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HISTORY AND LEGACY OF THE LUDLOW MASSACRE

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The **Ludlow Massacre** was the defining event of the 1913-1914 Colorado Coal Field Strike. This coal strike was one of the most violent in United States history. It resulted in an estimated 66 deaths and an unknown number of wounded. The question of who “won” the strike—coal companies or organized labor—can be answered differently. Although the **United Mine Workers of America (UMWA)** did not achieve its most important goal of Union recognition, the strike can nonetheless be seen as a victory for organized labor. The striking miners held out for 14 months in makeshift tent colonies on the Colorado prairie. They endured through one of the worst winters in Colorado history. They persevered despite the considerable ethnic diversity of the coal fields—24 different languages were spoken—which undoubtedly made collective action difficult. The strikers were eventually undone by the superior economic and political resources of the coal companies, and the depletion of UMWA strike funds. Certainly, the events of the strike and, especially, the deaths of women and children at Ludlow, outraged the American public and forced some key reforms in management-labor relations (Crawford, 1995; Gitelman 1998).

This background history has several purposes. One is to put the Colorado coal strike into a wider national and historical context. Another is to provide details about specific events of the strike and highlight the consequences and legacies of those events. A final goal is to provide some concepts and ideas that can inform, or be selectively adapted to, a classroom curriculum concerned with historical chronology as well as with the nature of historical inquiry. Concern with both issues is mandated by the Colorado History Standards.

With respect to chronology, our interest is in the **Progressive Era** in American history. Colorado’s labor struggles exemplified, perhaps more than any other, the violence and social disruption of that time period (Adams 1966). With respect to inquiry, our concern is with the **historical narratives** that have been used to make sense of the past. These narratives are shaped and reshaped through time to fit the interests and demands of contemporary society (Foote 1997; Trouillot 1995). Ludlow is a topic particularly germane to this issue, in that it usefully illustrates the differences between different kinds of “interested” histories. We can categorize these histories as **official** (national, triumphal), **vernacular** (local, personal), and **critical** (democratic, reflexive). The differences between them will be clarified in the course of the discussion that follows.

National Historical Context

Although especially dramatic, the hostilities at Ludlow were not unique for the times. They typified a period of industrial violence that defined the first couple decades of the 20th century. This period (1890-1914 in the Colorado History Standards) is generally—and paradoxically—known as the **Progressive Era**. During the Progressive Era **industrialization** was established as the driving economic force in American society. Resources, human labor, and machine technology were brought together in largely urban contexts of factory production. Industrial production was accompanied by a deepening social **class division** between those who owned the technological means of producing wealth and those who contributed labor for its production. Progressive Era violence was thus sparked by two conflicting, class-based visions of workplace relations. **Capital's** vision privileged ownership as the most important party, on the assumption that Business takes all the risks in producing national wealth. **Labor's** vision saw workers as central, given that worker effort directly creates national wealth.

Progressive Era clashes between Capital and Labor were as intense in the United States as in any other nation faced with rapid economic and political change. Strikes, riots, and massacres punctuated the time period at regular intervals across the country (Foote 1997). On May 3, 1886 police killed four strikers and wounded many others during a violent confrontation between unionized workers and non-union strikebreakers at the McCormick Reaper Works in Chicago. This incident preceded by one day the bombing in **Haymarket Square** that killed and wounded several police and protestors. On July 6, 1892 Pinkerton Security guards opened fire on striking Carnegie mill steelworkers in **Homestead**, Pennsylvania. Eleven strikers and spectators and seven guards were shot to death. On September 10, 1897 nineteen unarmed striking coal miners and mine workers were killed and 36 wounded by a sheriff's posse for refusing to disperse near **Lattimer**, Pennsylvania. On June 8, 1904 a battle between state militia and striking miners at **Dunsmuir**, Colorado ended with six union members dead and 15 taken prisoner. On December 25, 1909 a bomb destroyed a portion of the Llewellyn Ironworks in Los Angeles where a bitter strike was in progress. On February 24, 1912 women and children were beaten by police during a textile strike in **Lawrence**, Massachusetts. Numerous other examples from across the nation could be cited. Ludlow's distinctiveness in this context of industrial violence stemmed from its relative geographical isolation on the Western frontier and its number of women and children casualties (McGovern and Guttridge 1972).

Ludlow was also distinctive in terms of its especially high concentration of immigrant labor. **Immigration** combined with industrialization to form a volatile context for Progressive Era conflict. Many immigrants to America came to establish new lives, but others were looking for income that they could use to improve their lives back in their home countries. Whatever their motives, Progressive Era immigrant workers (like immigrants during earlier periods of industrialization) largely came from rural, pre-industrial backgrounds. They were new to industrial production, and thus they brought work habits to the factory gate that could frustrate discipline- and cost-conscious manufacturers (Gutman 1977). American work rules and idea of the "work week" also conflicted with a variety of other old country cultural and religious practices. Gutman (1977) provides a number of examples. A Polish wedding in a Pennsylvania mining or mill town lasted three to five days. Eastern European Orthodox Jews held a festival

eight days after the birth of son without regard to what particular day that was (Gutman 1977:23). Greek and Roman Catholic workers shared the same jobs but observed different holy days, an annoyance to many employers. A recurrent tension thus existed between native and immigrant men and women fresh to the factory and the demands imposed upon them by the regularities and disciplines of factory labor (Gutman 1977:13).

Industrialization and immigration opened doors to intensified exploitation of working people by corporate interests all across the United States. There were no laws protecting workers rights or union activity in 1913-1914. Workers in many places were denied freedoms of speech and assembly. While Labor's cause to redress these conditions has not always been a noble struggle for justice (Foote 1997), in almost every instance the fight between Capital and Labor was unequal. Capital was able to mobilize tremendous resources, from control of railroad and telegraph to control of local police and government, to further its agenda and suppress labor's cause. Progressive Era political and economic discourse came to be dominated by, as framed by Gitelman (1988), the **Labor Question**: "Can some way be found to accommodate the interests of Capital and Labor, or is their conflict—often violent and almost always incendiary in its emotional charge—bound to breach the existing order?"

The hostilities at Ludlow were also of a piece with processes and conflicts extending deeper into the history of the American West. The American West has long enjoyed romantic, mythic status as an open, empty region where rugged, bootstrapping individuals could make their fortunes unfettered by the constraints of class and ethnic background. The scholarly work of Frederick Jackson Turner, especially his 1893 essay *The Significance of the Frontier in American History*, did much to advance this "triumphal" narrative of Western history (see also Turner 1920). While Turner's work was crucial for legitimizing the study of Western history, it left much out of the story. **New Western Historians**, among others, have gunned down the romantic Turnerian image (Limerick 1987, 1991; Cronon, Miles, and Gitlin 1998; see also Nash 1991, Smith 1950). They have demonstrated the embeddedness of Western life and culture in larger historical processes of conquest, ethnic conflict, population migration, economic exploitation, and political domination. They have shown the effect of these processes on all sectors of societies and on a variety of ethnic groups.

Indeed, even the West's great iconic symbol of economic free agency and self-sufficiency—the cowboy—is now known to have been shaped by capitalist class relationships centered in the industrializing East. Many cowboys were wage laborers in the employ of ranches often organized as joint stock companies. Many didn't even own their own horses. As Papanikolas (1995:75) puts it, "Strip a cowboy of his horse...[and he was] but one more seasonal worker attached to the industrial world by railroads that led to Chicago stockyards and ranches owned as often as not by Eastern bankers or Scottish investors." The freedom of the cowboy was simply the freedom to choose his own master (McGuire and Reckner 1998). Most Americans have heard about the 1881 gunfight at the OK Corral; many fewer have heard about the 1883 Texas "Cowboy Strike" in which several hundred cowboys walked off their jobs at five major ranches (Curtin 1991:56-59), or the 1885 cowboy strike on Wyoming's Sweetwater (Papanikolas 1995; McGuire and Reckner 1998). Wallace Stegner, arguably our leading chronicler and writer about Western life, notes that "Cowboys didn't make the West; they only

created the image by which it is mis-known. People like **Louis Tikas** [one of the principals in the Ludlow Massacre and this Mock Trial] made the West..." (Stegner 1982).

Class struggle of the sort that would explode with particular ferocity at Ludlow is thus deeply embedded in the history of the West. Indeed, Ludlow is generally regarded as the best example of open class warfare in American history. In the words of George West, a federal investigator of the coal field strike, "This rebellion constituted perhaps one of the nearest approaches to civil war and revolution ever known in this country in connection with an industrial conflict" (quoted in Long 1989a:170). This is an astonishing fact for many Americans. Astonishing, because we Americans need our myths, especially myths of simpler, timeless places that can serve as an antidote to the economic uncertainty and political insecurity of modern times. New Western Historians have connected belief in a West devoid of conflict and struggle to modern economic and political anxieties that require, for their containment, seamless, mythic, triumphal narratives (Cronon et al. 1998).

Understanding events in the southern Colorado coal fields thus depends on understanding Western history as it is connected to the histories of other regions. There are many intellectual models and critical frameworks available for understanding and teaching this relationship, including numerous "core-periphery models" derived from **world systems theory** (Wallerstein 1974), and various frameworks contained within **historical political economy** (Wolf 1982; Roseberry 1994). To the extent that many of these approaches concern themselves with both the historical process and narratives about that process (Trouillot 1995) they can be termed **critical histories**.

Southern Coal Field History

The southern Colorado coal field is on the east side of the Rocky Mountains. It lies in two counties, Las Animas and Huerfano. The coal seams occur in the foothills of the Sangre de Cristo Range. Coal mines were located up canyons where the coal seams were exposed by erosion. In contrast to the northern fields around Boulder and Louisville which produced low grade home-heating coal, the southern mines supplied high-grade bituminous coal. This was used to produce **coking coal**, or **coke**, for the steel industry. Coke burns cleaner and hotter than regular coal, and introduces fewer impurities into molten steel (Clyne 1999). Coking coal fueled the new industrial capitalism (Long 1989a), especially the steel industry which supplied rails for the expanding United States rail network.

In 1913 Colorado was the 8th largest coal producing state in the United States (McGovern and Guttridge 1972). Because of the railroads' need for a steady supply of coking coal, the southern field was heavily industrialized. It was also dominated by a few large-scale corporate operations. The largest of these operations was the **Colorado Fuel and Iron Company (C.F.&I.)**, based in Pueblo. Founded in 1880 by John Osgood, C.F.&I. produced 75% of Colorado's coal by 1892. It became the largest coal mining, iron ore mining, and steel manufacturing enterprise in the West, earning the moniker "Pittsburgh of the West". In 1903 C.F.&I. was acquired by the corporate empire of **John D. Rockefeller, Jr.** (Scamehorn 1992). In 1906, the *Engineering and Mining Journal* estimated that 10% of Colorado's population depended on C.F.&I. for their livelihood (Whiteside 1990: 8-9).

C.F.&I. and the other large southern field operators, such as the Osgood-owned Victor-American Fuel Company, had nearly total control over the economic and political life of Las Animas and Huerfano Counties in the early 20th century. Most of the miners lived in **company towns**. They rented company houses, bought food and equipment at **company stores**, and bought alcohol at company saloons. Many of these expenses were automatically deducted from a miner's wages. Although it was illegal by 1913 **scrip**, a form of currency redeemable only at the company store, was still in use in the southern Colorado coal towns. Company store prices could be as much as 30 percent higher than those at independent stores outside the coal towns (Long 1985). Doctors, priests, schoolteachers, and law enforcement officers were all company employees. The company selected the contents of town libraries and censored movies, books, and magazines. The entries to the camps were gated and guarded by deputized armed guards (Beshoar 1957:2; McGovern and Guttridge 1972:23). Contemporary accounts described the situation as feudal (Seligman 1914a, 1914b).

The Colorado mines themselves were notoriously unsafe. They were among the most dangerous in the nation, second only to Utah. Colorado mines operated in flagrant violation of several state laws that regulated safety and the fair compensation of miners. In the years from 1884-1912, 42,898 coal miners were killed in mine accidents in the United States. Of these, 1,708 were killed in Colorado mines. Miners died in Colorado coal mines at over twice the national average (McGovern and Guttridge 1972:66; Whiteside 1991:74-5). Hand-picked coroner's juries absolved the coal companies of responsibility for these deaths almost without exception. For example, in the years from 1904-1914, the juries picked by the Sheriff of Huerfano County, Jeff Farr, found the coal operators to blame in only one case out of 95 (Whiteside 1990:22). Instead, victims were accused of "negligence" or "carelessness" (Yellen 1936). One of the great ironies of the 1913-14 strike is that striking miners were probably safer during the period when national guardsmen were shooting at them than they would have been had they still been working in the mines.

The mine workforce itself was largely "third wave" immigrant labor from Southern and Eastern Europe. These workers had been brought in as strikebreakers in 1903, replacing an earlier, second wave of immigrant miners from Ireland and Wales (Beshoar 1957:1; McGovern and Guttridge 1972:50). In 1912, 61% of Colorado's coal miners were of "non-Western European origin" (Whiteside 1991:48). Before the 1913 strike the UMWA counted 24 distinct languages in the southern field coal camps. This mix of ethnicities obviously had consequences for organizing the miners and maintaining unity during the strike. It is well documented in the papers of **Lamont Bowers**, C.F.&I. Board Chairman and CEO, that the company would purposely mix nationalities in the shafts so as to discourage worker communication and solidarity (Long 1989b, Clyne 1999). The ethnic mix also resulted in the strike and its violence being seen—at least in the context of some official histories—as the result of a belligerent Greek and Balkan culture, rather than the working conditions that existed in the southern Colorado coal fields.

The UMWA was founded in 1890 and made its first appearance in the Western States in 1900 with a strike in Gallup, New Mexico. In 1903, the UMWA led a strike in the Colorado coal fields. This strike was successful in the northern field but failed in the South as operators

successfully employed replacement labor and strikebreaking agencies (Vallejo 1998). This defeat did not extinguish the union spirit, however, and organizing continued in a variety of covert ways (Long 1989a:248). In fact, Long (1989a) provides a strong basis for disputing the recent argument of Clyne (1999:8-13) that the union in southern Colorado was “like a comet”, streaking through and then flaming out with every episode of labor unrest. Union organizing, like tactics of resistance generally, often “covers its tracks” (Scott 1985; Paynter and McGuire 1991). It is thus likely that union activity had a more sustained history in the southern coal field than Clyne allows. Clyne does, however, raise the interesting issue of the relationship between union organizing and the activities of the various fraternal and ethnic organizations or “lodges” that organized workers in the company towns (Clyne 1999:75-76). These organizations may have collaborated with the union to foster solidarity during times of labor unrest.

In 1910, northern operators refused to renew the union contract and the miners struck for the next 3 years. In 1912, the coal companies fired 1,200 southern miners on suspicion of union activities. In the summer of 1913 the UMWA, spearheaded by national organizers such as **Frank Hayes** and **John Lawson**, opened its biggest push yet in the south. In September of that year the UMWA announced a strike when the operators would not meet a list of **seven demands** (Fox 1990; McGovern and Guttridge 1972):

1. Recognition of the United Mine Workers union.
2. A 10% increase in wages on the tonnage rates. Each miner was paid by the ton of coal he mined, not by the hour
3. An eight hour work day.
4. Payment for "dead work." Since miners were only paid for the coal they mined, work such as shoring, timbering, and laying track was not paid work.
5. The right to elect their own checkweighmen. Miners suspected, generally with good reason, that they were being cheated at the scales which weighed their coal. They wanted a miner to check the scales.
6. The right to trade in any store, to choose their own boarding places, and choose their own doctors.
7. Enforcement of Colorado mining laws—some of which already addressed a few of these demands—and abolition of the company guard system.

Approximately 90% of the workforce struck, numbering around 10,000 miners and their families. Those who lived in the company towns were evicted, and on September 23, 1913 the striker families hauled their possessions out of the canyons through rain and snow to about a dozen sites rented in advance by the UMWA to house them. The colonies were located at strategic spots covering the entrances to canyons in order to intercept strikebreakers. Each of these colonies contained a mix of nationalities including Italians, Greeks, Eastern Europeans, Mexicans, African Americans, and Welsh. Ludlow, with about 200 tents holding 1,200 miners and their families, was the largest of the colonies and also served as strike headquarters for Las Animas county (McGovern and Guttridge 1972; Papanikolas 1982). The UMWA supplied tents and ovens, and provided the strikers with food, medical attention, and weekly strike pay. This amounted to \$3.00 per week for each miner, \$1.00 for each wife, and \$.50 for each child. Many important personages in American labor history became involved in the strike on the side of Labor, including **Mary "Mother" Jones**, Upton Sinclair, and John Reed.

The coal operators reacted quickly to the strike. Replacement miners were imported from across the country and abroad. **Baldwin-Felts** detectives—specialists in breaking coal strikes—were brought in from Bluefield, West Virginia. Violence characterized the strike from the very beginning, with both sides committing shootings and murders (Beshoar 1957; McGovern and Guttridge 1972; Papanikolas 1982). The first casualty actually occurred in advance of the strike on August 13, when a young Italian-American organizer named Gerald Lippiatt was shot dead on the streets of Trinidad by a Baldwin-Felts detective (Long 1989b). The coal companies soon mounted a campaign of harassment against the strikers. This harassment took the form of high-powered searchlights that played on the tent colonies at night, and use of the "**Death Special**," an improvised armored car that periodically sprayed certain colonies with machine-gun fire. The first exchange of gunfire occurred at Ludlow on October 7 (Long 1989a). On October 17 the armored car fired into the Forbes tent colony, about 5 miles south of Ludlow, killing and wounding several people. On October 24 mine guards fired into a group of strikers in Walsenberg, killing four of them (Foner 1980; Vallejo 1998). The purpose of this harassment may have been to goad the strikers into violent action, which would provide a pretext for the Colorado Governor to call out the National Guard. This would shift financial burden for breaking the strike from the coal companies to the state. With violence escalating and the operators pressing him, Colorado Governor **Elias Ammons** called out the Guard on October 28, 1913.

In November Governor Ammons issued an order allowing guardsmen to escort strikebreakers into the coal towns. This indicated to the strikers that state power had joined the side of the operators (Long 1985). During the strike C.F.& I. billeted guardsmen on company property, furnished them with supplies from the company store, and advanced them pay (Adams 1966). On a visit to the strike zone, Colorado state senator **Helen Ring Robinson** observed guardsmen entering the offices of C.F.&I. to receive paychecks (Long 1989a:290).

The sympathies of the Guard leadership exacerbated the tensions. The Guard commander, a Denver ophthalmologist named **John Chase**, had been involved in suppressing a 1904 miner's strike at Cripple Creek (Jameson 1998). Following the pattern set at Cripple Creek, Chase essentially declared martial law in the strike zone. This period of unofficial and illegal martial law included mass jailing of strikers in "bullpens", the suspension of habeas corpus (the constitutional right that a citizen in custody must be either charged or released), the torture and beating of prisoners and, on January 22, 1914, a cavalry charge on a demonstration of miners' wives and children in downtown Trinidad. Women and children were important contributors to the miner's cause throughout the strike, specializing in picketing of mine entrances and verbal abuse of guardsmen (Long 1989a). In this instance they were marching to demand the release of Mother Jones, who had been jailed earlier in the month.

In December the Colorado State Federation of Labor, with the sanction of Governor Ammons, convened a committee to investigate the conduct of the Guard (Yellen 1936). It issued a report on abuses—from robberies to harassment of strikers—that ran over 700 pages (Long 1985). In February 1914 a congressional delegation from the United States House Committee on Mines toured the strike zone and collected testimony in Denver amidst national publicity (Long 1989a:288-269). This was a time of relative calm in the coal field. This congressional

investigation had little impact other than to produce a good historical record of the strike (Long 1989a).

On March 11 the Guard tore down tents at the Forbes colony. To one UMWA official this indicated the beginning of a reign of terror designed to drive the miners back to work (Long 1989b). By spring 1914, as the cost of supporting a force of 695 enlisted men and 397 officers in the field gradually bankrupted the state, all but two of the militia companies were withdrawn. The mining companies replaced these militiamen with mine guards under the command of Colorado National Guard officers. With this move the neutrality of the Guard was completely destroyed and it now became little more than a strikebreaking force (Sunsieri 1972).

The exact circumstances and sequence of events on April 20, 1914 are uncertain. As McGovern and Guttridge (1972:344) point out, little has been written of the events that led to the Ludlow Massacre without emotion and distortion. The principals have been cast in both noble and sinister lights: coal operators are heartless profiteers, mine guards thugs, militiamen trigger-happy goons, Union leaders self-serving opportunists, and miners hot-tempered foreigners. Much depends on preconceived attitudes about Capital and Labor, and the way that one constructs, filters, and relates historical facts.

Rumors of an impending Guard attack on the Ludlow tent colony had circulated for some days prior to April 20th. The earlier Guard attacks on Forbes and at Walsenburg provided a justification for striker paranoia (Yellen 1936:234; Vallejo 1998:96). At 9:00 am on April 20th Guard activity increased around a machine gun nest located on Water Tank Hill located approximately 1.5 kilometers to the south of the Ludlow colony. Those miners who were armed (it is unknown how many there were) took protected positions in a railway cut and prepared foxholes to draw machine gun fire away from the colony. Archaeological research at the Ludlow tent colony indicates that strikers were armed with a hodgepodge of weapons including Winchester rifles and shotguns. The Guard detonated two bombs, perhaps as a signal to troops at other positions. No one knows who fired the first shot, but within minutes guardsmen and miners were exchanging gunfire.

After a few hours of firing one of the survivors noted that the Ludlow tents were so full of holes that they looked like lace (O'Neal 1971). In the colony there was pandemonium. Some colonists sought refuge in a large walk-in well where they stood knee deep in freezing water for the rest of the day. Others took refuge behind a steel railroad bridge at the northwest corner of the colony. Many people huddled in the cellars they had dug under their tents. The camp's leaders worked all day trying to get people to a dry creek bed north of the camp, and from there to the home of a sympathetic rancher two kilometers away. Many colonists ultimately bivouacked in the Black Hills to the east of Ludlow.

In the early afternoon a 12 year old boy named Frank Snyder came up out of his family's cellar and was shot dead. As the day wore on the force facing the miners grew to almost 200 guardsmen and two machine guns. At dusk a train stopped in front of the Guard's machine guns and blocked their line of fire. The train crew restarted the train in response to threats by the guardsmen, but by then the majority of the people left in the camp and the armed strikers had fled. By 7:00 the tent colony was in flames and guardsmen were looting the colony.

During the battle four women and ten children took refuge in a pit dug beneath a tent. All but two, Mary Petrucci and Alcarita Pedregone, suffocated when the tent above them was burned. The dead included Mary Petrucci's three children and Alcarita Pedregone's two children. This pit became infamous as the "**Death Pit.**" The known fatalities at the end of the day were 25 people, including three militiamen, one uninvolved passerby, and 11 children.

Toward evening **Louis Tikas**, the Greek leader of Ludlow Tent Colony, and two other miners were taken prisoner by the Guard. They were subsequently shot and killed. Implicated in the deaths was a Guard Lieutenant named **Karl Linderfelt**. Linderfelt was a professional soldier, Spanish-American War veteran, and former head of mine guards for C.F.&I. He had also been present at Cripple Creek as a company guard. Linderfelt commanded Company B, which consisted entirely of mine guards and was the most despised of all Guard units stationed in the southern coal field (Papanikolas 1982).

When news of Ludlow got out, striking miners at the other tent colonies went to war. For ten days they attacked and destroyed mines, fighting pitched battles with mine guards and militia along a 40-mile front between Trinidad and Walsenburg. The strikers, in largely uncoordinated guerilla attacks, destroyed several company towns and killed company employees. At Forbes, gunfire left six non-union miners and three strikers dead. Near Walsenburg, strikers occupied a position atop the hogback overlooking the McNally mine and destroyed several buildings with gunfire. They were engaged by state militia in a battle that claimed the lives of ten mine guards, one striker, one non-combatant, and a militia doctor (Vallejo 1998).

The fighting ceased when a desperate Governor Ammons asked for Federal intervention. **President Woodrow Wilson** complied and on April 30th sent federal troops to Trinidad to restore order, with the stipulation that once federal troops arrived the Guard must leave (Albright 1975). In an unusual departure from military precedent, the commanders of federal cavalry detachments in Colorado reported directly to the Secretary of War, Lindley Miller Garrison (Albright 1975). The Army confiscated guns from both sides and gun shops and saloons were closed. The Army also had orders not to escort out-of-state strikebreakers into the coal camps. However, C.F.&I President Jesse Welborn later testified that strikebreakers came freely to Colorado from other states and were protected by the Army as they took jobs in the coal camps (Long 1989a:299).

After order was restored the Ludlow tent colony was rebuilt and the strike dragged on for another seven months. During this time President Wilson sought to broker a settlement agreement between the coal companies and strikers (Yellen 1936). His efforts were unsuccessful. The strike was eventually terminated by a financially-strapped UMWA on December 10, 1914. Some strikers with families remained on UMWA strike relief until February 1915. Scamehorn (1992:51) reports that some strikers with families were rehired by C.F.&I. Some miners drifted out-of-state, while many others joined the ranks of the unemployed.

Aftermath of the Strike

After the strike mass arrests were made of the miners. These totaled 408, with 332 miners indicted for murder including John Lawson, the main strike leader. These trials dragged on until 1920. All were eventually quashed, with most never coming to trial. The State of Colorado court-martialed 10 officers and 12 enlisted men of the National Guard, but found them innocent of wrong-doing. Central to the defense of the Guardsmen was the argument that they were forced to take action because of the “aggressive nature” of the miners. A Board of Officers appointed by Governor Ammons on April 25 to investigate the battle at Ludlow heard testimony from witnesses who insisted that strikers started the incident (Long 1989a). Neither strikers nor unionists were interviewed. In its report the Board applauded the restraint and heroism of the Guard, and decried the “barbarism” and “savagery” of the strikers. John Rockefeller, Jr. lent his voice to the Guard’s defense by arguing that the “defenders of law and property” should not be blamed for the fatalities. Nonetheless, by the end of 1915 Colorado’s militia had been thoroughly discredited (McGovern and Guttridge 1972). General Chase resisted efforts to dislodge him until he was forced to resign in 1916. After Ludlow there was a reluctance across the nation to intervene in labor disputes with state militias (Albright 1975).

As for Karl Linderfelt, the defendant in this Mock Trial case, there is ambiguity in the accounts as concerns his role in the death of Louis Tikas. Some accounts claim that Tikas and his fellow prisoners died in a crossfire when they attempted to escape, while others attest to their murder while in Guard custody. The report of Las Animas County coroner B.B. Sipe states that Tikas and others “came to their deaths by bullet wounds in the battle between militiamen under...Lieutenant Linderfelt and mine guards on one side and strikers on the other...” Tikas’s death certificate, on the other hand, states the cause of his death as “Gun shot wound. Homicide”. Linderfelt admitted striking Louis Tikas with a rifle but he was acquitted of any criminal action (McGovern and Guttridge 1972; see Papanikolas 1982:227-233 for a transcript excerpt in the Linderfelt court martial hearing).

Although the legal court proceedings went nowhere, it was a different story in the court of public opinion. The Ludlow Massacre electrified the nation. Demonstrations and rallies protesting the killing of women and children erupted in cities across the country (Long 1989a:296). In Denver, 5000 people demonstrated at the state capitol, calling for Guard officers to be tried for murder and the Governor as an accessory (Zinn 1970). Nearly every newspaper and magazine in the country covered the story, with pro- and anti-company editorials existing side-by-side (Long 1989a:308). The *New York Times* carried so much news that the index of articles for three months amounted to six pages of small print (Long 1989a:308). Rockefeller was excoriated in the press and demonized in the eyes of the American Public by such prominent progressives as Upton Sinclair and John Reed. Even *The Wall Street Journal*, after a wait of several days following the massacre, observed that a “reign of terror” existed in southern Colorado (Long 1989a:308). Grim cartoons ran in both the mainstream press and socialist publications. In *The Masses*, John Sloan’s cover drawing showed a miner, dead baby in his arms and dead wife at his feet, returning gunfire at Ludlow. In *Harper’s Weekly* Rockefeller was portrayed as a vulture-like creature hovering over the shambles of Ludlow with a caption that read “Success” (Long 1989a:306). A national speaking tour by several women survivors of Ludlow including Mary Petrucci—still barely coherent from the loss of her children in the “Death Pit”—brought the tragedy even closer to home for many Americans. This tour included

visits to Rockefeller's offices at 26 Broadway in New York City as well as to the White House (Papanikolas 1982:243).

The widespread national reaction to Ludlow focused attention on conditions in the Colorado coal camps, and on labor conditions throughout the United States (Gitelman 1988; Adams 1966). In what was a classic Progressive Era initiative to deal with labor problems the **United States Commission on Industrial Relations** (CIR) investigated the events of the strike. The Commission was originally established by President William Taft but its membership—representatives from business, labor, and the general public—was filled by Woodrow Wilson (Long 1989a). The Commission was chaired by **Frank Walsh**, a labor lawyer and Democratic Party activist with a devotion to Labor and a commitment to economic reform. In many ways, Walsh was an early advocate of “New Deal” labor policies (Adams 1966).

The Commission on Industrial Relations was chiefly concerned with the causes of industrial strife during the years 1910-1915. The Commission's members traveled for two years collecting information about the events in Colorado. In a spectacular series of public hearings the Commission took testimony from major principals including John D. Rockefeller, Jr. In the first few months of 1915 the hearing-room confrontations between the young industrialist and Walsh, the flamboyant champion of worker's rights, riveted national attention. Initially, Rockefeller's composed and heartfelt testimony won for him great media sympathy and even the admiration of Mother Jones. Eventually, however, Commission fact-finding and Walsh's dogged interrogation exposed Rockefeller's role as a leading strategist in dealing with the Colorado strike (see also Yellen 1936:220; Foner 1980). But in the process Walsh himself came under criticism for his “bullying” tactics (Adams 1966).

The Commission's 1,200 page final report argued for worker's rights to organize, restrictions on the use of private detective agencies like Baldwin-Felts, and the need for state intervention in protecting worker rights. The Commission influenced President Woodrow Wilson to champion bills in 1915-16 that would ban child labor and institute the 8 hour workday. These initiatives helped Wilson get re-elected (largely on the strength of worker support) in 1916, and Walsh went on to other duties in the Wilson Administration.

For his part, John Rockefeller Jr. engaged labor relations expert **W.L. Mackenzie King** to develop a plan for a series of reforms in the mines and company towns of southern Colorado. Various known as the **Colorado Industrial Plan**, Colorado Plan, Industrial Representation Plan, or just “Rockefeller Plan”, these reforms called for a worker grievance procedure, infrastructural improvements to company towns (e.g., construction of paved roads and recreational facilities such as YMCAs), enforcement of Colorado mining laws, and the election of worker representatives to serve with management on four standing committees concerned with working conditions, safety, sanitation, and recreation (Gitelman 1988; Adams 1966). The Plan also forbade discrimination against workers suspected of having been union members in the past. However, it did not provide for recognition of the UMWA or agree to the principle of collective bargaining (Adams 1966).

The Colorado Industrial Plan effectively established a **company union**. The plan was outlined to C.F.&I. managers and worker representatives in Pueblo on October 2, 1915. Feeling

that there was little alternative, Colorado miners accepted the plan. It became effective January 1, 1916 (Scamehorn 1992). But critics such as UMWA Vice President Frank Hayes condemned the Plan as “pure paternalism” and “benevolent feudalism” (Adams 1966). Mother Jones grew disenchanted with Rockefeller, declaring the Plan a “fraud” and a “hypocritical and dishonest pretense” (Adams 1966). Still, the Colorado plan served as the model for many other company unions, which spread across the country and by 1920 covered 1.5 million workers (about 8% of the workforce).

It is not clear what direct, practical impacts the Colorado Industrial Plan had on the lives of miners and their families. Initially, the Plan was implemented without strict concern for cost. In time, however, Rockefeller’s New York staff demanded reforms designed to make the program cost-effective (Scamehorn 1992). Some scholars see such Progressive Era reforms as little more than corporate welfare, and/or attempts to control immigrant workers by “Americanizing” them. The Plan may have produced some real material gains for workers in the company towns (Crawford 1995; Roth 1992), but more research (both historical and archaeological) is needed. Certainly the reforms were limited, as indicated by the fact that throughout the 1920s the southern coal fields continued to be embroiled in strikes. In 1921 martial law again governed the coal fields when miners struck in protest of C.F.&I.’s elimination of previous wage increases.

Widespread union recognition in southern Colorado only came with the **New Deal** reforms of the 1930s. In 1933 C.F.&I. abandoned the Colorado Plan after a majority of miners voted in favor of an independent union. That same year the company negotiated a genuine collective bargaining agreement with the UMWA. The company’s hand had actually been forced several years earlier. In 1928 **Josephine Roche**, a crusader for social and industrial reform and controlling owner of the Rocky Mountain Fuel Company, signed a contract with the UMWA that increased miner’s salaries (McGovern and Guttridge 1972). This move attracted more skillful workers to Rocky Mountain Fuel, and the company’s productivity increased. Company unions were eventually outlawed with passage of the 1935 **Wagner Act**.

One of the more unappreciated consequences of Ludlow is its role in making public relations a priority for Big Business. Shortly after the massacre John D. Rockefeller hired **Ivy L. Lee**, publicist for the Pennsylvania Railroad, to mount a national pro-management publicity campaign intended to rehabilitate his image (Adams 1966). Between June and September 1914 Lee produced a series of weekly bulletins entitled *Facts Concerning the Struggle in Colorado For Industrial Freedom* that was circulated to a carefully prepared mailing list of congressmen, governors, editors, journalists, college presidents, professional leaders, and church ministers (Yellen 1936; McGovern and Guttridge 1972). In August 1914 Lee toured the Colorado coal fields to better understand the audience he needed to win over. Long (1989a:309) identifies this effort as the beginning of modern market research. John D. Rockefeller Jr. himself toured the coal fields in September 1915. Lee’s spin-doctoring, Rockefeller’s coal field visits and expanded post-massacre philanthropic endeavors, and implementation of the Colorado Industrial Plan transformed Rockefeller from the “most hated man in America” in 1915 to one of the most respected in 1920. Ludlow thus was not only a significant event in labor history but also the birthplace of professional corporate public relations (Gitelman 1988, Martinson 1996, O’Neill 1991, Ryan and Scott 1995).

Ludlow, Public Memory, and Official History

The UMWA bought the 40 acres containing the site of the Ludlow Tent Colony sometime after the end of the strike. A memorial was officially proposed for the site at the 1916 UMWA convention by union President John P. White. The convention passed the proposal. Later that year, several hundred coal miners met at the site of Ludlow and joined the union. The monument was finally dedicated May 30, 1918 (UMWJ 1918). The Death Pit was also preserved as a concrete pit into which people can walk today. Regular commemorations have been held at the site since 1918, in the form of a June memorial service sponsored by the UMWA.

Though important to labor and labor unions, the struggles commemorated at places like Ludlow are generally erased from **public memory** (Walker 1999). Public memory is a body of beliefs and ideas about the past that help a public or society understand its past, present, and future (Bodnar 1992:15). We can better understand the erasure of sites like Ludlow by drawing on Bodnar's distinction between **official history** and **vernacular history**. Official history is nationalistic and patriotic, emphasizing citizen duties over citizen rights. It emphasizes social unity and the continuity of the social order, and glosses over periods of transformation and rupture. Official history is progressive and triumphal. The ugly and violent events addressed by official history—like the Civil War—are usually presented as always having resulted in a better nation. Official history is publicly-funded and professionally-managed.

In contrast to official history, **vernacular history** is diverse and changing. Vernacular histories are local rather than national in orientation. They ultimately derive from the first-hand, everyday experience of those “ordinary people” who were directly involved with history's events. Vernacular histories are “passed around the kitchen table”. In Bodnar's words, vernacular histories “convey what social reality feels like, rather than what it should be like (Bodnar 1992:14).” They thus threaten the sacred and timeless nature of official history. Vernacular histories of Ludlow are pro-Union. They emphasize the Guard's role in starting the shooting on April 20th and implicate the Guard in many more atrocities against colonists on the day of the massacre. They also count many more casualties in the conflict suggesting, for example, that additional bodies were removed from Ludlow during the three days that elapsed between the Guard's closing of the burned camp and the arrival of Red Cross relief workers.

The distinction between official and vernacular history is, of course, ideal. How much vernacular history is expressed in public memory is a matter of negotiation between official and vernacular interests in communities. However, it is usually official history that wins in the end. Labor conflict and struggle, and vernacular histories generally, lack the onwards and upwards tendency of official history. As described by Foote (1997), Labor's history is one of fits and starts, precedents and setbacks. It is a movement that has lurched from one crisis to another, trying to wrestle change out of diversity. It is a story that does not yield readily to grand, unified narratives. Labor conflict has little visibility in official history, and thus tangible evidence of this past—monuments and memorials marking labor's struggles—are few and far between.

The silence of official history on the subject of labor struggle is not simply a case of powerful interests dominating the writing of history. Rather, it is often a case of the struggle being subconsciously ignored. In contemporary American ideology the United States is a classless society. Except for a few people who are very rich or very poor, we are all “middle-class”. Cultural leaders in the United States, including those who produce and represent history, come from the ranks of middle class professionals. They are purveyors of loyalty to larger political structures and existing institutions (Bodnar 1992:15). Thus, events that bear a resemblance to class warfare or even draw attention to the existence of classes are not easily squared with America’s ideology of classlessness. Such was not necessarily the case in the 19th century, when Americans commonly described their society in terms of class (Long 1989a). For example, in 1901 the Colorado Commissioner of Labor raised few eyebrows when he noted that “the absurdity of the old-time asininity that the interests of the laborer and the capitalist are identical is apparent to all intelligent people who understand the real cause of the conflict between the classes” (quoted in Long 1989a:53).

To see history as narrative and to recognize the existence of different kinds of histories is not to say that history is myth, or to take a relativist stance toward historical fact, or to bow to the gods of **reversionism** and **political correctness**. Such criticisms are fashionable today as researchers of hidden histories find more room to work within colleges, universities, and other institutions of cultural production like museums and heritage organizations. Rather, to see history as narrative is to say that facts and events are selectively filtered, screened, and interpreted in keeping with theoretical preconceptions and existing social realities. This is a central proposition of what we might call **critical history**. History, practiced well, is aware of this filtering process and the controlling biases of race, class, gender, and nationalism (Gorn 2000). Well-practiced history also recognizes conquest, conflict, exploitation, and domination. It looks squarely at the past, “warts and all” (Limerick 1998). Good history is “knowledge of painful things, painfully arrived at” (Gorn 2000).

At present, institutions of cultural production in southern Colorado privilege official history by emphasizing the area’s place in romantic, mythic narratives of the “Old West”. Specifically, Trinidad celebrates it’s status as a rest stop on the Santa Fe Trail where wagon trains would pause to recoup before heading over Raton Pass into New Mexico. Westward expansion and growth are the dominant themes of this official history. It is a history of Kit Carson and Bat Masterson. Histories of coal mining, company towns, and labor struggle—while not totally erased—are nonetheless marginal.

When coal mining history is addressed, it is through a soft-focus lens. That is, the history is sanitized and romanticized (see also Brooke 1998, Karaim 1997, Lowenthal 1996, Poirier and Spude 1998). Such is the case at the town of **Cokedale**, a well-preserved company town located to the southwest of Ludlow. Here, the homey details of coal camp life are emphasized, along with the benevolent paternalism of the coal companies (see Clyne 1999 for a demythologizing, albeit indirect, of this homey image). Labor struggles, when mentioned, are attributed to outside agitators. This is in keeping with trends seen in other deindustrializing regions of the United States, such as the coal mining and steel towns of Pennsylvania (Abrams 1994, Brant 1996, Mondale 1994, Stewart 1997, Staub 1994). This trend is disturbing because it does not serve the cause of accurate history.

Conclusion: Ludlow's Legacy

How shall we read the story of the Ludlow Massacre? Zinn (1970:100) asks this question in *The Politics of History* and sketches three possible readings. One reading is to view Ludlow narrowly, as an incident in the history of the trade union movement and the coal industry. On this reading, Ludlow is an “angry splotch” in the past, fading rapidly amidst new events. A second reading is to see Ludlow as a problem in personal responsibility. This reading focuses on who was to blame. Rockefeller and his corporate managers? Tikas and his unruly Greek compatriots? Linderfelt and his hired guns? A third reading sees Ludlow as a commentary on a larger set of questions concerning the structural relationship of government to corporate power, and the relationship of both to social protest movements. This reading connects Ludlow to the present (Zinn 1970:100) and articulates with the concerns of critical history.

Ludlow was a watershed event in United States labor history. The coal field strike did not achieve for the UMWA its most important strike goals, but it planted seeds of reform that would be realized later during the New Deal. The Ludlow strikers paved the way to many rights that we now take for granted, such as a safe workplace and eight-hour work day. In the wake of Ludlow corporate management policies began to turn from violent confrontations with strikers to more negotiated settlements. “Public relations” became a priority for Big Business. The Ludlow experience also showed that Labor could effectively rally varied constituencies around a common cause, something that has long been a problem for the movement (Foote 1997). Helen Ring Robinson’s testimony before the Commission on Industrial Relations is pertinent in this regard. Recalling her visit to the Ludlow tent colony Robinson found that “...this long winter had brought the nationalities together in a rather remarkable way. I found a friendliness among women of all nationalities—22 at least. I saw the true melting pot at Ludlow” (quoted in Long 1989a:290). In this regard, the Ludlow strikers not only pioneered unionism, but challenged the rampant public racism of the day (Long 1989b).

The last coal mines closed in the southern field in 1996 when Capital moved its focus to the northern fields in Wyoming. Trainloads of this northern coal now rumble daily past the abandoned Ludlow Depot and the ruined company towns up the canyons. Although the southern coal fields are quiet, many of the everyday realities that provided context for the Ludlow Massacre—workplace danger, chronic tension between Capital and Labor, and official neglect of America’s working people and their histories—are still with us.

OSHA safety requirements notwithstanding, coal mining remains a dangerous occupation. Since 1910, when the Bureau of Mines began compiling statistics, 80,400 men have died in American coal mines, and 1.5 million others have suffered disabling injuries (McGovern and Guttridge 1972). On September 23, 2001 two explosions rocked the Blue Creek No. 5 underground mine in Brookwood, Alabama, the nation’s deepest at 2,140 feet beneath the surface. Thirteen coal miners were killed in the explosions, twelve of whom had rushed into the mine to save their trapped co-workers. Like Colorado eighty years ago, Alabama today has the highest mine accident rate of any state in the country. According to the federal Mine Safety and Health Administration the coal company, Jim Walter Resources, Inc., has a mixed safety record.

It counted serious injuries nearly double the industry average in 2000, but fewer this year (Firestone 2001).

The conflict between Capital and Labor—the tension created by their competing visions—also lives on. In fact, the most relevant current example of this chronic tension is directly linked to the events of 1913-14. It concerns the strike right here in Colorado pitting Pueblo steelworkers against Rocky Mountain Steel—formerly C.F.&I—a subsidiary of Oregon Steel. The steelworkers have been on strike since October 1997 to stop forced overtime and thus regain one of the basic rights for which the Ludlow strikers died: the eight hour workday. The Pueblo strikers have used Ludlow as a powerful symbol in their struggle. They march at the annual UMWA memorial service at the Ludlow Memorial, and they have set up a “Camp Ludlow” at Oregon Steel headquarters in Portland. In fact, it is the power of Ludlow’s symbolism that led Oregon Steel to change the name of its Pueblo subsidiary from C.F.&I. to Rocky Mountain Steel, as a way to distance itself from the events of 1914. But Oregon Steel is determined to break the steelworkers union and thus deprive workers of another of the basic rights for which the Ludlow strikers fought: the right to collective bargaining. We thus should not be fooled into believing that the conflicts and concerns of the “old” industrial world have any less resonance in, or are any less relevant to, today’s “post-industrial” one.

We have yet to come to terms with episodes like Ludlow in the way we publicly remember, and tangibly commemorate, our history. As noted, “official” public memory provides little space for the Ludlows of history. Americans have always been deeply ambivalent about violence and tragedy. Rather than view homeland violence as a fundamental aspect of American life we tend to attribute it to the national character or agitations of outsiders. When we have no choice but to deal with home-grown violence we spin it positively, as a regenerative force capable of refining and forging a new society (Foote 1997). We even need such balance in our monuments to national loss as, for example, in the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington DC. Here, the black, angular, subterranean grimness of “the wall”—a powerful commentary on a nation divided—is balanced at its apex by heroic images of soldiers and nurses. Foote (1997) predicts that we will see more recognition of such “landscapes of violence and tragedy”—including landscapes of labor struggle—in the years ahead. He suggests that many sites will be commemorated as a way to thwart destruction by economic development, much as Civil War sites were saved. We can only hope that other sites will be commemorated by choice as we recognize the often glaring blindspots of official history. As a 1991 US House of Representatives report confesses, “the history of work and working people...is not adequately represented or preserved” in the United States (report cited in Foote, 1997).

This process of commemoration is well underway in southeastern Colorado. In 1996 the United Mine Worker signs on Interstate 25 directing people to the Ludlow Memorial were replaced by official brown heritage signs. In keeping with the powerful hold of mythic, Western history on the public imagination, most visitors arrive at Ludlow expecting to find a monument to an Indian massacre or some other episode of the Indian Wars. They rarely expect a monument to Labor Wars. In May 1997 a memorial to coal miners who died in southern Colorado mines was erected by the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce in the middle of the Trinidad historic district, thereby producing a much-needed contribution to the city’s official history. We can only hope that this memorial will fare better than the miner’s memorials that

were built—and then unceremoniously demolished—in other crucibles of industrial conflict like Harlan County, Kentucky (Scott 1995) and Windber, Pennsylvania (Beik 1999).

Afterword

In commenting on recent historical work exposing the moral failings of Thomas Jefferson, Patricia Limerick suggests that the more we critically think about and demythologize the Founding Fathers the more we honor them (Limerick 1998). The greatest injury we can commit against people like Jefferson, Limerick says, is to let them off the hook. By the same token, the greatest injury we can commit against America is to let *it* off the hook. The events that took place in the southern Colorado coal field are not happy ones. By acknowledging their existence and analyzing them from a critical perspective we produce more complete, and better, histories. To the extent that this critical encounter with unhappy events also broadens the cast of characters involved in the making of America, we produce more democratic histories. Blind allegiance to “Fourth of July historiography”—one that celebrates heroic events and suppresses horrific ones—is not befitting a genuine democracy (Dower 1995). By struggling with the ambiguities in, and conflicts between, alternative histories of America’s past we can better sharpen our skills of critical thought, evaluation, and debate. In so doing we stand to gain better histories, better students, and better citizens.

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