

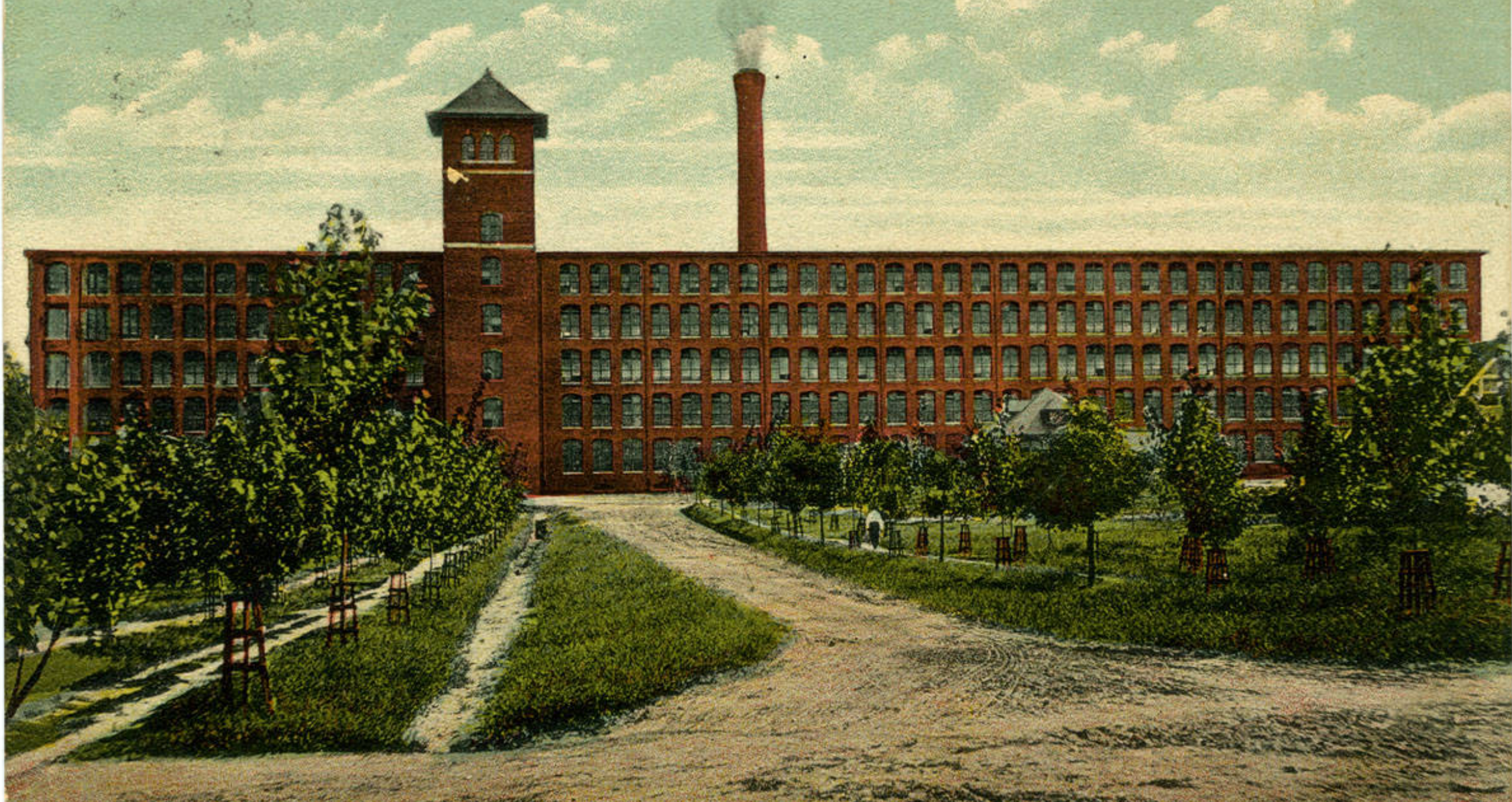
Ella May and the Loray Mill Strike



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Gastonia, N. C., Loray Cotton Mill (57,000 Spindles)



Loray School.

The Loray Company is preparing to open and maintain a school for the benefit of the children of its employees. The partitions will be removed from one of the cottages and the room fitted up for school purposes with new desks and seats. Miss Bertha L. Johnson, whose home is with the family of Chief Engineer L. A. States, has been chosen to teach the school. She is an experienced teacher in city schools, and a most accomplished lady. We trust, and believe, that she will find her work very pleasant.

From an April 4, 1902
newspaper

With a blooming population settling at Loray, there was more pressure for the company to provide necessary services like schools.

The Mill Mother's Lament



ELLA MAY WIGGINS 09/17/1900 - 09/14/1929, "SHE DIED CARRYING THE TORCH OF SOCIAL JUSTICE", MARTYR OF THE 1929 LORAY MILLS STRIKE, GASTONIA, NC

- According to Ella May, what problems exist with working in Loray Mill?
- How are these problems impacting workers' lives, particularly the lives of working mothers?
- What picture of mill work does this song paint overall?
- What do you think Ella's purpose was in writing this song? What did she hope to accomplish? (Make sure students not only discuss a higher wage, but also the mention of unionizing.)
- What risks did Ella take by writing this song?
- Why do you think Ella is calling for a union? What do you already know about unions?
- How might the mill owners respond to this song?
- What connection do you think this song and the sentiments express have to the warm up image?

Workers Resist Efficiency Report Recommendations

The stretchout started in February and almost immediately workers protested the new working conditions and their hated mill manager, Gordon Johnstone. Even after Johnstone left in August, tensions between workers and management continued to worsen.

Weavers of Loray Mills Go On Strike
Gastonia, N. C., March 6—While striking weavers remained adamant in their refusal to return to their tasks today, officials of the Loray Mills here were inclined to deprecate the strike and expressed the opinion that the trouble would blow over in short time.

The weavers went on strike yesterday with a demand for a restoration of wage scales and a reduction in the number of looms one man was required to operate. General Manager E. A. Johnstone said only one department of the mill was affected by the strike. A conference yesterday between the strikers and mill officials broke up without an agreement being reached.

There was no disorder around the mill last night.



The children of Ella May Wiggins, September 1929. From left: Albert, Myrtle, baby Charlotte, Millie, Clyde.

Millican Pictorial History Museum

Discussion Stations

- What did you learn about working at Loray Mill based on this quote?
- What might you infer this person wants?
- What additional questions do you have based on this excerpt in general, and/or what questions would you like to ask this particular mill worker?
- How do you think a mill owner may have responded and why?

LABOR DEFENDER

SEPT. 1929

10¢



MOBILIZE *TO* FREE
THE GASTONIA PRISONERS

SIXTEEN STRIKERS AND ORGANIZERS
OF THE NATIONAL TEXTILE WORKERS UNION,
FACE DEATH AND LONG IMPRISONMENT!

DEFEAT THE BOSSES CONSPIRACY
TO PREVENT ORGANIZING THE SOUTH
DEFEND THE RIGHT TO ORGANIZE !

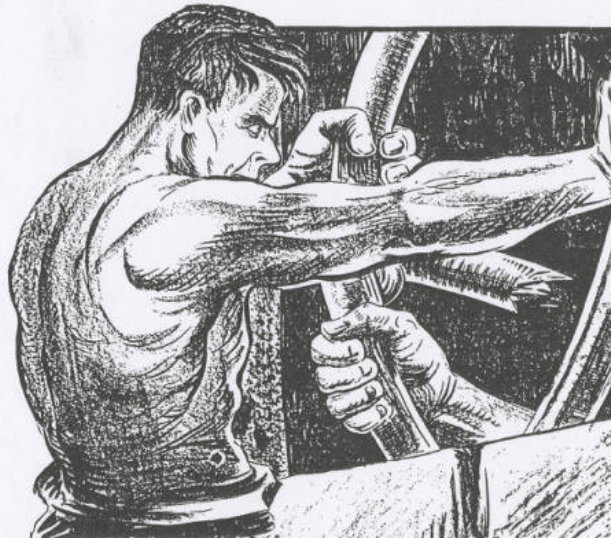
Smash the Murder Frame-up!

Defend the Gastonia Textile Workers!

14 SOUTHERN TEXTILE STRIKERS
(Members of the National Textile Workers Union)
CHARGED WITH MURDER FACE THE ELECTRIC CHAIR

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8 OTHERS FACE LONG PRISON TERMS

All the organizers and leading strikers, members of the National Textile Workers Union have been arrested on the murder charge. The workers have been driven from their tent colony. The police of Gastonia, upon the direct orders of the mill owners attacked the workers' headquarters and their tent colony, fired shots into the tents, where women and children were sleeping and began shooting at the strikers and beating them with their guns. In the struggle which followed, Chief of Police Aderholt was killed. The first to fall wounded in the attack of the policeman was an organizer for the N.T.W.U., Joseph Harrison.

DEFEND THE RIGHT OF THE SOUTHERN WORKERS TO ORGANIZE!

A mass Sacco-Vanzetti frame-up in Gastonia.

The entire American working class is challenged
The International Labor Defense is defending these heroic strikers.

The 14 Southern Textile Workers shall not die—All must be freed at once.—Their cause is your cause.

Thousands of dollars are needed to defend these militant strikers.

RUSH ALL FUNDS to the NATIONAL OFFICE of the

INTERNATIONAL LABOR DEFENSE

80 East 11th Street, New York, N. Y.

INTERNATIONAL LABOR DEFENSE,

National Office: 80 E. 11th St., New York.

I hereby enclose \$ _____ for the Gastonia Defense.

Name _____

Address _____

City and State _____