

TEXT FOR THE BERWIND HISTORICAL MARKER

On this site stood the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company's coal camp of Berwind, established in 1888. The camp was named after Edward J. Berwind, president of the Colorado Coal and Iron Company, which was later bought out by CF&I. In 1901 the company established the Tabasco coal camp, located one-mile northwest of here on the Ludlow Branch of the Colorado and Southern Railway.

The camps were home to many ethnic groups. The largest group at Berwind were Italians. There were also large numbers of Eastern Europeans, Mexicans and Greeks. While men worked in the mines, women spent their days raising children, cooking, and cleaning. The presence of heavy air-borne coal dust and the absence of running water made for very unsanitary conditions in the household. Working conditions in the mines were exploitative and unsafe.

The terrible living and working conditions caused the miners to engage in a series of strikes. The 1913 strike was one of the most violent. On September 23, 1913, Berwind's strikers streamed into the Ludlow Tent Colony located at the mouth of this canyon to the east. This strike climaxed with the Ludlow Massacre of April 20, 1914, and eventually ended in December 1914. As a result of the strike living and working conditions improved in company towns throughout the U.S. Here in Berwind improvements included two new churches, two new schools, and a YMCA. However, the miners continued to suffer from low wages, layoffs, accidents, and fatalities.

During the 1920s and 1930s much of the United States switched to alternative power sources such as electricity and natural gas. As a result, in the late 1920s many of

the mines in the Trinidad district were closed. Berwind closed in 1928 and Tabasco in 1930.

The Colorado Coal Field War Archaeological Project, a joint effort of the University of Denver, Fort Lewis College, and the State University of New York at Binghamton, excavated here at Berwind in the late 1990s. The project was an effort to better understand everyday life in the coal camps at the time of the 1913 strike and how life changed as a result of the strike. Artifacts collected from these excavations are being preserved for future study, and for posterity. As the remains of the coal camps disappear under modern development it is important to remember the lives and struggles of the working families who built Colorado.

Credit Line:

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