



Spring 2023  
WWW.illinoislaborhistory.org

430 S. Michigan Avenue, Room 540AUD  
Chicago, Illinois 60605

**CELEBRATE MAY DAY!**

**Upcoming Events:**

- Coal Mining History*
- Workers Memorial Day*
- Mother Jones Birthday Party*
- International Mother Jones Festival*
- Pullman Railroad Days*

**Lessons in History:**

- Clarence Darrow Commemoration*
- On-line Bloomington Social Justice Tour*
- The Brickmakers of Pullman*
- ILHS Interviews History Fair Winner*

**Book Review:**

*Blood Money*

**At the ILHS Online Bookstore**

- Dirt Work: An Education in the Woods*
- How Wal-Mart is Destroying America (and the World)*

**Do You Know Your Labor History?**

**Have You Renewed Your Membership?**

**MAY DAY 2023**



*May Day 2022 with Chicago Federation of Labor Sec-Treas. Don Villar*

**HAYMARKET MEMORIAL PLAQUE DEDICATION**

**Monday, May 1, 4:30 p.m.**

**Haymarket Memorial — 175 N. Des Plaines St., Chicago**

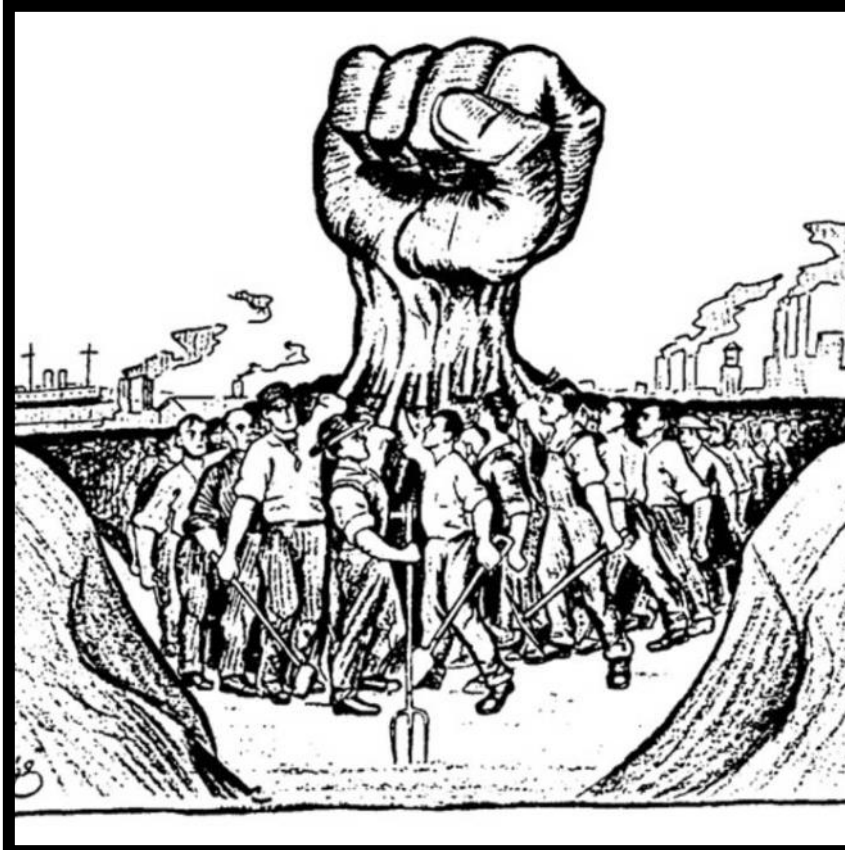
*Join the CFL, ILHS, LCLAA, and UFW on the 30th Anniversary of his death, a plaque will be dedicated to honor the life and legacy of Cesar Chavez, as well as the continuing work of Dolores Huerta and the United Farm Workers to fight for equity and justice.*

# FROM YOUR PRESIDENT



As May Day approaches, I remember why we celebrate International Workers' Day — to show our global solidarity. As Americans, we can learn as much from other nations' workers' movements, as we can from U.S. labor history. It never ceases to amaze me how workers in other countries respond to attacks on labor and working peoples' interests, in ways we don't in the United States. As I write this, I continue to pay attention to striking workers in Europe and elsewhere. In France, the CGT (their plaque is on the statue in Haymarket Square) has been conducting nationwide strikes against President Macron's raising of the retirement age. English, German, and Italian unions are striking for higher wages. And in Israel, the Histadrut has called for a national strike against Prime Minister Netanyahu's assault on democracy.

I was recently interviewed for a WBEZ radio podcast regarding Samuel Gompers, and his namesake park and statue on Chicago's Northwest side. As the first president of the American Federation of Labor, Gompers played a leading role in matters far beyond bread-and-butter issues of wages, hours, and working conditions. He often weighed in on matters of foreign policy, racism, immigration, and a myriad of other social issues. During the interview, I expressed my belief that many of the conflict dynamics surrounding the role of labor outside normal "collective bargaining," have been with us since the time of Gompers. We also discussed how unions in other countries engaged in these issues more actively on a national scale.



The role of labor unions, in regard to the broader issues in society, has been hotly contested since the early days of the labor movement. Organizations such as the Knights of Labor, the International Workingmen's Association, the AFL, and the CIO before the merger, had robust arguments about these questions. Some unions limited their discussion to collective bargaining issues that only included wages, hours, and working conditions. Nevertheless, in the 2000s, many unions began addressing social issues, especially moving beyond xenophobic attitudes toward immigrants, and welcoming all workers. The "Fight for \$15" became a national labor rallying cry, and some unions embraced national health care. Some also spoke out against the Iraq war.

In discussing Gompers and the AFL, we talked about how historically, the U.S. union movement developed differently from other countries. It is clear we can learn some good lessons from other nation's labor movements about collective action, beyond collective bargaining. Ironically, it may have been the 1886 Chicago Haymarket tragedy that inspired other nations to fight for the eight-hour day. As lessons were drawn from the American experience, we would do well to reflect and learn from other nations' social and labor movements who learned from us in so many ways!

Happy May Day!

*Larry Spivack*

# Celebrate May Day!

## HAYMARKET MEMORIAL PLAQUE DEDICATION

Monday, May 1, 4:30 p.m., Haymarket Memorial, 175 N. Des Plaines St., Chicago

Join the Illinois Labor History Society, the Chicago Federation of Labor, and the Labor Council For Latin American Advancement for the annual May Day commemoration, 4:30 p.m. on Monday, May 1 at the Haymarket Statue, 175 N. Des Plaines Street, Chicago.

Globally, the 1886 Haymarket incident and the fight for the eight-hour day is honored. Since the statue's installation, every May Day a different labor organization comes to add a commemorative plaque to the statue's base. This year's plaque will be dedicated by the CFL, saluting the Labor Council For Latin American Advancement (LCLAA) and the United Farm Workers (UFW), to honor of the thirtieth anniversary of Cesar Chavez's death.

The Chicago Federation of Labor (CFL) has been a co-sponsor of the annual celebration for the last 15 years. Interest from organizations and labor groups from all over the world, as well as the US, continues to grow. Two years ago, the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (CBTU) dedicated a plaque. Last year's plaque was dedicated by the Italian Federation, FIOM, whose top officials came to Chicago from Italy to give the presentation.

The Haymarket Memorial Statue in Haymarket Square in Chicago was dedicated in 2004, after decades of advocacy by the Illinois Labor History Society, which sought recognition of the incident that transpired in 1886. In 2005, the ILHS held its first May Day celebration at the statue, with a plaque dedicated from a Colombian trade union federation, the Central Unitaria de Trabajadores (CUT), in memory of the more than 1,200 workers murdered by death squads there. Since then, plaques from labor federations around the world and the US have been dedicated in solidarity with, and celebration of International Workers' Day.



From New Zealand to Iraq, from Sweden to Mexico, from France to Japan, many workers federations have contributed plaques.

Founded in 1973, LCLAA is the leading national organization for Latino/a workers and their families. LCLAA was born out of the need to educate, organize, and mobilize Latino/as in the labor movement and has expanded its influence to organize Latino/as in an effort to impact workers' rights and their influence in the political process. LCLAA represents the interest of more than two million Latino/a workers in the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO), The Change to Win Federation, independent unions, and all their affiliate unions.

The UFW was founded in the early 1960s by Cesar Chavez, Dolores Huerta, Larry Itliong, and other organizers, and is the nation's first enduring and largest farm workers' union. The UFW continues its activism in major agricultural sectors, chiefly in California. UFW contract agreements protect thousands of vegetable, berry, winery, tomato, and dairy workers in California, Oregon, and Washington state. More than 75 percent of California's fresh mushroom industry is now under union contract.



Many landmark, UFW-sponsored, laws and regulations, now serve to protect all farm workers in California, especially at non-union ranches. They include the first state laws in the nation providing farm workers with overtime pay after eight hours a day in California, Washington state, and Oregon; the first comprehensive standards in the U.S. to prevent heat deaths and illnesses in California; and recent, COVID19 protections for agricultural workers. The UFW is a leader in the national movement for immigration reform and continues to champion legislative and regulatory reforms for farm workers, covering issues such as overtime, heat safety, and pesticide use and exposure, among the many protections needed to safeguard the lives of workers.

Since 1896, the CFL has fought for economic, social, and racial justice for all working people. The CFL represents 300 unions which, in turn, represent approximately 500,000 working people in Chicago and Cook County. The strength of the Chicago labor movement comes from the unity and solidarity of their affiliated organizations and their members.

## Upcoming Event!

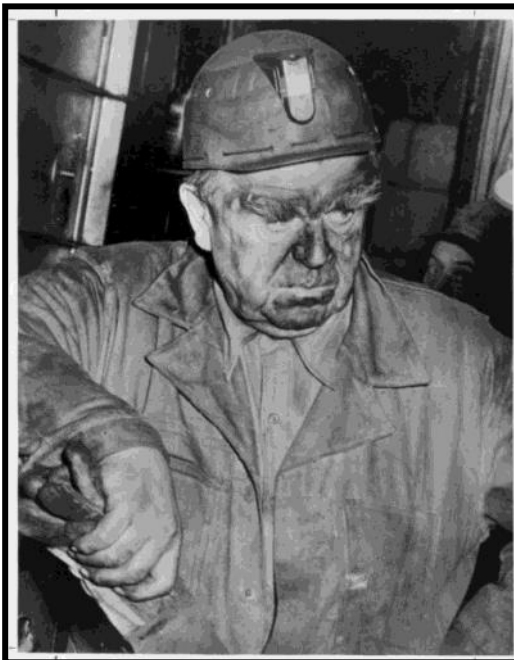
# Coal Mining History April 26 in West Frankfort

Illinois' rich coal mining history, a story complete with immigrants, hard labor, union battles and tragedies, is slated for a presentation at noon on Wednesday, April 26, at the Frankfort Area Historical Museum, 2000 East St. Louis Street, West Frankfort, IL (618) 932-6159. The event is free and open to the public.

Illinois Labor History Society members and Illinois Humanities Council, "Road Scholars," Bucky Halker and Mike Matejka will present together. Halker's program is entitled, *Down in the Mine: American Coal Miners and Their Songs, 1890-1960*, and Matejka will add historical background.

Williamson County has a rich coal mining history and for many years led the state in coal production. On December 21, 1951, disaster struck, when an underground explosion took 119 miners' lives at West Orient Mine #2. This mine was billed as the world's largest underground shaft mine, and in 1947 set a world record, mining 15,000 tons in one day. 1952's federal Coal Mining Safety Act came in reaction to this Christmas week tragedy.

**D**r. Bucky Halker is a long-time, popular Road Scholar who has



*United Mine Workers President John L. Lewis emerging from the Orient Mine #2 in West Frankfort in 1951 after inspecting the mine explosion.*

Halker will again share *Down in the Mine: American Coal Miners and Their Songs, 1890-1960* for the Rochester Historic Preservation District on May 22 at 7 p.m. at the Rochester United Methodist church, 555 S. Walnut, Rochester, IL. Matejka will present on *Grassroots Democracy: Illinois Labor Journeys* at the Des Plaines History Center, 781 Pearson Street, Des Plaines, IL, on July 13, at 1:30 p.m.

The Illinois Humanities Council is supported in part by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and the Illinois General Assembly [through the Illinois Arts Council Agency (IACA)], as well as by contributions from individuals, foundations, and corporations. Any views, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed by speakers, program participants, or audiences do not necessarily reflect those of the NEH, Illinois Humanities, IACA, our partnering organizations, or our funders.



## ILHS Traveling Bookstore

**T**om Suhrbur, Carole Ramsden, and Larry Spivack had a very successful ILHS book table at the IEA Representative Assembly on Thursday and Friday, March 9-10.

We sold 46 books and two t-shirts. Top sellers were: *Death in the Haymarket' A Fight for the Soul of Public Education*, *Joe Hill*, *Mother Jones*, and *Rising From the Rails*.

We added 14 new members, renewed 4 existing memberships, and added 34 people to our email list.

Great job everyone!

# Illinois Workers' Memorial Day

**Alton** – The Greater Madison County Federation of Labor Workers Memorial program will be held Friday, April 28 at 7:00 p.m. at Gordon Moore Park, at the Workers Memorial Site, Highway 140, in Alton, Illinois. Please ask members and families to attend this annual program. In the case of inclement weather, the program will be held indoors at the Muensterman Building. Please notify Mike Fultz at 618-409-4314 or [mpfultz@att.net](mailto:mpfultz@att.net), or Dean Webb at 618-259-8558 if you know of a worker with a fatal or permanently disabling injury, so that we may honor them during the program.

**Bloomington** – The Bloomington & Normal Trades & Labor Assembly will gather at 6 a.m. on Friday, April 28, Workers Memorial Day, at Bloomington's White Oak Park, 1514 N Cottage Avenue. Over 300 names of area fallen workers will be read in a brief, pre-work ceremony.

**Champaign** – Friday, April 28 – A memorial event is set for 5:00 p.m. at the Champaign County Worker Memorial site in Dodds Park, 1501 N. Mattis Avenue in Champaign, IL. Champaign County AFL-CIO President Matt Kelly and East Central Illinois Building & Construction Trades President Kevin Sage will be joined by elected officials and community leaders for remarks and a memorial wreath presentation, as they add the name of ride-share driver and aspiring veterinarian, Kristian Philpotts, to the memorial.

**Chicago** – The Chicago Federation of Labor is joining ARISE Chicago for a virtual, interfaith service on Friday, April 28 from 8:30-9:15 a.m. To register, visit <https://forms.gle/Gwdj6Zg6w7geiaXHA>.

**Decatur** – Friday, April 28, Decatur Trades and Labor Assembly Workers' Memorial Day Service, 5:30 p.m. on the northwest corner of the Macon County Courthouse lawn, located at 253 West Wood Street in downtown Decatur. There will be a guest speaker and reading of the names of those who have died on the job. Contact Lloyd Holman, 217-620-4923 or Lamarcus Williams at 217-413-3577.

**Galesburg** – Friday, April 28, at 5:30 p.m. at the Galesburg Trades & Labor office, 1640 N. Henderson Street in Galesburg, IL.

**Peoria** – Friday, April 28, Labor Council of West Central Illinois Workers' Memorial Service. At 6:00 p.m., gather at the Workers' Memorial Monument at City Hall, 419 Fulton Street, Peoria. There will be a brief memorial service to honor our fallen brothers & sisters who have died or have been seriously injured as a result of workplace accidents. Contact Lisa Uphoff at 309-672-1967 or Amy Flynn at 309-674-5181.

**Quad Cities** – USW Local 105, IBEW 1379, and ARCONIC Davenport Works leadership invite Quad City area working families to join them in a national observance of Workers Memorial Day. This is a time for working families and union members to remember sisters and brothers who have died or been injured on the job. Call 563-355-1181 for more information.

**Rockford** – Friday, April 28, the Rockford United Labor (RUL) Workers' Memorial Day Ceremony will be held at 5:30 p.m. at the AFL-CIO monument behind the Zeke Giorgi State building, located at 200 South Wyman Street in Rockford. RUL will honor those union members who have lost their lives on the job. Following the ceremony, a special presentation will take place at the Nordlof theater, where RUL will host NIU Professor Dr. Rosemary Feurer as she presents her 28-minute documentary about honored labor leader Mother Jones. The presentation will begin at 6:30 p.m. For more information, contact Sara Dorner at 815-608-0834.

**Springfield** – Friday, April 28, the Springfield & Central Illinois Trades & Labor Council and the Illinois AFL-CIO will host a press conference and ceremony at 10:00 a.m. at the Illinois AFL-CIO Front Plaza located at 534 S. Second Street in Springfield, IL. The event will be dedicated to all who have lost their lives on the job. Families of fallen workers will be invited and flowers will be placed in their memory.

## JOIN US TO MEMORIALIZE OUR FALLEN WORKERS

APRIL 26, 2023  
3:30PM-6:30PM

IN FRONT OF ST. AGNES OF BOHEMIA  
CATHOLIC CHURCH  
2651 S CENTRAL PARK AVE, CHICAGO, IL 60623

BRING PHOTOS TO COMMEMORATE YOUR LOVED  
ONE



MAY  
DAY

## MOTHER JONES BIRTHDAY PARTY

SUNDAY  
APRIL 30, 2023 3-5 PM

Erin Room  
Irish American Heritage Center  
4626 North Knox Avenue,  
Chicago



Let's Celebrate with Mother Jones  
as we anticipate a springtime of  
renewal and a new sculpture/statue  
at Chicago's Water Tower

Featuring World Famous Irish Fiddler Liz Carroll

Brendan and Siobhan McKinney pipes&flute

other performers speakers to be announced

Free event RSVP requested:

[motherjonesmuseum.org/events](https://motherjonesmuseum.org/events)

[donate to statue or](#)

[place a greeting/ ad in the program book](#)

[at motherjonesmuseum.org/donate](https://motherjonesmuseum.org/donate)

# Upcoming Event!

# International Mother Jones Festival



... "as long as the spark of liberty glows in men's breasts this place where her mortal remains are finally laid to rest, will be a shrine to which all lovers of justice and right and liberty will ever turn for hope and encouragement." Fr. Maguire, 12/8/1930

### Union Miners Cemetery 12 pm to 1:30 pm

Join us as we commemorate Mother Jones Funeral with a reading of the magnificent eulogy written and delivered on December 8, 1930 by Father Robert Maguire, President of St. Viator College, fellow Irish immigrant and good friend of Mary Harris Jones, followed by classic labor songs, and tributes from the Irish Consul General at Chicago, and labor leaders from around America.

Speakers include Brother Jerome Lewnard of the Viatorians, who will read the eulogy, Irish Consul Kevin Byrne, Tim Drea, president of the Illinois AFL/CIO. Music by Wildflower Conspiracy



### Mother Jones Museum, Main St., Mt. Olive 1:30 – 4 PM

The celebration continues with great food, music, children's programs, museum tours, Mother Jones and Genral Bradley actors, tribute to local heroes, Elmer Milcic and his grandparents Matt and Anna Yurkovich. Traditional and new labor songs performed by Wildflower Conspiracy, Nick Krumweide, Casting Runes, and Kelley Hatlee.

Food from Fema catering Benld and traditonal cabbage rolls by Melinda Zippay  
Mother Jones Hellraiser coffee, a special blend from Kazoo Coffee Roasters, will be for sale

Macoupin Art Collective staff will present children's activities at their Art Bus

Magician Randy Thompson will perform.

Actor Loretta Williams will present Mother Jones' story and read the March of the Mill Children.

Dale Hawkins will portray General Bradley, hero of the great Battle of Virden.

Local Boy Scouts will have lemonade for sale.

Friends of the Mother Jones Museum will have commemorative and souvenir items for sale, including travel mugs, tee shirts, books, and magnets.

Admission is free to all events. The food, coffee and souvenirs are for sale.

Mother Jones Museum Mt. Olive  
215 East Main Street | Mt. Olive, IL 62069  
friendsofthemothertjonesmuseum@gmail.com  
mothertjonesmuseummtolive.org

For more information call 618-659-8759

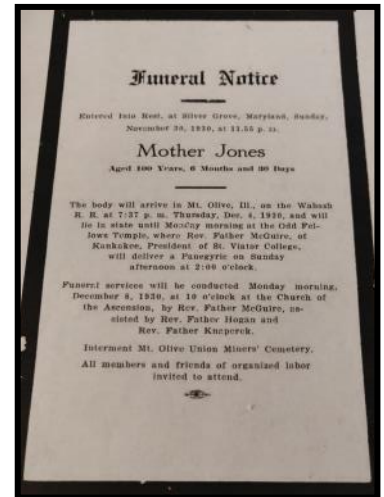


Union Miners Cemetery  
Perpetual Care Association  
211 W 1st North St., Mt. Olive, IL 62069  
Exit 44, I 55

Mother Jones Monument



Father McGuire and Mother Jones



Mother Jones Funeral Notice



Labor leaders attend Mother Jones funeral.



Mother Jones Funeral Procession

## Upcoming Event!

# Labor History Society offering tours for Pullman Railroad Days, May 20-21

The Historic Pullman Foundation (HPF) will host its second annual *Pullman Railroad Days: People, Progress & Innovation* on Saturday, May 20 and Sunday, May 21 at Pullman National Historical Park, 610 E 111th St, Chicago, IL. The Illinois Labor History Society will be offering tours both days. Railroad Days tickets are available at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/pullman-railroad-days-2023-registration-470604138647>

Hosted within the newly-elevated Pullman National Historical Park, this weekend-long celebration will have something for train enthusiasts, national park fanatics, families, and everyone in between.

In partnership with Metra, and the American Association of Private Railroad Car Owners, visitors will be able to explore historic Pullman rail cars from different eras at the 111th Street/Pullman Metra Electric station over the weekend. Included are the 1923 New York Central 3, the 1950 Royal Street Observation, and the 1949 Pennsylvania Railroad Colonial Crafts. These cars reflect Pullman workers' craft skills.

Attendees will also be able to enjoy a virtual reality experience and locomotive simulator hosted by Norfolk

Southern, tours of the Park, Hotel Florence, the Factory Site, and the neighborhood. There will be food trucks from local restaurants, live music, and so much more!

A new exhibit opening in the HPF's Exhibit Hall will highlight the organization's 50th anniversary and neighborhood revitalization and renovation. "The exhibit speaks to the power of an engaged community," said Historic Pullman Foundation President Joseph C. Szabo. "So many have toiled for so long, and it serves as a great example of how people in action can make a difference."

The weekend-long event will be a mix of free events and a single-ticket entry for others. Historic Pullman Foundation Members get a 10% discount on ticket sales. Advance purchase tickets receive a 20% discount and special early access each morning from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. to the historic Pullman Railcar display. Lines tend to get long in the afternoon.

Save by purchasing advance tickets by May 14. Day-of admission will be \$30. Advance Ticket holder access 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. General Access 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.



**RAILROAD DAYS**  
**2023**

*People, Progress & Innovation*

**BOOK YOUR TICKETS for**  
**Saturday, May 20 & Sunday, May 21**

[www.pullmanil.org/specialevents](http://www.pullmanil.org/specialevents)  
773.785.8901

Historic Pullman Foundation is the official philanthropic partner of Pullman National Historical Park



## Lessons in History

# Clarence Darrow Commemoration



Clarence Darrow—1913

**M**onday, March 13 — On the 125th Anniversary of the Woodworkers' Strike where Clarence Darrow successfully defended woodworkers who struck against the Paine Lumber Company in Oshkosh, Wisc., the Clarence Darrow Commemorative Committee celebrated the memory of the famous attorney at two separate events.

the labor movement was the foundation for his progressive attitude in fighting for social justice." Also speaking was ILHS member Nina Helstein.



**L**ater that evening, a symposium co-sponsored with the Civitas ChildLaw Center, and the Curt and Linda Rodin Center for Social Justice, was held at Loyola University Chicago School of Law, further exploring Darrow's role in the historic case.



In the morning, at the annual flower-tossing at the Darrow Bridge in Jackson Park, Chicago, ILHS President Spivack spoke about the need to remember Darrow for his work in promoting a strong defense of Labor, especially earlier in his career. He added, "Too

Sheri Flanders, a Chicago-based writer, actor, and comedian, read a powerful excerpt from Darrow's closing statement to the jury.



Chicago Federation of Labor (CFL) President Bob Reiter, Jr., reflected on the importance of Darrow's pioneering work for the labor movement still relevant today.



often history focuses on Darrow's later work as a defense attorney for high profile cases such as the Scopes Monkey Trial and defense of Leopold and Loeb." "Important as they may be," Spivack said, "Darrow's work in defending Eugene Debs and others in



**L**oyola University Professor Juan Perea argued that the labor movement today could benefit from having many more lawyers like Darrow, dedicated to social justice and workers' rights.



## Online Bloomington social justice tour highlights labor sites

**T**he McLean County Museum of History (MCMH) and Not In Our Town (NIOT) are proud to announce a new Social Justice walking tour website, chronicling historic Bloomington events. Thanks to a generous "Under Our Wing" grant from Business Builders Marketing, this website guides people to actual social justice event sites in Bloomington. The site is at <https://blono-social-justice-tour.org/>.

design their own walking tour. Pages also include links to additional content inside MCMH exhibits, biographies, and books, allowing visitors to explore topics more deeply. Students will find this an invaluable research tool for local history.

The website at [blono-social-justice-tour.org](https://blono-social-justice-tour.org) guides people to 15 different sites where social justice-related events took place, from the Civil War through the 2000s. There are six categories: Women's Rights, the Civil War, African American Civil Rights, Gay Rights, Immigration, and Labor & Unions. The map feature encourages users to visit these sites in person and to

**L**abor history sites include the 1917 transit strike with Mother Jones and the old Armory, where troops were dispatched from, to suppress strikes.

"Our community offers some unique stories where the national quest for equality and justice played out in our community," said Museum of History executive director, Julie Emig. "It is very eye-opening when one sees the deep efforts people made to achieve fairness within our own backyard."



## Online Bloomington social justice tour continued...

“Too often we think of social justice efforts as happening in big cities or distant places,” said NIOT co-chair, Mike Matejka, who piloted the project. “We all know who Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King Jr. are, but who are the people who made efforts to change our community? Through this site, one learns about those very real local efforts.”

**B**usiness Builders Marketing owner, Jennifer McCarron added, “McLean County is a fantastic community with a history and culture as unique as those who make their home here. It’s been a pleasure to partner with the McLean County Museum of History to offer an innovative, web-based way to learn more about our exciting past. We hope that the online Downtown Bloomington Social Justice Walking Tour will be appreciated by scholars, history buffs, and the community for many years to come.”

The sites included are:

**The Old Courthouse**, 200 N. Main Street, now the Museum of History, where women first voted locally in 1892, and where troops encamped during the 1917 transit strike;

**Schroeder’s Opera House**, formerly at 205 N. Main, where the first Illinois Women’s Suffrage Convention was held, and where Frederick Douglass and others spoke;

**The former Woolworth’s**, 110 East Jefferson, where the Illinois NAACP picketed in 1960 to protest southern U.S. segregation;

**The Illinois House**, 211 West Jefferson, formerly Bloomington’s finest hotel, which was segregated in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century;

**The *Bloomington Times* newspaper office**, formerly at 216 N. Center, where an angry mob attacked this pro-slavery newspaper in 1862;

**106 West Washington**, where Jesse and Kersey Fell convinced Abraham Lincoln to write his autobiography in 1859;

**102 West Washington**, Sigmund Livingston’s law office, founder of the Anti-Defamation League;

**The Lincoln Parking Garage**, Major’s Hall site, where Abraham Lincoln delivered his “lost speech” about

slavery expansion;

**221 East Front Street**, Gummerman Printing site; the German language *Bloomington Journal* was forced to print in English during World War I;

**109 East Olive**, Bloomington City Hall; multiple meetings took place here over equal opportunity, housing, and LGBTQ+ rights;

**Bloomington Armory**, formerly at 316 S. Madison, where troops were dispatched to squelch labor strikes;

**400 S. Madison**, “Pone Hollow,” a 19<sup>th</sup> century, mixed race shanty town;

**Electric powerhouse**, 402 S. Roosevelt, this was protected by troops after famed labor organizer Mary “Mother” Jones spoke, supporting local streetcar strikers in 1917;



*Illinois National Guard troops surround the McLean County Courthouse in Bloomington, the day after a fiery speech by Mary “Mother” Jones. (McLean County Museum of History image)*

**Wayman A.M.E. Church**, 803 West Olive Street, current location for Bloomington’s oldest African-American congregation.

**T**he tour was first developed by MCMH emeritus director, Greg Koos and Mike Matejka in the early 2000s. Matejka and Museum Librarian, Bill Kemp, still offer the tour for students and civic organizations. As warmer weather nears, a walking tour is planned to mark this website launch.

The website was a collaborative effort between MCMH staff, Business Builders Marketing, and student interns Aaron Sander, Yvin Shin and Aditi Sharma.

The “Under Our Wing” grant from Business Builders Marketing was supplemented with an Illinois Department of Human Services Healing Illinois Grant and an Illinois Humanities Council grant.

**I**llinois Humanities is supported in part by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and the Illinois General Assembly [through the Illinois Arts Council Agency], as well as by contributions from individuals, foundations, and corporations. Any views, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed by speakers, program participants, or audiences do not necessarily reflect those of the NEH, Illinois Humanities, our partnering organizations, or our funders.

## Stories in Labor History

# The Brickmakers of Pullman

The Pullman Strike of 1894 was a pivotal event in labor history, not only here in Illinois, but nationally. It showed the power of industrial unionism and thrust American Railway Union president, Eugene Debs, onto the national stage. Even so, it is conventionally remembered as a defeat for labor. The strike was brutally crushed by federal troops and Debs was prosecuted and imprisoned in the McHenry County jail.

Yet it was a different story for one group of Pullman strikers, the brickmakers. They would emerge from the struggle with higher wages, shorter hours and employer recognition of their union. It was victory now lost, like the Chicago brickmakers unions, in the mists of time.



Brickies at the ovens

Photo Provided by John Cameron

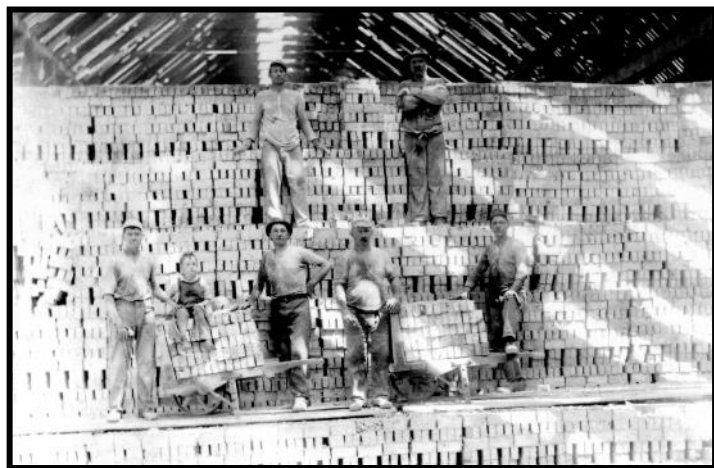
When George Pullman built his model town in 1880 (actually, it was his workers who did the building), it was labeled the “first all-brick city.” While the distinctive red facades of many of its structures consist of pressed brick imported from Indiana, most of the rest of the buildings were constructed of “common brick,” made of clay dredged from the bottom of Lake Calumet. Among Pullman’s first steps had been establishing a brickworks located on the lake’s shore, just south of the newly-platted town.

Brickmakers were recruited from across the city. Among those “pioneers” was Jacob Perry, my fourth great-uncle. Perry was a Civil War veteran who had moved his growing family from upstate New York a few years earlier to work with his brother in the brickyards along the South Branch of the Chicago River. The Perrys would now take up residence in the “Brickyard Cottages,” small, hastily constructed frame homes – later described as “shanties,” adjacent to the brickworks.

Large-scale brickmaking in the Chicago area had emerged during the 1850s and had exploded after the 1871 fire. Skilled brickmakers along the river had been able to form a strong union affiliated with the Knights of Labor for a number of years. As the increasingly mechanized industry spread out in search of additional clay deposits in the 1880s, the union made a concerted effort to organize the new operations in outlying communities. An 1886 strike of workers in south suburban Blue Island and Dolton was lost and the unions busted, but organizing was resumed at these locations as well as the Pullman yard by 1894.

When the rail carmakers at Pullman went out that May, the brickmakers local voted to strike in sympathy. Subsequently, discontent at other area yards would lead to a general strike across the metropolitan area, including brickworks as far north as Evanston and Northbrook. After a nine-week work stoppage, the southsiders would return to work with union recognition, an eight hour day, and an arbitrated wage increase (though the northside men lost union recognition). Jacob Perry and other Pullman workers would become Local 4 of the Illinois Brickmakers’ Alliance, and two years later, the state organization went national and affiliated with the AFL.

During the 1894 strike, militant brickmakers had rallied to support their railworker brothers. Hundreds came out in late June to hear Debs speak in Blue Island when the American Railway Union (ARU) men launched the general railroad boycott. Indeed, at the 1895 Presidential Strike Commission hearings, witnesses would claim that “idle” brickyard workers and other “hoodlums” were behind the sometimes-violent unrest at the Blue Island rail yards.



The Perry men in front of the brick piles

Photo Provided by John Cameron

*Continued on Page 11*

## Stories in Labor History continued...

The plight of Pullman brickmakers was also spotlighted in the commission hearings. Though the company asserted that its brickyard cottages had been just for temporary use, and that they “were not a part of Pullman,” it continued to lease them to local workers like Jacob Perry. And it continued to charge excessively high rents for the flimsy 3-room structures that lacked running water, gas or sewage hook ups, claiming, “When you build temporary structures of that sort they must necessarily be rented higher than permanent structures because they must be charged off sooner or later from your books.” Upon hearing this, the commissioners pointed out that the company had earned back its costs for the dwellings many times over.



Brickmakers Union parade Roseland 1892-93 Photo Provided by John Cameron

Commission testimony and other fallout from the strike would lead to the 1898 break-up of the Pullman Company’s monopolistic grip and the brickyard cottages were torn down. Jacob Perry moved his family to the “West Pullman” neighborhood, while he and his sons continued to be employed at the brickworks and where Jacob would become a supervisor in his later years.

The Pullman yard was incorporated into the Illinois Brick Company in 1900. A conglomerate of some 40 brick operations, the IBC had generally cordial relations with the brickmakers union (some would claim too cordial), but labor strife was not infrequent in other Chicago-area brickyards. Industry consolidation continued as old clay pits were exhausted; older works like Pullman were eventually closed. By the 1920s, IBC operated just ten brickworks, even as production hit unparalleled heights to meet the needs of the decade’s building boom. Demand collapsed with the Great Depression and began the steady decline of Chicago brickmaking. The last local operation shut down in 1981.

The industry’s fortunes were matched to the decline in union membership and the National Brickmakers’ Alliance would undergo various reconfigurations over the decades. Its successor organization finally merged into the United Steelworkers in 1996.

— ILHS Member John Cameron

## ILHS Interviews History Fair Winner



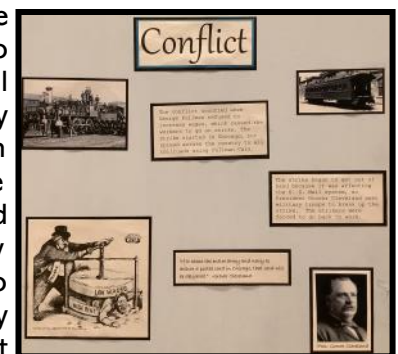
Late last year, Emma Danke, an eighth-grade student at D.C. Everest Junior High School in Weston, Wisconsin, wrote to the ILHS to request information for her U.S. History school project. The theme was “Conflict and/or Compromise” and

she selected the Pullman Strike. Her focus was more on the development of labor and union progression than on the strike itself.

She interviewed ILHS President Larry Spivack to help in her research. Her main takeaway? “I learned that it is important to treat your employees like you would want to be treated, unlike how George Pullman treated his

employees which caused the strike.”

And the verdict? She reported, “I wanted to thank you so much for all your help on my History Project of the Pullman Strike. All of the information you provided me with was very helpful. I would like to tell you that on History Day I competed against 30 other displays in my 8th grade class and I got first place!”



She aptly explained the importance of the project: “I learned that it is important to study history so that we can learn from our mistakes and not repeat them.”

A lesson well learned. Congratulations Emma!

## Book Review

# Blood Money

*Blood Money: The Story of Life, Death & Profit Inside America's Blood Industry*

By Kathleen McLaughlin  
One Signal Publisher, 2023

Every morning at my Laborers' union hall, construction workers gather for job dispatch. About 20 years ago, I noticed Sally (not her real name) looked haggard. I asked how she was doing. "I'm okay, I just sold blood and I'm feeling tired."

Cruise any city on the working class side of the tracks, and there's a good chance you'll find a plasma center, where people get poked and paid to share their body's vital fluid. For too many, it means groceries, rent or a student's college textbooks.

The U.S.A. is a rare nation – this country allows people to sell blood for money. It is forbidden in most countries except for the U.S., Germany, Austria, the Czech Republic and Hungary – the world depends for two-thirds of its plasma supply from within U.S. borders, a profitable but unseen enterprise.

Kathleen McLaughlin, *Blood Money's* author, lives on the receiving side, she has a rare disease, chronic inflammatory demyelinating polyneuropathy (CIDP), which means she requires a plasma transfusion every few months. Her curiosity was first sparked while reporting in China. China had ceased importing blood in 1985 during the AIDS epidemic. To supplement the nation's supply, rural farmers in Hunan became the new, paid donors, stuck two to three times weekly for eight dollars. Despite the government restrictions, AIDS was present. Rural peasants began falling to the disease and roughly one million Chinese were infected. To protect herself, McLaughlin smuggled plasma into China for her own needs. Where did that plasma come from? This sent her on a cross-country American journey, visiting plasma extraction centers and trying to learn who the donors were.

The donors were not homeless nor notoriously poor. They were working people subsisting on minimum wage, part-time employment, a high percentage of people of color. College students were selling plasma to buy textbooks. Mexican nationals crossed the

border multiple times a week, making more than Mexico's minimum \$12.50 daily wage. She plotted where the plasma centers were – not anywhere with high economic standards, always in struggling border, Rust Belt, and Southern communities. She cites an Oxfam America 2022 study that showed one-third of American workers earn \$31,000 annually, \$15 dollars an hour for a 40-hour week. These were the donor target populations, needing extra cash for a car repair or groceries. There were fewer than 300 paying plasma centers in 2005, over 1,000 by 2021.

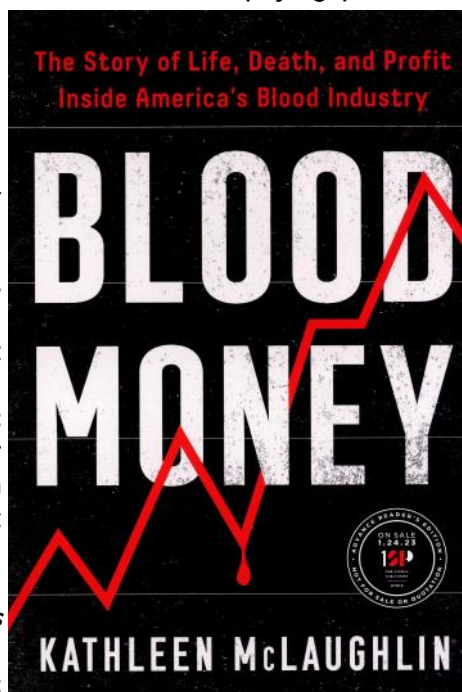
Simply watch where working Americans shop and eat, and there's a good chance there's a stick shop nearby. When President Donald Trump closed the Mexican border, there was panic in the U.S. plasma industry; five to ten percent of its plasma came from 52 border blood centers.

At blood drives, willing donors share their life fluid, bolstering medical needs. For those who depend upon paid donations, she asks if plasma donation should be considered work, with an established minimum per donation? In the 1930s, before blood storage was perfected, hospitals needed donors for immediate transfusion. New York city donors organized an American Federation of Labor (AFL)

Blood Givers' Union, and demanded a consistent payment system. Once blood storage was possible, this faded, but she sees a future possibility here in organizing.

Impoverished Flint, Michigan was once the United Auto Workers' bulwark, a city where industrial unionism was born in the 1936-37 General Motors sit-down strike. In Flint, she found a weed grown field with a sculptural salute to these union pioneers who fought their way into the middle class. Across the street is a plasma center, where today's working class finds their survival income.

Human blood is vital. Vampire stories mark our cultural dark corners. A vampire international trade industry is literally sucking people's blood for a few dollars more. Plasma centers lure donors like a casino, promising bonuses with frequent donations. Donors experience



## Book Review Continued....

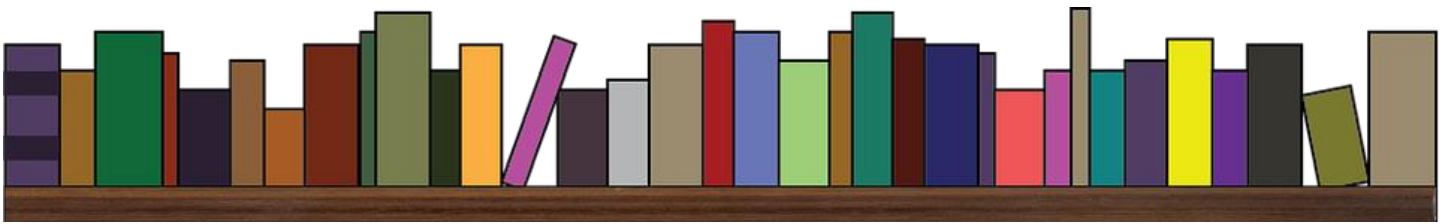
fatigue yet no one is studying the long-term health consequences of weekly or even more frequent extractions.

McLaughlin writes, “The fundamental problem with the plasma business lies not in the practices of drawing people’s plasma but in the flaws inherent in American capitalism. We have begun to accept that people should do whatever it takes to get by – as the rich get richer, it’s fine for teachers and truck drivers to

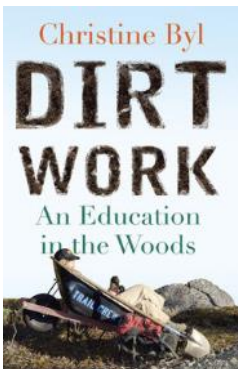
sell their blood to make ends meet.”

Donating blood is an exemplary assist to unseen medical needs. For-profit extraction preys on those struggling to just make ends meet. This unseen industry deserves the spotlight, one McLaughlin turns on it, not just in clinical terms, but from her own medical needs and working people’s perspective, who use their blood to survive another day.

*Review by Mike Matejka*



# At the ILHS Online Bookstore!

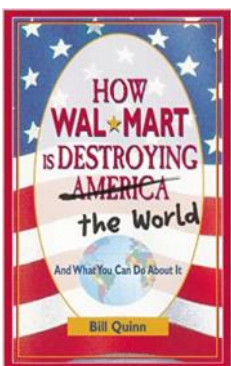


### *Dirt Work: An Education in the Woods*

By Christing Byl  
Beacon Press, Boston — \$24.95

Byl first encountered the national parks the way most of us do: on vacation. But after she graduated from college, broke and ready for a new challenge, she joined a Glacier National Park trail crew as a seasonal “traildog” maintaining mountain trails for the millions of visitors Glacier draws every year. Byl first thought of the job as a paycheck, a summer diversion, a welcome break from “the real world” before going on to graduate school. She came to find out that work in the woods on a trail crew was more demanding, more rewarding—more real—than she ever imagined.

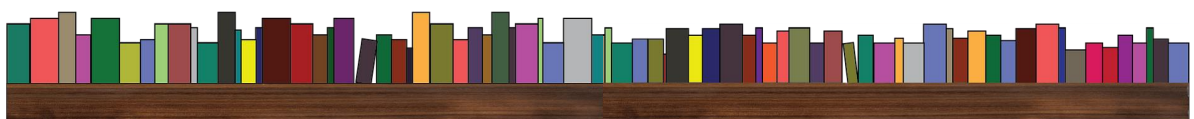
In *Dirt Work*, Christine Byl probes common assumptions about the division between mental and physical labor, “women’s work” and “men’s work,” white collars and blue collars. The supposedly simple work of digging holes, dropping trees, and blasting snowdrifts in fact offers her an education of the hands and the head, as well as membership in an utterly unique subculture. *Dirt Work* is a contemplative but unsentimental look at the pleasures of labor, the challenges of apprenticeship, and the way a place becomes a home.



### *How Wal-Mart is Destroying America (and the World)*

By Bill Quinn  
Ten Speed Press — \$15

An updated and expanded continuation of detailed accounts of Wal-Mart’s questionable business practices, their not-so-ethical tactics, and their expansion into the global market. Shows concerned citizens how to fight to keep Wal-Mart from invading their towns.





## DO YOU KNOW YOUR LABOR HISTORY?

[HTTPS://LABORHISTORYIN2.PODBEAN.COM/](https://laborhistoryin2.podbean.com/)

**Today in Labor History, March 2,** the year was 1937. The Steel Workers Organizing Committee, or SWOC, and US Steel signed their first, historic labor agreement. Previous efforts to organize steel workers had failed due to the union-busting tactics of the steel mill owners. But in 1935, the passage of the National Labor Relations Act required owners to bargain in good faith with workers. Armed with the protections of the act, the Congress of Industrial Organizations was determined to organize steel. The next year the CIO set up a SWOC headquarters in downtown Pittsburgh, the heart of steel country. In fact, SWOC set up shop in the tallest building in Pittsburgh, the Grant Building. Many steel companies had offices in the handsome Grant building, and SWOC was taking the labor fight right to their doorstep. SWOC held rallies and sent organizers into the steel mill towns. They gathered 125,000 union cards in the effort. Their first big victory came when they announced a new agreement with US Steel. The agreement included \$5 a day for workers in northern mills, an eight-hour work day, overtime, seniority protection, a grievance procedure, and recognition of SWOC as the bargaining representative for the workers. Many across the country were shocked that US Steel had sat down at the bargaining table. Despite this ground-breaking agreement, many of the smaller plants, known as "Little Steel," refused to bargain with SWOC. 1937 was marked with bloody battles to unionize Little Steel, including when ten workers died in Chicago. Yet momentum was in the workers' favor. Finally in 1941, Little Steel capitulated and came to the bargaining table. SWOC had won union rights for steel workers across the country. In 1942, SWOC

disbanded and became the United Steel Workers of America.

**Today in Labor History, April 4,** the year was 1968. It is a day of mourning. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was killed by an assassin's bullet as he was coming out of the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, Tennessee. Dr. King was in Memphis for a march to support striking African American sanitation workers. They were trying to gain union recognition and safe working conditions. The night before the scheduled march, he gave a speech that will be long remembered. Here is part of what he said, "Nothing would be more tragic than to stop at this point in Memphis. We've got to see it through. And when we have our march, you need to be there. If it means leaving work, if it means leaving school — be there. Be concerned about your brother. You may not be on strike. But either we go up together, or we go down together." He then ended the speech with these prophetic words, "Well, I don't know what will happen now. We've got some difficult days ahead. But it really doesn't matter with me now, because I've been to the mountaintop. And I don't mind. Like anybody, I would like to live a long life. Longevity has its place. But I'm not concerned about that now. I just want to do God's will. And He's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over. And I've seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people, will get to the promised land!" Less than 24 hours later, King had given his life to the cause of civil rights.

**Today in Labor History, May 11,** the year was 1894. It was the first day of the Pullman Strike. The strike started in the company of town of Pullman, on the south side of Chicago. George Pullman made his fortune making luxury sleeping cars for passenger trains. His cars revolutionized the rail industry, making long-distance travel a much more pleasant experience. Pullman founded a model town for his employees. In 1893, an economic crash devastated the US economy. Pullman lowered the pay of his workers by as much as third. But, he did not lower rents in Pullman and did not decrease the dividends he paid his stock holders. Outraged, the Pullman employees called a strike. The strike was led by the American Railway Union and its leader Eugene Debs. When the union held its convention in Chicago that June, the delegates voted to boycott any train that included a Pullman Car. More than a quarter of a million railroad workers in twenty-seven states and U.S. territories supported the boycott. Angry businessmen demanded that something be done. President Grover Cleveland promised intervention if any train carrying U.S. mail was halted by the boycott. Railroad owners quickly attached mail cars to as many trains as they could. President Cleveland declared, "If it takes every dollar in the Treasury and every soldier in the United States army to deliver a postcard in Chicago, that postal card shall be delivered." Federal troops brutally crushed the boycott. Thirty people died and more were injured. A federal injunction was filed against Eugene Debs, and he went to jail for six months for refusing to stop his support of the boycott. The Pullman Strike marked a new level of federal intervention against the cause of labor.



# #ILHLIVES



Don't forget to follow the ILHS at [www.facebook.com/ILLaborHistory](http://www.facebook.com/ILLaborHistory)



# Thank you for your past support!

## There is still time to renew your membership!



The Illinois Labor History Society's mission is reaching the next generation with labor's rich and vibrant history. You are vital as we work together to keep labor history alive, reaching students, workers, apprentices, academics, and the general public.

We're reaching out to you for support for the continuation of our 50-plus year history of activities, outreach, and programs. Your membership helps the Illinois Labor History Society protect important sites of labor history throughout our state and to provide quality labor education programs and outreach.

Your membership can help support the Illinois Labor History Society in many ways:

#### General Operations

- Preserving the Haymarket Monument and other sites of labor history
- Labor History Education for K-12 Students
- Labor History Education for Union Members
- Labor History in 2:00 Podcasts

If you have not yet renewed your membership, you can go online to:  
<http://www.illinoislaborhistory.org/become-a-member>

*Thank you – we depend on volunteers and your support to keep labor history alive!*

*Since 1969*



# Illinois Labor History Society

430 S. Michigan Ave.  
AUD 540  
Chicago, IL 60605  
312-341-2247

[www.illinoislaborhistory.org](http://www.illinoislaborhistory.org)  
[www.ILaborHistoryS@gmail.com](mailto:www.ILaborHistoryS@gmail.com)

## Our Mission Statement

It shall be the Purpose of the Illinois Labor History Society to encourage the preservation and study of labor history materials of the Illinois Region, and to arouse public interest in the profound significance of the past to the present.

#ILHLives

## Upcoming Events

**Coal Mining History** — 1 p.m., April 26 at the Frankfort Area Historical Museum, 2000 East St. Louis Street, West Frankfort, IL

**Mother Jones Birthday Party** — 3-5 p.m., April 30 at the IAHC, 4626 N. Knox Ave., Chicago

**International Mother Jones Festival** — April 30 at the Union Miners Cemetery, noon–1:30 p.m. and Mother Jones Museum, 1:30-4 p.m., Mt. Olive, IL

**May Day** — 4:30 p.m., May 1 at Haymarket Memorial, 175 N. Des Plaines St., Chicago

**Pullman Railroad Days** — May 20-21 at Pullman National Historical Park, 610 E. 111th St., Chicago, IL



Illinois Labor History Society  
430 S Michigan Ave, AUD 540  
Chicago IL 60605

*Or Current Resident*

*"The day will come when our silence will be more powerful than the voices you are throttling today."  
August Spies — 1855-1887*