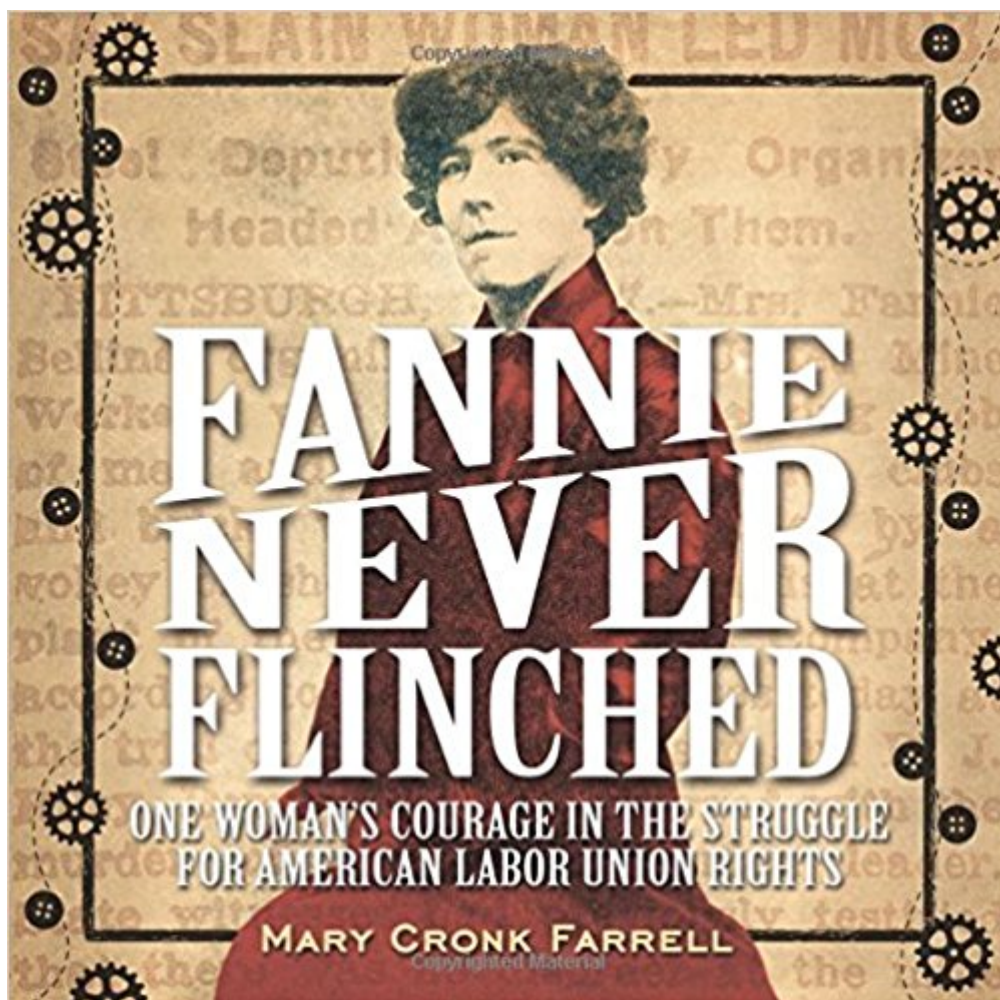




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# Fannie Never Flinched: One Woman's Courage In The Struggle For American Labor Union Rights



## Synopsis

Fannie Sellins (1872–1919) lived during the Gilded Age of American Industrialization, when the Carnegies and Morgans wore jewels while their laborers wore rags. Fannie dreamed that America could achieve its ideals of equality and justice for all, and she sacrificed her life to help that dream come true. Fannie became a union activist, helping to create St. Louis, Missouri, Local 67 of the United Garment Workers of America. She traveled the nation and eventually gave her life, calling for fair wages and decent working and living conditions for workers in both the garment and mining industries. Her accomplishments live on today. This book includes an index, glossary, a timeline of unions in the United States, and endnotes.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Gr 4–6 • The narrative begins with the murder of Fannie Sellins by deputies in Natrona, PA, in 1919 and then goes back 20 years to when Sellins first started working at the Marx and Haas garment factory and helped form the local United Garment Workers of America (UGWA) in St. Louis. Sellins moved up the UGWA ladder and traveled the country talking about the plight of factory workers: long days, low pay, and unsafe working conditions. Word of Sellins's abilities reached coal country, where she visited. Sellins supported the coal miners' efforts to unionize. When mine owners brought up scabs from the South, she chased their car along the railroad tracks, yelling at them not to break the coal miners' strike. Though there was no justice for her death, her memory lives on in coal country. In her author's note, Farrell details why she wrote about Sellins and discusses the difficulties she faced in finding reliable information about her subject's personal

life. The text is matter-of-fact in tone, with captioned black-and-white photos and newsprint ads. The beige background features buttons, cogs, and stitches along the bottom of each page, and the end pages are scraps of seamed blue fabric. VERDICT An essential purchase for public or large school libraries interested in workers' rights and social justice. —Tamara Saarinen, Pierce County Library, WA

"A cogent, well-documented, handsomely designed treatment of a heretofore forgotten hero of labor." (Kirkus) \*\*STARRED REVIEW\*\* "An essential purchase for public or large school libraries interested in workers' rights and social justice." (School Library Journal) \*\*STARRED REVIEW\*\* "The author may be addressing this stirring story of an early union activist Fannie Sellins (1872-1919) to middle-schoolers, but the rigor of her approach yields a book with solid scholarly feature." (Publishers Weekly) \*\*STARRED REVIEW\*\* "Readers interested in the history of workers' rights shouldn't miss this entrée to the subject, which is bolstered by a timeline of labor struggles, source notes, and other resources." (Booklist) "A useful resource for students researching the violent era of American labor history." (Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books)

This was well written for youth. My book club read it and discussed just last evening with the author Mary Farrell.

Originally reviewed at Kid Lit Reviews; Received Fannie Never Flinched from the publisher in exchange for an Honest review. History books are full of famous people who have accomplished extraordinary things. History books also lack many influential people in niche markets who helped changed the way Americans live and work. One such person was Fannie Sellins. Fannie lived during the industrial revolution and the days of powerful men like J. P. Morgan, Andrew Carnegie, and John D. Rockefeller — all famous industrialists who helped America grow. Fannie was never a friend to these men, and probably not well liked by them. As they and others grew their steel, clothing, coal, and other businesses, Sellins was trying to make the playing field between owner and worker more equitable. Fannie Sellins was a union organizer — activist better describes her work. This meant much more than it did in the fifties. Sellins helped families survive while on strike, made sure workers' children had proper clothing, shoes, and food. She was moral support for the wives and tried to keep the contentious field between owners — hired guns and strikers peaceful. It was extremely difficult work.

Unimaginable work. In the end, angry “police” took Fannie Sellins’ life in a one-sided heated battle, in cold blood. Fannie Never Flinched is apropos for a woman steadfast in her ideals and unwavering in her support of those who trusted her. Readers will learn of a woman most history books never mention, but should be between those pages under unsung heroes. She helped improve the working conditions and the wages of American workers in her original field of garment sewing and other fields such as coal mining and carpentry. Sellins fought for children, many of whom never went to school, but instead worked to help feed their family. Teachers will find Fannie Never Flinched a wonderful adjunct text while teaching the industrial revolution or the beginnings of organized labor. Filled with actual newspaper clippings, still readable, photographs, and eyewitness testimony, Fannie Never Flinched is mesmerizing. Mary Cronk Farrell wrote Fannie Never Flinched for kids, in a manner easily understood by the age group intended, and for adults, who will find Sellins’ story heartbreaking, deplorable, unjust, sad, and un-American. Farrell does not take sides when writing about the incident in which Sellins lost her life. She writes the facts as though she were there, a reporter, after-the-fact, which she was. Yet, thanks to all her trustworthy research, what happened on that awful day is easy to surmise and horrible to believe. Not every hero survives. More importantly, all of Fannie Sellins’ hard work on behalf of the average American worker, children, and families is no longer lost. Mary Cronk Farrell, thanks to Fannie Never Flinched, and her other titles, may be one today’s most influential and important historians in children’s literature.

I rarely check the categories a book belongs to when I’m checking out books at the Overdrive library, so whoops, I grabbed this, not realizing it was for kids. BUT. I learned about a new person and am motivated to do further research on this time period’s labor union rights.

This book is absolutely fantastic. It’s beautiful, the content is thoroughly researched, and it’s an incredible story of courage, valor, and universal rights. This book is perfect for students, but it’s also a great read for anyone interested in labor rights and the historical influence of amazing women!

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