

BATTLEFIELDS OF CLASS CONFLICT: LUDLOW THEN AND NOW

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ABSTRACT

In April 1914, a tent colony of striking coal miners at Ludlow, Colorado was the setting of the most notorious example of open class warfare in American History. This paper explores some dimensions of the conflict as revealed by archaeological investigations at the Ludlow Massacre Memorial. We consider the tactical strategies used by Labor and Capital to gain advantage in the conflict, as well as the survival strategies employed by ordinary people in harm's way. We also address recent vandalism at the Memorial which suggests that, ninety years later, the Ludlow ground remains a contested landscape.

The Colorado Coal Field War is a little known yet significant event in American labor history. Hostilities between striking miners and state militiamen occurred between 20–30 April, 1914, but were nearly seven months in the making. They were triggered by the 20 April killing of men, women, and children at the Ludlow striker's camp, an event known as the Ludlow Massacre. For the next 10 days miners and militiamen fought pitched battles along a 40-mile front in the Colorado foothills. Peace was restored only when President Woodrow Wilson sent in federal troops to disarm both sides.

In this paper, we explore some dimensions of agency in this conflict as revealed by archaeological investigations at the Ludlow Tent Colony, a National Historic Register site located near the town of Trinidad in southeastern Colorado (Fig. 1). Our interest is in the tactical strategies used by Labor and Capital to gain advantage in the conflict, as well as the survival strategies employed by ordinary people in harm's way. We identify future research directions, and offer some general implications of our work for an anthropological understanding of industrial warfare and other cases of 'internal' conflict. We also consider Ludlow's status as a contested landscape in *contemporary* class conflict. Recent vandalism of the site's stone monument provides an entry point for considering the nature of public memory in America and archaeology's important role in the struggle over what, and how, we remember.

Ludlow Then

The definitive history of the Colorado Coal Field War is provided by McGovern and Guttridge (1972; see also Papanikolas 1982, Gitelman 1988,

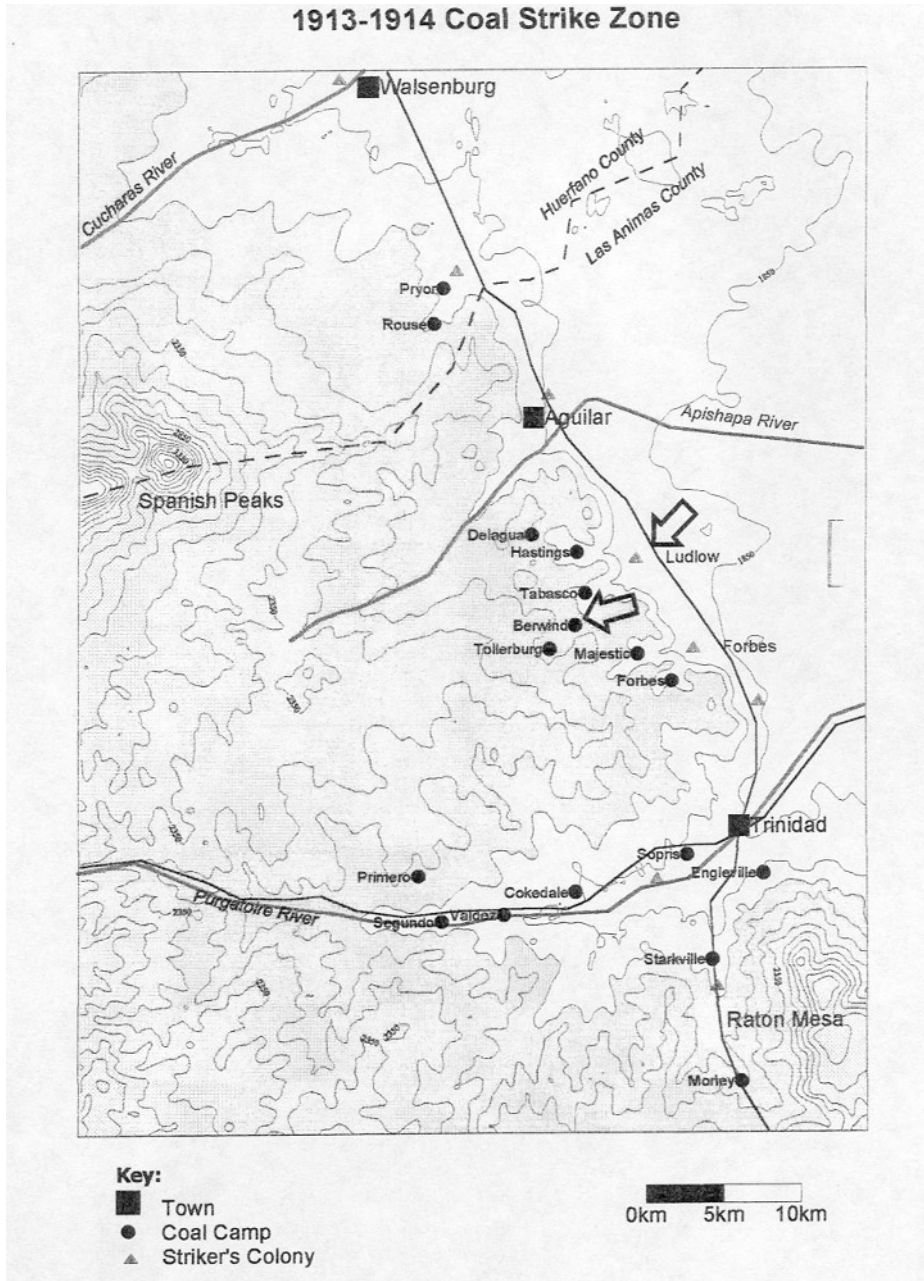


Fig. 1. Map of the Ludlow area showing coal camps and striker tent colonies. Courtesy Mark Walker

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Long 1989). The Ludlow Tent Colony was the largest of a dozen tent camps that housed 10,000 striking coal miners and their families between September 1913 and December 1914 (Plate 1). Ludlow numbered 200 tents and about 1,200 people. The miners were recent immigrants to the United States, of largely southern and eastern European descent. Miners were striking to raise pay, improve safety conditions in the mines, and gain United Mine Workers union recognition. In 1913, Colorado mines were the second most dangerous in the nation after Utah. Workers were dying at twice the national average and four times the rate of unionized mines (Whiteside 1990). In fact, Colorado miners were at greater risk of dying on the job than they were when shooting it out with state militiamen while on strike—a telling commentary on the state of industrial relations in early 20th century America.

Violence characterized the strike right from the beginning. Partisans on both sides of the Labor-Capital split were murdered on the streets of Trinidad beginning in late 1913. On April 20, 1914 hostilities came to head. On that day more than twenty people, including two women and eleven children, were killed when the Colorado militia attacked and burned the Ludlow tent colony in what may have been a premeditated attempt to break the strike. By that time, the militia had been almost totally co-opted by the coal operators (principally, the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company, or C, F&I) and their hired



Plate 1. The Ludlow tent colony, 1913. (Denver Public Library, Western History Collection)

agents and mercenaries. The Ludlow Massacre is perhaps the most notorious example of open class warfare in American history.

Our theoretical touchstone for this investigation is some themes in the geography of class struggle. These themes are provided by Harvey (2000), Williams (1989), and others who have theorized the social dynamics of *place* and *space*. The dynamics of place are distinct from the dynamics of space. Place is local, while space is regional and global. Archaeological data, of course, are uniquely sensitive to both.

During the Coal Field War space and place were differentially controlled by Capital and Labor. Prior to the development of the railroad and telegraph, Capital and Labor had roughly comparable abilities to command *space*. However, with the development of these technologies, the superior trading connections of Capital gave it an edge. These technologies allowed Capital to quickly move armed force to sites of working class unrest, and to spread information useful in eliminating other kinds of worker resistance. Labor sought to counter these tactics by transferring material aid from one site of class struggle to another. The Ludlow strike depended upon, but was eventually derailed by, such transfers of resources.

Labor is much better at controlling *place*. Ties of kin and community link workers to family and friends employed in local business, health care, law enforcement, and so on. The problem for Labor has always been to connect particular local struggles—what Williams calls ‘militant particularisms’—to a general struggle; that is, to link labor action at a variety of places in a way that leads to wider control of space. For workers, such control has to be built up by negotiation between different place-specific demands, concerns, and aspirations, and in ways immune to corruption by more powerful interests.

Capital’s control of space in the southern coal field was secured in a number of ways. The strike zone was quarantined, hindering the flow of resources to strikers. State and local political support was purchased as a way to establish local authority. Union supplies were deliberately delayed on highways and railways. Rail stations were guarded to intercept agitators, and some, like the famous American labor activist Mother Jones, were imprisoned and/or deported. Baldwin-Felts detectives—specialists in breaking coal strikes—were brought in from West Virginia. Strikebreakers were imported from across the country and abroad. Finally, the coal companies used their powers of quarantine and spatial control to mount a campaign of harassment against the strikers. This harassment took the form of high-powered searchlights that played on the tent colonies at night, strategically placed machine gun nests, and use of the ‘Death Special’, an improvised armored car that periodically sprayed the colonies with machine gun fire. The purpose of this harassment was to goad the strikers

into violent action, which would provide a pretext for the Colorado Governor to call out the state militia. Amid steadily escalating violence in the coalfields and pressure from the coal companies, that is exactly what happened in late 1913.

Labor's control of place was also facilitated in a number of ways. Most important was tapping the good will of local citizens. Local ranchers leased to the UMW the land upon which tent colonies were established, at places convenient for intercepting trains of strikebreakers coming into the canyons. The colonies were furnished with tents and ovens recycled from coal strikes in other states. Sympathetic citizens sheltered colonists after the massacre and tended to their medical needs. Others took up arms with the strikers in retaliation for the massacre.

At Ludlow, our aim is to test these historical observations about strategies of class struggle in the coalfield and investigate other ways—perhaps unrecorded by history—in which strikers might have been coping with their circumstances.

Historical photos reveal that cellars up to six feet deep were dug beneath the Ludlow tents. Historians suggest that these cellars were used as shelter from gunfire. Excavation of tent cellar locations reveals a variety of uses beyond protection, including storage and possibly habitation. Sub-floor features range in size from small 'hidey-holes' to full basements. The latter are very well constructed, often containing wall niches for extra storage. All things considered, the miners were clearly staked to place, and dug in for the long haul.

We are especially interested in what dietary remains at Ludlow can tell us about patterns of local interaction and support, specifically the extent to which strikers may have drawn on local merchants and other sources. Our trash pit and midden excavations reveal an enormous reliance on canned foods, much more than what we see in working class contexts in the nearby company town of Berwind, where we are conducting comparative work. Some of this canned food is undoubtedly Union-supplied. At the same time, some deep features contain lots of evidence for home canning, such as mason jars. This implies access to local farmers or gardens for fresh vegetables and fruit. Similarly, cow bones showing up in Ludlow deposits—and the fact that they usually represent inferior cuts of meat—may suggest donations from area ranchers.

It is interesting to consider the strikers' use of canned foods—especially national name-brand products—as a possible cover for local support in the form of prepared foods and garden and ranch products. The tent colonies were subject to search, and thus any distinctive, locally-produced goods could have been traced to particular merchants. In his work on marginalized households in Annapolis, Maryland, Mullins (1999) shows that African Americans

purchased national name-brand, price-controlled foods as a way to avoid exploitation by local merchants. Strikers at Ludlow may have done the same, but in this instance as a strategy to protect local, striker-friendly merchants from harassment by invasive coal company operatives and the Colorado Militia.

Our most direct evidence of local connections lies in beer and whiskey bottles, whose embossing and labeling reflects Trinidad origins. The frequency of alcohol bottles is higher at Ludlow compared to what we see in working class precincts in Berwind. Greater alcohol consumption at Ludlow reflects either the relatively greater freedom of workers from company surveillance given their control of place or, alternatively, efforts to relieve boredom and stress under siege-like conditions. However, it is interesting to note that liquor bottles cluster in the upper stratigraphic layers of deposits, suggesting that they may have originally belonged not to encamped miners but rather to those militiamen who looted and burned the camp on the evening of the massacre.

Of perhaps more direct interest to an archaeology of conflict are the weapons and tactics employed by the combatants. Documentary and photographic evidence indicate that strikers were armed with Winchester rifles and shotguns, and militiamen with Springfield service rifles and steel-jacketed bullets. Although an 'arms race' characterized the months leading up to the massacre, we do not know the full firepower of the strikers and we are looking for the archaeology to clarify that. Even less well-known are troop movements on the day of the massacre and after. Our ability to reconstruct battle tactics has been hamstrung by the reluctance of landowners to grant access to the militia camp located within eyeshot of Ludlow, and to adjacent railroad cuts. We know that workers took up positions in railroad cuts on 20 April as a way to draw militia machine gun fire away from the tent colony. Documents also mention trenches existing on the perimeter of the colony. Further radar and metal detector survey might help clarify tactical movements and positions. We also know that strikers sought refuge in the nearby Black Hills during the night of 20 April, and from here they may have staged attacks against coal towns during the following 10 days of open warfare. Survey in these and other surrounding hills will add to our understanding of miner troop movements and their coordination during the 10-day war.

Once peace was restored by federal troops, the strike continued for another eight months. It ended in December 1914 when strikes in other, widely separated places diverted the UMW's attention and resources. This is consistent with Labor's spatial disadvantage: it can move control from one place to another, but it is hard-pressed to consolidate simultaneous command over multiple places that would serve as a basis for challenging the spatial control

of Capital. In time, Capital itself moved on. It closed the southern coal fields and moved operations to the northern fields in Wyoming. Today, railcars full of this northern coal rumble several times daily past the ruined Ludlow depot, and our excavations.

Our study of the Colorado Coal Field War is a work in progress. We have much to do to substantiate the various kinds of material support that the besieged Ludlow colonists received from outside sources, as well as their novel, 'home grown' support strategies. The same holds for the question of battlefield logistics and tactics, which certainly will require expansion of research beyond the tent colony itself. We have, however, already made some novel contributions to understanding working class strategizing in the coalfields that supplement the documentary record. For example, Wood's (2002) study of household deposits at Berwind shows how working class women in the company towns were able to raise families on miner's wages that would not even feed two people. Trash dating before the strike contains lots of tin cans, large cooking pots, and big serving vessels. Families took in single male miners as boarders to make the extra income and women used canned foods to make stews and soups to feed them. After the strike the companies discouraged boarders but the wages still remained very low. The tin cans and big pots disappear from the trash to be replaced by canning jars and lids, and the bones of rabbits, and chickens. Women and children who could no longer earn money from boarders instead produced food at home to feed the family. Other working class strategies may have been consciously developed around cultural identity. Preliminary analysis of ceramic remains from one cellar at Ludlow suggests that colonists were resisting 'Americanizing' influences in turn-of-the-century immigrant life that elsewhere were expressed by the embracing of a Georgian order in foodways and associated material culture (Gray 2005). Other insights into working class life and culture will likely emerge as we delve more deeply into analysis of archaeological remains from both Berwind and Ludlow.

Whether we will have anything new to contribute to general anthropological theories of warfare remains an open question. Certainly we can contribute to what Otterbein (2003) calls 'internal conflict theory' by identifying variation in the strategies used by contending groups to control space and place under conditions of internecine warfare. We can also contribute to more holistic theories of warfare that bring together materialist and idealist or psychological motivations for conflict. Ember and Ember's (1992) model combining resource unpredictability and 'socialization for fear' is relevant here. This model has been put to good use by Lekson (2002) in his study of post-Chacoan warfare in the ancient American Southwest. Both variables are relevant in the Colorado

coalfields. Resource unpredictability produced the coal field strike and resource scarcity ended it. Fear of violent death underground, the explosive racism of early 20th century America, and the ‘cultures of masculine violence’ (Jameson 1998) that shaped behaviour on both sides of the Capital-Labor split created a volatile mix that certainly escalated hostilities. Both variables can be archaeologically tracked in the coalfields in ways that benefit general theory.

Ludlow Now

Ludlow is of scholarly interest because it promises to add to our knowledge of past industrial conflict. Ludlow also serves as an entry point for understanding *contemporary* class conflict. Because of the event’s historical significance, memory of the Ludlow Massacre is an integral element of working class identity in southern Colorado. The 40 acres occupied by the former tent colony is considered sacred ground for the ‘descendant community’ of coal miners in Colorado, and unionists everywhere. On the last Sunday of every June since 1918, union members, labor activists, and sympathetic citizens from around the country have converged on the site to remember the Ludlow dead and rally support for contemporary causes. Ludlow is thus a ‘living memorial’ and an important site of struggle—at least for hearts and minds—in the great historical conflict between Labor and Capital.

This importance was demonstrated by events in May 2003. Sometime between caretaker’s rounds on May 7 and May 8, the granite monument commemorating the massacre at Ludlow was vandalized by parties who remain unknown. Two figures that anchor the monument—a miner and a woman cradling a child in her arms—were decapitated (Plate 2). At present, the Las Animas County Sheriff’s Department and Trinidad police have no reliable leads as to the identity of the vandals, despite a \$5,000 reward for information.

At the annual memorial service on June 29, 2003 unionists in southern Colorado were out in force to rally around their desecrated monument. An estimated 400 people constituted the largest turnout in recent memory. Various speakers put the significance of the monument in historical context and urged support for restoration. In a particularly stirring speech, United Mineworkers President Cecil Roberts described the Ludlow dead as ‘American heroes’ and ‘freedom fighters’. He compared the Ludlow Memorial to the Vietnam Memorial, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, and the Lincoln Memorial in that the Ludlow strikers died for basic workplace rights that most Americans enjoy—but take for granted—today. Representatives of several unions presented donations to aid in the memorial restoration effort.

It can be extremely difficult to ascertain the motivations behind vandalism



Plate 2. Vandalized monument at the Ludlow Massacre Memorial. Courtesy of Dean Saitta

at public monuments. Much can be classified as opportunistic, including gratuitous destruction by drunks and thrill-seekers. While there is no direct evidence that the vandalism at Ludlow was anti-union, old-timers in the area say that the vandalism ‘feels’ anti-union. The visitor logbook at the Memorial certainly records its share of anti-union sentiments. Suspicion of anti-union sentiment is also warranted given that Ludlow has been used as a potent symbol in a protracted strike by steelworkers in Pueblo, Colorado—about 90 miles north of Trinidad—against Rocky Mountain Steel Mills, the direct corporate descendant of C, F&I. The symbolism of Ludlow resonates in this strike in that the steelworkers have been fighting forced overtime and thus trying to regain one of the basic rights for which the Ludlow strikers died: the eight hour workday. Steelworkers participate in the annual Ludlow memorial service, and it has been suggested that replacement workers at the Pueblo plant committed the vandalism out of anger at strikers preparing to participate in the 29 June event (Green 2004). It took some time, but Ludlow’s powerful symbolism eventually dawned on steel company management at its highest level. Faced with hard bargaining in contract negotiations, Joe Corvin, a former president of Rocky Mountain Steel Mills, commented about the steelworkers that, “They’re still mad about the Ludlow Massacre. We never thought about that. That culture is still there” (Strom 2000).

Even if the vandalism at Ludlow was not anti-union *it might as well have been*, given the climate of the times in America today (Saitta 2004a). Political conditions are such that labor unions rightly fear for their future. Union protections are being denied to workers in several industries, pension funds are at risk of depletion through privatization, and funding to ensure worker safety—even in the aftermath of well-publicized mining accidents in Alabama (Firestone 2001) and Pennsylvania—is being cut. Intolerance of, and hostility against, migrant workers is on the rise. But Labor has been here before, and the Ludlow Memorial was peaceful for 85 years before the vandalism, so the question of anti-union motivation remains open.

Perhaps a more tractable indicator of persistent anti-Labor sentiment in America is media response to cases of labor monument vandalism. The vandalism at Ludlow provoked universal outrage in union circles, received widespread coverage on independent news websites, and was the focus of a long article in the Mexican newspaper *La Cronica* (Delarbre 2003). Yet the national mainstream press outside of Colorado was resoundingly silent. This is notable if only because the *New York Times*’ index of articles about the massacre over a three month period in 1914 consumed six broadsheet pages of small print (Long 1989: 308). Vandalism at public memorials is generally newsworthy stuff. Even though labor memorials are fewer, farther between, and much

more modest than other kinds of memorials, we know from scholarly and informal channels that they take their share of hits. For example, the United Auto Workers memorial to Flint, Michigan strikers has been a frequent target for vandalism. A plaque dedicated to pro-labor martyrs at the site of the 1886 Haymarket Bombing in Chicago has been damaged multiple times by vandals. There is a tradition of coal miner memorials being dismantled not by vandals but by civic authorities in Harlan County, Kentucky and Windber, Pennsylvania (e.g. Beik 1999).

Given this, it is not unreasonable to expect some proportionality in the reporting of incidents. However, this is not the case. A search of the Lexis-Nexis Academic Universe database and other on-line resources for reports of public monument vandalism produced 260 relevant items. The vast majority of these referred to monuments having distinctly ethnic, religious, and military associations. Only one item in 260 had a labor history or class conflict dimension. This item described a series of attacks on a San Diego public park in the spring of 2003. The vandals defaced a statue of Cesar Chavez and a mural honoring Mexican workers who died trying to immigrate into the U.S. However, the text of the article focused on the anti-Mexican dimension of the crime, rather than its labor/class dimensions. That is, it reflected a 'racial', rather than class, consciousness.

A search of national and regional newspapers produced similar results; that is, heavy reporting of desecrations at churches, cemeteries, and war memorials. We found only one report of vandalism of a labor-related marker, again involving Cesar Chavez. The incident involved the defacement of a marker sign for the Cesar Chavez Memorial Highway in 1999 near Corpus Christi in south Texas. Here, the writer made reference to Chavez's labor activism, but nonetheless emphasized the growth of a 'wider Hispanic civil rights movement' as Chavez's legacy. A local politician who picketed with Chavez in the early 1970s expressed his shock and anger at the crime by comparing the hatefulness of the Chavez vandalism to that of the desecration of a Jewish cemetery. Thus, the event's significance was also conceptualized in distinctly ethnic and racial, rather than working class, terms.

Of course, none of this is entirely surprising. Because of the progressive and triumphal nature of 'official' American public history—a public history aided by the dominant American ideology of class mobility, and often abetted by civic authorities and philanthropic industrialists—we should expect working class history to be a hidden and/or displaced element in media reporting of monument vandalism, in the educational system, and in popular discourse generally. American history textbooks tend to underplay Ludlow, if mentioning it at all. Our on-site interviews with visitors to the Ludlow Massacre

Memorial also indicate the event's status as hidden history. Seventy percent of site visitors expect to find a monument to American *Indian Wars*—another Custer battlefield, perhaps—rather than a monument to American labor wars. This ignorance runs deep, and even extends to senior lawmakers in the Colorado Legislature who, though born and raised in the state, have confessed to knowing little of Ludlow, what happened there, and why it is important.

Organized labor has long been aware that its history is under constant threat of erasure. Memory is mapped physically, through the mnemonics of material culture, from artifacts to the landscape. Official history can be an overwhelming physical presence through historic markers, museums, and public ceremonies. Within two years of the massacre, miners were expressing concern that Ludlow would disappear from public memory (Walker 2003). The construction of the monument was a deliberate effort to ensure that this would not occur. Over the years, unions and working class communities have invested what might appear to be a surprising amount of effort in memorials and monuments to commemorate significant labor events (Green 1995; AFL-CIO 1999; Labor Heritage Foundation n.d.). Memory takes continuous work. A monument soon drifts into 'invisibility' through habitual viewing (Hallam and Hockey 2001: 8). The annual ceremonies at Ludlow serve to keep the meaning of the monument alive, and as a shout against the silence. The need for Ludlow to be remembered is still a powerful refrain. For example, a recent song about Ludlow, on a compact disc put out to benefit the striking steelworkers in Pueblo, was entitled 'Don't You Ever Forget' (Fetty 2001).

Thus, the memory of Ludlow parallels the geographic dynamic of overt labor struggle described in the first part of this paper. Ludlow has been written out of the 'space' of national memory, but remains a vital and living 'place' in the memory of organized labor. The question now is what politically-engaged archaeologists can do to reclaim and expand the space for labor history in national memory. Many eloquent and sensible pleas for engaging the unhappy events of our past have been made by historians. The New Western Historian Patricia Limerick has been in the forefront of this cause, suggesting that the more we critically deconstruct and demythologize the American past the more we honour it (Limerick 1998). Others suggest that blind allegiance to 'Fourth of July historiography'—one that celebrates heroic events and suppresses horrific ones—is not befitting a genuine democracy (e.g. Dower 1995). Archaeologists have recently picked up on this theme, suggesting that more inclusive interpretations of the past are possible if we turn our attention to neglected histories, such as that of Labor (Shackel 2004).

In the first edition of his book *Shadowed Ground*—the most comprehensive analysis of labor memorials and their place in the American commemorative

landscape—Foote (1997) suggested that although the overwhelming majority of significant events in American labor history remain unrecalled in official memory and unmarked on the nation's landscape, there was cause for optimism. The great industrialists are dead, we have a better awareness of how economic development threatens historic resources, and a 1991 U.S. House of Representatives report conceded that 'the history of work and working people . . . is not adequately represented or preserved' in the United States (cited in Foote 1997: 303). These trends probably have something to do with the positive public response to our archaeological work since the Colorado Coal Field War project was initiated in 1997—coincidentally the same year that Foote's book was published. The Colorado Historical Society has been very generous in its support of our project for a variety of reasons that likely include Ludlow's sensitivity to the immigrant story in the American West, especially as it concerns industrialization (a phenomenon that still occupies a backseat to homesteading and ranching in the area's official commemorative landscape). Another state cultural institution—The Colorado Endowment for the Humanities—has also supported the project by sponsoring two summer institutes for teachers dedicated to developing a labor history curriculum for Colorado schools.

These positive trends now show signs of reversing, however. In the second edition of his book Foote (2003: 350) admits that since 1997 'efforts to expand the pantheon of labor leaders and the hall of honor of labor sites have not gone far'. Part of the reason may be the continuing lack of direct involvement by Organized Labor. Foote (1997: 304) notes that Organized Labor needs to be more heavily involved as an active agent if local, 'homegrown' markers are to become national markers having protected status. The late 1990s promised new and exciting activity on this front as Labor and American universities began to entertain prospects for a re-invigorated relationship (Tomasky 1997). However, since the national election of 2000 American Labor has had to face other battles for survival. Moreover, long-standing competition between unions for members within the same industry has never been conducive to building the kind of unity that is required to create a national narrative around Labor's history.

Another complicating factor at present is the resurgence of old-time triumphalism after 9/11 and a renewed championing of national consensus history. The intellectual heirs of Lynne Cheney and William Bennett—aggressive opponents of pluralism and inclusiveness in public history during their successive tenures as chairs of the National Endowment for the Humanities between 1981–93—are on the prowl. This time they are aided by a new *conservative* student activism on campus that is vigorously challenging what is portrayed

as a dangerous liberal bias among university humanities faculty. The latter threatens to chill the climate for politically-engaged teaching about American history, and impede efforts to build a relationship between the Academy and Organized Labor. Although the Colorado Endowment for the Humanities remains supportive of projects in subaltern history, future teacher institutes are on-hold while programs with greater purchase on the triumphal history of the American West—around the explorers John Wesley Powell and Lewis and Clark, for example—continue to run.

So what is to be done? Professional historians and archaeologists converge in recommending National Historic Landmark (NHL) status for labor history sites (Green 2004; Shackel 2004). This is easier said than done, especially at a time when, in keeping with the new triumphalism, NHL status is being rescinded for sites that potentially embarrass the reigning administration in Washington (Shackel 2004). Other issues surround who controls the interpretive message at NHL-designated sites. Minimally, we need to better tap into the ‘strong publics’ (Fraser 1990; see also Green 2004) that closely identify with the events commemorated at historical sites and who ‘have something to tell the rest of us about grief and loss, and the duty to remember’ (Green 2004: 15).

A potential rub is that these strong publics often invoke what might be termed ‘vernacular histories’ of the past (Bodnar 1992). Vernacular histories are local rather than national in orientation. They derive from the first-hand, everyday experience of people who were directly involved with history’s events. Vernacular histories usefully challenge and even threaten the sacred and timeless nature of official history. However, vernacular histories can be just as selective and exaggerated as official history in what gets remembered, and how. Vernacular histories in southern Colorado—many proffered by members of the descendant community of coal miners—emphasize the militia’s role in starting the shooting on April 20. They implicate the militia in many more atrocities against colonists on the day of the massacre, and count many more casualties in the conflict. They suggest, for example, that additional bodies were removed from Ludlow after the militia assault and subsequently deposited in unmarked graves on the Colorado prairie. Such accounts are often at odds with both the historical and archaeological records.

A safeguard against the potential excesses and polarizing effects of official and vernacular history is what we might term critical history. Critical history understands that facts are selectively filtered and interpreted in keeping with theoretical preconceptions and existing social realities. With their unique data base and hard-earned epistemological self-consciousness archaeologists are well-positioned to produce critical history. In our public lectures about the coalfield

war we are sensitive to the fact that there is not just one alternative to official history, but many. We involve the purveyors of official and vernacular histories in our summer teacher institutes, and we incorporate aspects of these accounts into our on-site interpretive materials. In these contexts we seek to build better history by negotiating between official, vernacular, and critical accounts in ways that are informed by archaeological data. This is so much the better for building and mobilizing even stronger publics in the cause of less selective and more democratic national remembrance. But doing so in southern Colorado and elsewhere also requires that we break with, or minimally put a more 'pragmatic' spin on, the realist epistemologies that currently unite practitioners across archaeology's theoretical spectrum (Saitta 2004b). That is, we need to be as sensitive to how our practice articulates with ways of living as we are to how it shapes ways of knowing. And, we might measure disciplinary progress less in terms of the accumulation of descriptive and explanatory knowledge (Hill 1991) and more in terms of our ability to respond to the needs of ever more inclusive groups of people (Rorty 1994: 81).

Conclusion

Our research at Ludlow engages class conflict in both the past and present. Archaeological fieldwork is contributing new insights about the Colorado Coalfield strike, especially as it concerns the day-to-day existential realities for miners in the shafts and families in the home. Our scholarly contributions are of a piece with wider disciplinary concerns to illuminate agency in the past. By producing knowledge about Labor's history and significant contributions to national life, we add to archaeology's body of descriptive and explanatory knowledge. These additions promise to expand the cast of characters involved in the making of America, thereby contributing to more democratic histories.

The other battle is to more broadly disseminate this knowledge in the public arena in an effort to show that the taken-for-granted workplace rights and privileges that Americans enjoy today have a history—and a bloody one at that (e.g. McGuire 2004; Saitta 2005). Recent vandalism at the Ludlow Massacre Memorial, regardless of that event's immediate causes, gives this public interpretive work a new relevance and immediacy. It suggests that, in one sense, things haven't changed that much after all. Post-9/11 resurgence of progressivist and triumphalist thought about American history—transparently offered as an antidote to criticisms of American exceptionalism—threaten to swamp recent democratizing trends in public history and memory. The battle today is first and foremost for hearts and minds, yet we are still balanced on

the edge of a precipice. A better understanding of class conflict in history—one enhanced by archaeology, and better translated as a piece of national memory—might allow useful interventions before we experience new waves of workplace terrorism and bloodshed.

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