I have so much gratitude looking back at all that we accomplished together in 2021. Amid an ever-evolving pandemic, we continued to bring Mine Wars history out of the shadows and into the public even more so than before.

In October 2019, we packed up our artifacts and exhibits in our old building and moved into our new union-owned building with three times as much space. We officially reopened 29 months later in May 2021. The Mine Wars Museum “version 2.0,” as we sometimes call it, has expanded permanent exhibits, an ever growing in-person and digital archive, and a state-of-the-art research room. Our first guest and next door neighbor, Willow Chafin, walked in to see what all the buzz was about. It was a moment of pride when he recalled all the museums he’s ever visited in the country, and ours was “first class” and “something the whole community could be proud of.” You couldn’t wipe the smile off my face. We finally settled in our new space, and went on to welcome 1,500 visitors from nearby creeks and hollers and around the world, including Japan, Alaska, and Australia.

And, of course, we (and the region) will always remember 2021 as the year we spearheaded the Battle of Blair Mountain Centennial, a grassroots commemorative campaign that went down in our state’s history and landed us in the New York Times. All of us—rank-and-file members, generous donors, amazing volunteers, inspiring community partners, and our incredible staff—worked tirelessly for years to make it happen. That Labor Day weekend, there were more than two dozen events, performances, and exhibits to commemorate that pivotal battle, including a film festival in Huntington, a temporary exhibit in Morgantown, a performance of Terror of the Tug in Welch, a walking tour in Matewan, and so many more.

In 2013, the founders of the Mine Wars Museum came together, worked together, and created something truly special in Matewan. Despite having no funds and no staff, we had a big vision, a small storefront, and people who rolled up their sleeves to see to it that Mine Wars would be remembered. We’re still here: growing louder, stronger, and more resilient by the year. Thanks for being in it with us.
The museum welcomed over 1,500 visitors in our first full season in our new, greatly expanded exhibition space.

Mine Wars Forum, our live video interview series which began during the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, saw an exciting second season including an episode featuring UMWA President Cecil Roberts.

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Our Executive Director, Mackenzie, led the way for our incredible Battle of Blair Mountain Centennial celebration in September in her third year with the museum.

CREATIVE DIRECTOR SHAUN SLIFER PHOTOGRAPHED AND CATALOGED HUNDREDS OF ARTIFACTS FROM SEVERAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL Digs ON THE VARIOUS BLAIR MOUNTAIN BATTLEFIELDS, AND WORKED WITH ARCHAEOLOGY GRAD STUDENT ETHAN KARNES TO PRODUCE THE ONLINE EXHIBIT The Land Will Tell the Story.

FOUNDING BOARD MEMBERS CHUCK KEENEY AND KATEY LAUER (WHO SERVED AS OUR PROVISIONAL DIRECTOR FOR OUR FIRST FIVE YEARS), LEFT OUR TEAM THIS YEAR, BUT BOTH REMAIN VERY CLOSE TO THE WORK THAT WE CONTINUE TO DO.
West Virginia has never seen anything like it saw Labor Day Weekend 2021.

The weekend was the culmination of three years of planning, led by Executive Director Kenzie New-Walker, that included more than 25 events, exhibits, and performances across the state and beyond—the largest event series in the state’s history.

The shots fired at Blair Mountain have echoed down through the years, and the battle is widely recognized as a critical chapter in US labor history. West Virginia Delegate Danielle Walker observed, “To a Mountaineer, it is taking a stand in unity and solidarity for equality and equity. The resilience of those miners allows laborers today to fight for the right to unite.”

The commemoration began with virtual panels in the weeks leading up to Labor Day, a film festival in Huntington, and a Kick-Off event featuring musicians Heather Hannah and Company, Gerry Milnes, and Phil Wiggins and the Chesapeake Sheiks, a poem by Crystal Good, songs and stories by Doris “Lady D” Fields and Saro Lynch-Thomason, and a tribute by Emily Hilliard.

Other events included a reenactment of the murder of Sid Hatfield and Ed Chambers in Welch, a People’s Church Service in Logan, tours and screenings at the Boone County Coal Heritage Museum and Arts Center, and the annual UMWA Labor Day celebration in Racine. And some one hundred people took the Mine Wars Museum’s walking tour of Matewan and heard from board members Chuck Keeney and Wilma Steele.

According to Director New-Walker, “The whole planning process was incredible, including building a community around this history and creating new narratives about our state and its people.”

The Blair Centennial was an incredible, energizing, and powerful series of events that will long be remembered by many.

In front of the UMWA Local 1440 hall, Lorena Williams, as Mother Jones, fires up a crowd of over 100 people who showed up for a walking tour of Matewan.
This year, the Solidarity Gallery was proud to host an exhibit of new paintings by artist Chris DeMaria, *I Come Creeping.*

Inspired by his family roots on Cabin Creek during the 1912-1913 strike, DeMaria beautifully captured some of the historical figures of the Mine Wars in his oil paintings, and enthusiasts stepped up and bought every painting in the show, with DeMaria generously donating a portion of the proceeds to the museum.

This series of work is my first attempt to make paintings of a historical event and the people involved. I had no idea where I would begin or end up with these paintings. I just knew that I really wanted to do it.

My Granny and all her people are from the Cabin Creek/Eskdale area. She never talked about her life growing up there. She never talked about her Dad, who worked as a miner until he was injured. I hadn’t heard of the Battle of Blair Mountain until I was an adult. They didn’t teach us about the Mine Wars in West Virginia during the early part of the 20th Century.

A few years ago I found an interview with my Great Grandfather, Harry Mooney, gave to the Charleston Gazette in the 70s. He gave an account of his involvement in the Battle of Blair Mountain.

I went on to read up on the Battle, the Mine Wars and how my own family history was intertwined with these events.

I’m in reverence of how these women and men stood up for themselves, and what they stood up against. These paintings are my love letters to those brave people.
The first **Blair100 Core Team Meeting** of the year. The Core Team met periodically for the previous two years and every month in 2021 to plan the centennial events, marketing, and related materials.

Creative Director Shaun Slifer debuted the first in our new series of online exhibits, *Selections from the Museum*.

**April**

We opened to the first full season in the expanded space of a new building owned by UMWA Local 1440. This season would see **more than 1,400 visitors** tour what we came to call “Mine Wars Museum 2.0”

**May**

Season 2 of the **Mine Wars Forum**, a series of live interviews with host Chuck Keeney available on YouTube, kicked off with author Denise Giardina and would include UMWA President Cecil Roberts, Black in Appalachia producer William Isom, Creative Director Shaun Slifer, and the organizers of Blair Centennial events.

**June**

The museum hosted a dinner for donors in the hall of UMWA Local 1440 before a presentation by photographer Roger May about his *Mine Wars Before & Now* exhibition of photographs in the Solidarity Gallery. Beautiful prints of the photographs were given to donors.

June 30, 2021, will long be remembered by the museum’s members, staff, and board as the day of the **Cecil E. Roberts Building Dedication Ceremony.** UMWA Local 1440 hosted UMWA President Roberts and his staff members in Matewan, attracting a large crowd of supporters. The town was so lively, and the museum was buzzing with visitors, including President Roberts himself.

**July**

The Blair Centennial Core Team finalized the design and content of the glossy color **Blair Centennial Commemorative Journal**, which includes a map of Mine Wars sites, a brief history of the Mine Wars, thoughts on the centennial from Chuck Keeney, and a long list of centennial supporters.

**August**

The Blair Centennial kicked off with two virtual events. One was a discussion of the role of Mother Jones in the events surrounding Blair Mountain, hosted by the Mother Jones Heritage Project, and the other was a discussion of recently published books by Mine Wars Museum staff and board members, hosted by the Battle of Homestead Foundation.

We announced **The Land Will Tell the Story: Beneath the Soil of Blair Mountain**, an online exhibit of our entire collection of archaeological materials from the Blair Mountain Battlefield archaeology, curated and designed by Shaun Slifer and grad student Ethan Karnes.

**September**

The Blair100 Centennial weekend at long last! Labor Day weekend, 2021. The largest event series in West Virginia history, three years in the making, involving more than 25 partner organizations, and led by the Blair100 Core Team and the West Virginia Mine Wars Museum’s Executive Director Kenzie New Walker. The weekend was a resounding success that included a film festival at Marshall University, a kickoff concert and tabling in the Charleston Civic Center, a walking tour of Matewan, and exhibits, performances, and events by the partner organizations throughout the state and beyond.

Artist **Chris DeMaria** spoke at the museum during the Blair100 weekend to launch his exhibition of paintings *I Come Creeping*: scenes and portraits of major figures of the Mine Wars.

The Mine Wars Museum was featured in the *New York Times, twice!* Once in an article by Abby Lee Hood about Blair Mountain, and once in an article by Campbell Robertson covering the Blair100 weekend.

**November**

The **Red Bandana Awards** were presented once again live online. This year’s awards went to Sister Gretchen and Sister Cathy of the Big Laurel Learning Center, posthumously to singer-songwriter Elaine Purkey, and to union activist and steadfast museum supporter Terry Steele, of UMWA Local 1440.
We were chosen as one of ten organizations in the US to participate in Monument Lab’s 2022 Re:Generation project, a nationwide participatory public art and history initiative that elevates people shaping the next generation of monuments reckoning with and reimagining public memory. With a $10K grant in hand, we launched **Courage in the Hollers**, to begin the longterm work of memorializing the 90-mile march that led to the Battle of Blair Mountain in the rural Appalachian landscape in which it happened!

Coalfield Development purchased the three-building block at the end of Mate Street in Matewan, a storied location recognized locally for being the last location of the Nenni Department Store, and having sat abandoned for years. The Museum has agreed to begin developing an interpretive center on the second floor of the middle building, where Sid and Jessie Hatfield shared an apartment in 1920-21, as well as work with Fairmont-based muralist Joel Dugan to create a community-led mural in the main staircase.