

# Ludlow Massacre – (1914) (13 women and children and 7 men) in Colorado Coal Miners Strike

## Ludlow Massacre

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Picture taken from [article on Ludlow](#).

The Ludlow Massacre was a grueling, horrific display of the plight of labor workers. Many lives were lost or destroyed by the hands of big business.

In the early twentieth century, the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company was owned and controlled by John D. Rockefeller Jr., who lived some 2,000 miles away from his tormented miners.

The immoral suffering and oppression of the down-trodden service workers erupted in 1903 when many of the workers went on strike. Unfortunately, their efforts were quickly stifled when strike breakers were employed by the company and leaders of the movement were removed.

As years passed, the conditions worsened and the poor mining community was screaming for an answer to their suffering.

The coal strike of 1913-1914 began when, exhausted from years of anguish and to assert their rights, the workers banded together and left their picks and shovels for a better life.

Not only were miners fighting for recognition of the [United Mine Workers of America](#) union (UMWA), but every working day was a struggle to earn enough money to feed their families. Their working conditions were dangerous and the coal companies paid the workers in "scrip" that could only be spent in company stores. This may seem logical when one looks at how isolated the mines were, but it is clearly horrendous when the full picture comes into view. The coal companies treated the miners like slaves and paid them with money that would be recycled back to the head of the company. The coal miners could never send money to family members or even invest.

In September of 1913, the coal miners had had enough. They banded together and demanded fair treatment and decent pay from their oppressors. They demanded the enforcement of the 8-hour work day and the right to live outside of company towns. When their demands were not met, the miners went on strike. Over 13,000 miners and their families moved out of the poorly made houses (shacks provided by the company) and into primitive tents. The land on which the tents were placed was loaned to the strikers by ex-miners who sympathized and supported the strikers' union.

Louis Tikas and John Lawson were prominent figures in leading the rebellion. John Lawson was the man who drew together most of the demands and presented them to the coal company.

Mother Jones, a celebrity in the labor movement, paid a visit to Ludlow to show her support. She did this by giving powerful speeches, and being the vivacious fire brand she was, she instilled hope and faith in the strikers.

The coal company was furious and, after imprisoning Mother Jones, began threatening the strikers. They began shooting into the tent colony, attempting to frighten the strikers back to work; but they were met with retaliation from the colony. The coal company armed a train that, running along a track between the colony and the mines, began firing into the tent colony.

In mid-October the company, in evil desperation, ordered in four machine guns. They strapped the guns to a car that they called the "Death Special." When the colony learned of this they immediately dug pits under the tents to protect the women and children from the gunfire.

No sooner had the strikers completed these pits than the armored car, bearing the machine guns and coal officials with rifles, opened fire on the colony. This led to the death of one miner and the injury of two small children.

Colorado Governor Elias Ammons saw the trouble that was brewing and in late October, called in the Colorado National Guard. The militia was sent in with the intention of being neutral, but there was a separation among the men of the militia. Many were biased, as they were veteran strike-breakers from the coal strike of 1904. Those who did not have this experience to compel them against the strikers, were easily bought by the coal company. When the militia arrived they were not getting paid, based on an imbalance between the number of officers vs. enlisted men. Plus, the economy's inability to handle that influx. The Colorado Fuel and Iron Company paid the militia from \$75,000 to \$80,000, stationed troops in company buildings and supplied them with goods from company stores. The militia became economically dependent on the company and thereby set their goals on quashing the strikers.

A month later the passing of a bill by General Chase (a leader of the militia), declared that all unauthorized arms were to be turned in to him. When General Chase received a delivery of obsolete weapons (including a number of children's pop-guns) from the colony he was outraged. He had received a total of 2,000 weapons, 3/4 of which were coming from the mine officials. Because of the insult the militia received from the colony, they began supplying the company with guns.

After months of disarray, the coal officials saw that the strikers were not going to give-in to the militia. The company demanded the release of imaginary people (supposedly held captive by the colony). The colony denied possession of any such people, as they did not actually exist.

The coal company was growing desperate. On April 20, 1914 Karl Linderfelt, a company officer and a bitter veteran of the strike of 1904, lead the militia in a brutal attack. The militia surrounded the colony and opened fire. The strikers defended themselves as best they could while women and children huddled in trenches dug out underneath tables in the tents.

A train operator who was running his train past the coal mines at the time of the massacre stopped his train between the two sides in an attempt to end the blood-shed. By doing this, the man saved many lives and opened a doorway for Louis Tikas to begin leading the women and children to a cave over the hills. When Tikas returned he was kidnapped by the coal company and taken to their side. Although Tikas was unarmed, his head was cracked open with the butt of a rifle and he was then shot in the back.

Among the dead were 11 children and 2 women who were suffocated in the underground trenches when the colony was set aflame.

After the combat, when all was quiet and the firing had stopped, over 60 people had lost their lives.

The murders received national publicity and finally stopped when President Wilson sent in US troops at the request of Colorado Governor Ammons, to restore the peace.

The strike officially ended in December of 1914 and the miners were forced back to work. Soon after the strike was put to an end, Governor Ammons enforced the pre-existing Colorado labor laws upon the company.

But it wasn't until 1935 that workers attained true laboring rights including: pay for 'dead work', the right to live off company land, better housing

## **RELATED LINKS:**

To find out more information on the Ludlow massacre, follow these links:

[The Ludlow Massacre and the Birth of Company Unions](#)

[THE LUDLOW MASSACRE](#)

[LUDLOW MASSACRE \(WOODY GUTHRIE\) \(c. 1944\)](#)

## Agents



Strikers:

*The strikers were mainly immigrants who were paid slave wages in company "scrip." They were forced to work 10-12 hour days and were not paid for 'dead work' (clearing the mines of rubble).*

*Due to isolation of the mines and as a way of controlling the miner's families, the company supplied the miners with houses.*

*But these houses were unsuitable for living. When the coal miners made their demands, they consisted of: pay for 'dead work' 8-hour days, recognition of the union (UMW), and to be paid in US dollars.*

*When their demands were not met, the miners went on strike. Over 13,000 miners moved their families out of company housing and into tents on land loaned to them by supportive farmers.*

The Striker is programmed to stay on the colony land on strike. Their color changes when they become angered by the shooting of the Company Officials.



Tikas:

*Louis Tikas was a Greek miner who assumed a key leadership role among the strikers.*

*He was a worker in the mines and was a head figure in the organization of the strike.*

*Tikas began working as a miner after the strike of 1903, and was a victim of cruel treatment and unfair wages.*

Louis Tikas is programmed to act as a leadership figure in the colony. He becomes very angry and changes color when he sees injured strikers.



Lawson:

*John Lawson was a miner who was an advocate of and had many friends in the UMW . He became a strong representative of the union.*

*Lawson was a key element in composing and presenting the workers' demands to the company.*

John Lawson is programmed to act as a leadership figure in the colony. He becomes very angry and changes color when he sees injured strikers.



Mother Jones:

*Mother Jones is a prominent name in the Labor Movement. She was a fire brand of advanced age who spent the later years of her life fighting for labor justice.*

*She paid many visits to Ludlow and gave speeches to encourage the strikers to continue their fight, despite their fatigue and frustration.*

Mother Jones is programmed to organize strikers and she is later arrested by the militia.



Coal Officials:

*The Coal Officials had all the power over the workers and the land. They were responsible for the poor treatment of the workers and it was they who rejected the workers' demands.*

*The Coal Officials had control over the progress of the strike and the escalation of violence that occurred. It was the Coal Officials who ordered machine guns and manipulated the militia.*

*They were heartless, money-driven, cold people who had little or no compassion towards workers and their families.*

The Coal Officials are programmed to shoot at the strikers from across the train tracks and change color as their anger intensifies.



Linderfelt:

*Karl Linderfelt was a veteran from the coal strike of 1903. He was a lieutenant for the militia. The acknowledged brute was terribly cruel and macabre in his biases towards the strikers.*

*He formerly worked in Mexico and the Filipinos, he was employed by the mines of Cripple Creek. During the Ludlow incident he was deputized the company Sheriff.*

Linderfelt appears with he militia and leads them in an attack on the colony.



Militia:

*The militia was sent in by Governor Ammons to bring order to the chaos and disarm BOTH sides of the dispute. Because most of the militia were officers and had high wages, the Colorado treasury was unable to sustain their salary and therefore, the militia became economically dependent on the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company.*

The Militia is programmed to set up camp and when their money level drops, they become influenced by the coal officials and aid in the massacre of the strikers.



Train:

*The train ran on a track that passed between the colony and the mines. It exported coal from the mines, but when the workers were on strike, the coal officials mounted a gun on one of the cars and ordered it to shoot into the colony.*

*During the massacre, the train operator stopped his train between the militia and the colony. He saved many lives by doing this.*

The Train is programmed to run through the field and stop between the sides during the massacre.



Car:

*The "Death Special" was a car that was armed with machine guns. The coal officials ordered it with the intention of breaking the strike and scaring the strikers back to work.*

The Car is programmed to drive by and shoot at the colony.



Reporter:

The Reporter periodically provides information on the content of the simulation.