The Fight for Industrial Democracy and Domestic Prosperity: Working Class and Prominent Women's Participation in the Colorado Coal Field Strike, 1913-15

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Undergraduate Honors Thesis
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Abstract

This thesis examines the involvement of women, both working and upper class, in the Colorado Coal Field Strike, 1913-15. First, I will provide a background for the strike including the Industrial Revolution, the rise of big business, and the influx of immigration which shaped the mining towns. Second, I investigate the participation of mining town women and their complex social and political identities. These women fought to improve their domestic goals, not challenge them. Despite this, they understood the need to utilize Colorado’s womens’ suffrage to get the working class into office. Third, there will be a discussion on the Ludlow Massacre and the nation’s reaction to the event. This battle, branded as a “massacre” pushed upper class citizens to protest for the humanitarian treatment of workers and their families. Then, I investigate the actions of more prominent citizens, first those of upper class women in Denver and then the protests of socialist Upton Sinclair. The upper class women of Denver fought politically enforcing their influence in politics and adding credibility to their citizenship and suffrage, which women gained in Colorado in 1893. Finally, implications of the strike are discussed including industrial reform, the participation of working class women in strikes, and the importance of considering women in public relations and political decisions.
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For the women who fought militantly for their families despite class barriers.
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Introduction

“We are fighting for our rights, boys,
We are fighting for our homes,”
-Battle Song of the Union

On October 20, 1913 about four thousand men, women, and children paraded the streets of downtown Trinidad singing the “Battle Song” of the union. The women and children led the parade while carrying banners which stated, “The Democratic Party is on Trial,” and, “We Will not be Whipped into Citizenship.” These women and children came from the Southern Colorado mining towns and were on strike alongside their husbands and fathers. This demonstration informed people the strike was a family affair concerning the Democratic Party and oppression in the mining towns. The Chronicle-News reported, “Never in local history has there been a more spectacular demonstration.” The involvement of women and children was truly unique, the report observed, “Never at one time were so many women and children assembled.” A direct result of the Industrial Revolution, these miners and their families fought for better living and working conditions. The involvement of women in the strike is generally overlooked, yet their actions were crucial as they participated as working class women in a time of reform.

The Colorado Coal Strike began on September 23, 1913 in Southern Colorado and became a family effort, a revolt by the mining community, not just the mine workers. The women and children actively participated in the strike effort. The women in these communities were not workers but participated as wives and mothers fighting for their homes, not for feminist

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3 Ibid.
4 Ibid.
5 Ibid.
issues. These women were not middle and upper class feminists, but part of the working class fighting for change in the mines and the isolated mining communities. During the strike, these women created domestic realms in the union’s tent colonies, keeping up morale and reinforcing their domestic roles. A strong class consciousness, a result of company control and geographic isolation, influenced these women to act politically in small-scale intimidations of mine guards and “scabs,” and large scale marches to voice their family oriented goals during the strike. Further, this class consciousness drove them to become politically informed in order to get the working class into office to support change in the mines. These women fought for industrial democracy, as their husbands did, but as mothers. They participated as women, and they fought to extend and improve their domestic roles, not challenge them.

After the Ludlow Massacre on April 20, 1914 during which twelve children and two women strikers died, prominent upper class women joined the strike cause. Most of these women were part of the Woman’s Peace Association, and used their upper class club status to protest violence in the coal fields. The high profile women did not promote a side in the strike; rather, they fought for the humanitarian treatment of strikers, women and children in particular. Though these women participated in relief work after the massacre, they focused on political change and expressed their humanitarian goals directly to Governor Ammons of Colorado and President Wilson. Similar to the working class women, these upper class women participated with a feminine identity in the political realm. Further, these women brought the mining mothers into a realm of “sisterhood,” adding credibility to the strikers’ cause. Demonstrating on behalf of the mining communities reinforced their suffragist goals, as their participation added authority to their influence in political decisions. The Colorado Coal Strike is typically perceived as a
masculine movement. However, the participation of miners’ wives and prominent women was crucial to the strike effort and its long-term impact on industrial, social, and political reform.

The women in this strike acted in a time of general labor and women’s movements, but their actions were truly radical and created lasting importance for working class families and suffrage women. The women’s actions during the strike, both the working class women before the massacre and the high class women’s movements after the event, demonstrated the importance of women’s participation in labor strikes and politics. Following the Colorado Coal Strike, the miners’ wives became a symbol for wives and workers participating in other labor strikes. Similarly, the prominent women involved after Ludlow expressed the importance of their influence and participation in labor movements across the nation. The mining mothers and their children reinforced that the mining towns were family areas and work reform was necessary to maintain healthy domestic realms. Both groups of women revealed the importance of women’s actions in politics and the desire for healthy domestic roles across the nation.

The mining women also fought against corporate control in the mining towns. There were several major companies in Southern Colorado, the most notorious of which was the Rockefeller owned Colorado Fuel and Iron Company (CF&I). The CF&I exemplified big business after the Industrial Revolution as the company, and Rockefeller, held immense wealth. The Industrial Revolution marked the transition from small-scale farms to large corporations and created a reliance on coal. The national reliance on coal put pressure on production, and the companies used immigrants for their work. These towns were immensely diverse due to immigration and isolated from the rest of Colorado. Diversity and isolation allowed the company to monopolize the mining communities. The company controlled the town’s housing, stores, schools, and
medical institutions. This monopoly forced families under total company control. They felt the
direct effect of poor working and living conditions, prompting them to strike in 1913.

The solution to the mining community’s grievances came with the union. Unions,
particularly the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) became crucial to the strike efforts.
The union helped the strikers organize their allegations, demands, and set up tent colonies when
the workers went on strike. The UMWA provided the strikers with basic necessities such as
stoves, fuel, and weekly payment. They also organized marches and demonstrations to voice the
strikers’ cause. Though the women were not part of the union, they supported the union as the
solution to their grievances.

Despite their efforts, the Colorado Coal Strike ended in defeat for the strikers. However, the
strike sparked reform within corporations and the federal government for workers’ rights. The
Ludlow Massacre, in particular, became the symbol for change and the coal strike became a
symbol of violence among state militias and large corporations. The Ludlow Massacre, though a
localized dispute, impacted the nation at large. Newspapers such as The New York Times
reported extensively on the Massacre and the demonstrations that followed. Across the nation,
icons such as Jane Addams and Upton Sinclair protested the events at Ludlow. This event hit all
aspects of culture. The Massacre inspired author Upton Sinclair to not only protest but write two
novels based on the Coal War. Folksinger Woody Guthrie, in 1946, wrote of the incident in his
ballad “Ludlow Massacre.” In 1918, the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) erected a
monument in Ludlow to commemorate the massacre. The actions and creations which followed
the Massacre focused on humanitarian work and strike practices as well as freedom of speech

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8 Ibid.
and the right to organize. This event inspired prominent women, socialists, and artists throughout the country to protest and construct memorandums. The Massacre impacted every area of public life and sparked political and social reform.

The Coal War brought national attention to labor rights and violence during strikes and promoted public relations and reform within corporations, particularly the Rockefeller-owned CF&I. Though change was slow, the Colorado Coal Strike was not without reform and results. After this event, Rockefeller created the Industrial Representation Plan, the first “company union” intended to bring together employees and employers to discuss grievances and concerns. Rockefeller also promoted public relations, as his reputation plummeted as a result of the violence. Moreover, the women’s actions after the Massacre demonstrated their significance as citizens and voters in Colorado. As a result, these women were not ignored during Rockefeller’s subsequent public relations plan. These reforms, though slow and sometimes questionable in practice, began the shift towards workers’ rights, industrial reform, and corporate responsibility. The strike remains as a symbol in industrial warfare and sparked renovations within corporate policy.

The Ludlow Massacre was the pinnacle of the Colorado Coal War and prompted Rockefeller to implement industrial reforms. However, focusing on this battle and the deaths of women and children presents them as passive victims, when in reality they fought actively in the strike. Extending the coal narrative to include the mining women and children, before Ludlow, creates a better understanding of why families went on strike and what they were trying to achieve. Breaking out of the masculinized histories of mining in general extends history to include the women who played major roles in the strike efforts. The women who participated during the strike must be viewed in the broader context of labor and women’s movements during this time.
period. These women were able to participate and have a voice despite their working class status as they lived in a time of social, political, and industrial reform.

Prominent women, particularly in Denver, participated in humanitarian efforts after Ludlow. The events at Ludlow, particularly the “massacre” of women and children, acted as a catalyst for these upper class women. Including these women in the history of the strike demonstrates the public’s reaction to the Ludlow Massacre and how this event brought together two very different classes of women. Through their participation, the upper class women reinforced their influence in politics in a time of suffrage movements and added credibility to the strikers cause. The prominent women perceived the working class as victims, but understood their domestic goals and fought to help achieve them. Incorporating the women, both from the working and upper class, provides a better understanding of mining towns, the strikers goals, and the social and political climate in which these women participated in.

**Historiography**

This thesis incorporates the women’s participation to the larger narrative of the Colorado Coal Field Strike. Most scholarly work focuses on the Ludlow Massacre as the pinnacle of the Colorado Coal Strike and then expands this idea to incorporate the Industrial Revolution, immigration, industrial reform, and social aspects leading up to Ludlow. The “massacre,” as it came to be known, resulted in the deaths of eighteen strikers, including twelve children and two women. This event sparked humanitarian protests and demand for industrial reform. Since the Ludlow Massacre, Historians have analyzed the strike and the massacre’s effect on industrial policy. Upton Sinclair, celebrated socialist, published *King Coal: A Novel* in 1918.9 Years later,

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in 1976, *The Coal War: A Sequel to King Coal* was published.\textsuperscript{10} Sinclair’s novels on the Coal War are based on the events in the Colorado Coal Field Strike 1913-1915. These novels are fiction but add popular narrative to a historical event. Though Sinclair’s works are not scholarly, they add a socialist critique to industrial America in form readers can relate to.

George S. McGovern in his study, *The Great Coalfield War* (1996) provides a documentation of the Colorado Coal Field Strike, calling it the “most hard fought and violent labor struggle in American history.”\textsuperscript{11} McGovern begins with the landscape of the coal mining towns, the beginning of coal production, and the history of the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company (CF&I). He then goes into dangers of the mining industry, the beginning of coal strikes, the daily lives of the miners and their families, the Colorado Coal Strike (1913-1915), the role of the union, Ludlow, and the political and industrial consequences which followed this event. McGovern provides a detailed outline of the strike, though he does not delve into the social aspects as his successors do. His account is helpful more for background information and a general understanding of the strike events. Taking these strike details as background information, this thesis will expand to the women involved in the strike, both the mining town women and the upper class women who participated after the events of the Ludlow Massacre.

Journalist Scott Martelle in his work, *Blood Passion: The Ludlow Massacre and Class War in the American West* (2007) focuses on the Ludlow Massacre and expands a labor story into a, “saga of hubris and ego, courage and sacrifice, life and death.”\textsuperscript{12} Martelle critiques previously published accounts on the Ludlow Massacre as a one-sided story to gain public support for the strikers. This viewpoint opens understanding on the strike as a battle between two sides rather

\textsuperscript{10} Upton Sinclair, *The Coal War: A Sequel to King Coal*, (Boulder: Colorado Associated University Press, 1976).


than an oppressive force on a victimized community. He sets the scene for revolt and war in a lawless West during a time of industrial transformation and wealth discrepancies. In this way, Martelle creates a social history, one that revolves around clashing ideologies over the “American dream.” His focus is on ideologies and myth as immigrants came to the West to prosper. Nevertheless, his critique on the battle at Ludlow as a “massacre” is important as it expands the narrative beyond the victimization of the strikers to include battles which occurred before and after the event.

As a journalist, his work is well read and entertaining, though he focuses heavily on personal agendas. This thesis incorporates women’s social history and examines the perception of these women through testimonies. Martelle provides a riveting account of landscape, industrial transformation, and the ideologies of the players involved both miners and their employers. His history of the strike is useful, but this thesis will go beyond the traditional social history of industry and war and into an under-represented group of participants, the women.

In his work, *Killing for Coal: America’s Deadliest Labor War*, (2008) Thomas Andrews sets up the Ludlow Massacre as a publicity battle between strikers and mining officials. Andrews then critiques the narrow view of the Ludlow Massacre as a single event in the Colorado Coal Strike. He turns the focus from Ludlow to a larger narrative of “imagination, power, and violence that caused the Colorado coalfield wars and molded their course.”

Expanding the Ludlow Massacre beyond the victimization of strikers opens the historical narrative so, “working people can best achieve equality, fairness, and justice not through collective uprisings from below, but rather the intervention of national unions, the Democratic Party, and the federal government.”

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14 Ibid, 15.
In this paper we will examine the uprisings of the women and children strikers, but in the broader context of political reform and general labor and women’s movements in the time period. The Ludlow Massacre cannot be ignored, particularly as it leads to upper class women getting involved after the event. However, taking the focus off the Massacre gives the women and children an independent voice in the strike, rather than presenting them as victims and bystanders in the strike.

Andrews expands the history of the Colorado Coal Field Strike to include the Industrial Revolution and its effect on immigration patterns in the United States. He pushes the Industrial revolution beyond a human narrative to include its effect on ecology and the ecological effect on immigration and industry. Andrew’s focus in this work is the interplay between people, industry, and their environment. This approach expands the strike narrative in a unique way, though ecological patterns will not be discussed in this thesis. Immigration patterns become crucial as the coal camps consisted of a massively diverse population. This work was extremely informative on the coal strike and the smaller battles which occurred around the Ludlow Massacre including the effect of immigration and industrial capital on the mining towns.

Andrews also extensively discusses the major coal companies, particularly the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company (CF&I) along with the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) and their parts in the strike including their publicity battles. This thesis briefly discusses immigration patterns and the effect of the Industrial Revolution on the families of the mining towns as it pertains to the domestic realm. Andrews does not ignore the family element in the coal camps nor the effect of geographic isolation, production of coal, and corporate control on these families, as it will be discussed here. This thesis, however, will take the narrative of industry, business, and industrial reform but add the women who were deeply involved in the strike.
More recently, Archaeologists have taken up projects in the Ludlow Tent colony to dig deeper into the daily lives of the striking miners. Denver University conducted an archaeological Colorado Coal Field Project intended to a) better understand how the conditions in the coal towns led to the strike and how the strike changed these conditions and b) raise public awareness of the Coal War and the Ludlow Massacre.  

Denver University is still analyzing their finds at the lab, so detailed analysis is yet to come. However, the project determined, through artifacts, that the Ludlow community left in a hurry, leaving precious artifacts behind. Though analysis is still in progress, this project will shed light on the daily lives of the strikers and their families, as well as provide details of the battle at Ludlow. Archaeologist Mark Walker examines Ludlow in an analysis of historical memory and how to study an emotionally charged event. Walker discusses the importance of branding the events at Ludlow as a “massacre” and later touches on the corporate reform it promoted. This concept of “historical memory” is crucial when depicting a piece of history. The Colorado Coal War affected an entire population of people, and their memories and emotional connotations with the event are important to consider when reviewing primary sources and illustrating a historical narrative on paper. As this strike involved an entire community fighting to improve their personal lives, emotional ties must be taken into account in this thesis when relaying the stories of the women involved.

The Colorado Coal Field Strike is a hyper-masculine history. There is much emphasis on the male strikers, their nationality, their goals, and their battles throughout the strike. What is often overlooked is the women’s involvement in the strike. The mining towns and tent colonies inhabited entire families, not just male miners. Scholar Elizabeth Jameson incorporates women into the mining narrative with a focus on frontier women in the silver mining towns in the 1800s.

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15 University of Denver, Colorado Coal Field War Project. “The Archaeology of the 1913-14 Colorado Coal field War Project.” Online.
This time period precedes the Colorado Coal Field Strike and targets a different industry, but her analysis on women’s roles and societal norms in the early mining towns begins the discussion of women in mining towns. Relevant to this thesis, Jameson’s article “Imperfect Unions Class and Gender in Cripple Creek, 1894-1904” (1976) examines the miners’ connection to labor unions, and in particular women’s dependence on labor unions for family security.\textsuperscript{17} This article provides an important insight into the miners’ labor and the union’s role in creating a class consciousness through speeches and pamphlets. The Colorado Coal War relied heavily on the UMWA. Further, this thesis incorporates the mining women’s class consciousness into their actions during the strike.

Jameson, in her essay, “Women as Workers, Women as Civilizers: True Womanhood in the American West” (1984) investigates social roles of women during the late 1800s and how these norms transformed in the West.\textsuperscript{18} She describes social norms for women during the Victorian Era and how the West liberated women from these social roles. Her interpretation is problematic; however, as the mining town women were working class immigrants, and thus many did not fit into this upper class societal norms. Further, the idea of the West as “freeing” is romantic and mythological, but not entirely historically accurate. As the women of the Southern Colorado coal mining towns is discussed, Jameson’s essay provides an interesting insight into expected social norms. However, this thesis strays away from upper class Victorian social norms provided in her paper and examines the striking women in Southern Colorado in the broader context of general labor and women’s movements.


In her book, *All That Glitters: Class, Conflict, and Community in Cripple Creek*, (1998) Jameson sets up a social history by analyzing population breakdowns in the mining towns, professions, and income. Jameson examines women’s labor in the mining towns. She argues that women’s labor deteriorated the domestic realm but paved the way for women’s suffrage. Her argument is persuasive; however, the women in the Southern Colorado coal camps lived in a different world. The coal women participated in the strike efforts with the intent to extend their domestic roles. Though these women knew they needed to use the vote to get the working class into office, they fought to protect the domestic realm and sought suffrage as a solution to extend their domestic roles.

Focusing on the same time period as Jameson, Leanne Louise Sander wrote a dissertation called “‘The Men All Died of Miners’ Disease’: Women and Families in the Industrial Mining Environment of Upper Clear Creek Colorado, 1870-1900” (1990). Sander includes the family element in the mining towns and discusses how the men’s labor affected these families. Sander’s dissertation focuses on the lives of “average” women, daughters and wives of miners, and their relation to labor, family, and each other. This dissertation incorporates the daily lives of the mining town women as well as industrial practices which led to their social conditions. Sander’s incorporates family into the early mining narrative. This thesis will similarly incorporate family into the coal narrative, but with an emphasis on women’s participation during the strike.

Moving into the early 1900s and the Southern Colorado Coal Field Strike, Priscilla Long takes the lead. In her essay, “The women of Colorado Fuel and Iron strike, 1913-14” (1985), the miners’ wives, their class consciousness, and how they participated as wives and mothers is

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investigated.\textsuperscript{21} The subject of this thesis and the methodology concerning the mining town women was inspired by Long’s work. Her essay provides a good overview of the living conditions of these women with a focus on their class conscious. Long, in this essay, does not delve into the women’s participation in the strike but focuses more on their daily lives, social standing, and the Ludlow Massacre. Here, we expand on Long’s subject of the working class women of the mining towns, and extending the discussion to including their participation in the strike itself.

Long develops the ideas from her essay further in her book, \textit{Where the Sun Never Shines: A History of America’s Bloody Coal Industry} (1989).\textsuperscript{22} This study focuses on the Industrial Revolution’s impact on labor, immigration, corporations, and unions. She writes of the women, but mostly focuses on the Industrial Revolution’s impact on labor, immigration, and corporate control. In the book, Long delves deeper into specific women’s movements during the strike and the media’s reaction to these events. Her book was particularly helpful for background information and further analysis on the women’s movements in the context of industrial labor. I will incorporate elements of her book, particularly on the aftermath of the strike and the consequences it had for political and corporate reform.

Not much is written about the mining town women, though many historians reference one female labor leader, Mary “Mother” Jones. Priscilla Long wrote a pamphlet on Mother Jones’ life and strike career.\textsuperscript{23} Mother Jones, though a female, is viewed separately from the mining women as she used her “motherly” figure to rally men. Her speeches through the years were

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\textsuperscript{23} Priscilla Long, \textit{Mother Jones, Woman Organizer: And her Relations with Miners’ Wives, Working Women, and The Suffrage Movement}, (United States of America: Priscilla Long, 1976), 1
\end{flushleft}
collected by Edward M. Steel, shedding light on her work and impact on labor strikes across the nation.\textsuperscript{24} Mother Jones certainly was an important figure in labor strikes due to her focus on political and industrial reform. She was not a suffragist but promoted healthy domestic lives to motivate the women in order to draw in their men. Her speeches are incorporated into this thesis because she was such an integral player in the coal strike. However, my interpretation views Mother Jones as a catalyst in the mining women’s movement, not the cause nor the main figure. The women would have participated without this one figure, though her speeches and organization tactics were important for the strike.

The second half of my study examines the actions of prominent women in Denver, inspired by the Ludlow Massacre. This subject is touched on by Priscilla Long and Thomas Andrews, though it is not thoroughly examined. Thus, the intent here is to shed light on these events in the context of general women’s movements and rebuilding Colorado’s reputation.

\textsuperscript{24} Mother Jones, \textit{The Speeches and Writings of Mother Jones}, ed. By Edward M. Steel (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1988).
Chapter I: The Industrial Revolution, Big Business, Union Organization and the National Reliance on Coal

“It’s dark as a dungeon and damp as the dew,  
Where the danger is double and the pleasures are few,  
Where the rain never falls and the sun never shines,  
It’s dark as a dungeon way down in the Mine.”

--Merle Travis, “Dark as a Dungeon”25

The Colorado Coal Strike, a direct result of the Industrial Revolution, marked the transition from family farms and small-scale enterprises to large corporations which dominated the economy.26 Big business became the center of capital and changed the way people worked and structured their daily lives. As a result, in the early 1900s, labor strikes increased in the steel, textile, copper, railroad, and coal industries. The Colorado Coal Strike began on September 23, 1913 in the midst of labor strikes occurring across the nation. This strike developed out of those in Northern Colorado and in the South took place in Las Animas, Huerfano, and Fremont counties (see Figure 3). Though strikes were frequent in other industries, coal strikes were a serious concern as coal fueled the new industrial economy.27 In 1907 the Denver Chamber of Commerce described the new dependence on coal as, “We cannot survive without it.”28 Not only did coal run the new economy, but miners tended to strike more than those in other workforces.29 Geographic isolation, dangerous working conditions, and company policies on payment and working hours were a few reasons for a miner to strike. Further, coal relied on man-

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26Priscilla Long, Where the Sun Never Shines, xxiii.  
29Long, Where the Sun Never Shines, xxiv.
power whereas other industries transitioned to machines for hard labor.\textsuperscript{30} As coal relied on man-power, the companies needed to expand their workforce to meet the demands of coal production.

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{30} Andrews, \textit{Killing for Coal}, 93.}
Immigration, a consequence of improved transportation and industry, became essential for the coal companies. The demand for coal outweighed the need for skilled labor. Thus, many diverse and less experienced workers came to Colorado for work. In April 1913, the CFIC listed twenty-four nationalities among 4,000 coal miners. Further, about eighty-percent of the workforce spoke a first language other than English. The influx in immigration resulted from improved transportation and the increase in industrial labor. Improvements in industry produced population growth, ecological degradation, and social dislocation. Thus, people left their homes and searched for work in the new industry, including the Southern Colorado coal companies. The union accused the coal companies of hiring so many different nationalities to prevent labor and community organization. Despite the diverse population, the coal community found common cause in their living conditions and grievances. These communities were geographically isolated, working class, and uneducated about state politics. As a result, they were easy to manipulate.

The big mining companies grew richer while the workers became poorer. This discrepancy created a class consciousness among the men and women in the mining towns, uniting them in a common cause against the big companies.

There were several major coal companies in Southern Colorado, such as the American Fuel Co. and the Rocky Mountain Fuel Co., but the most notorious was the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company (CF&I) owned by John D. Rockefeller. Rockefeller and the CF&I exemplified the new big business economy after the Industrial Revolution. By 1896, the CF&I was one of the 100 largest firms in the United States and was the largest coal company in Colorado. By 1910 the CF&I held more than 100 million dollars in assets and John D. Rockefeller himself was

32 Ibid.
33 Andrews, Killing for Coal, 111.
worth over one billion dollars. Though Rockefeller and the CF&I held immense wealth, the miners employed by the Southern Colorado coal mines lived in poverty and isolation. The mining community, men and women, were aware that the coal miners created wealth, while the mine owners enjoyed it. The people living under the coal company’s monopoly in Southern Colorado were deprived of popular government, fair earnings, a safe working environment, and freedoms to live, learn, and purchase outside of the company. As a result, the employees of these major mines in Southern Colorado, accompanied by their families, went on strike in September of 1913.

The strikers in Southern Colorado sought solutions to their grievances in the union, particularly in the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA), which called the strike in 1913. Edward Lawrence Doyle, a UMWA organizer, reiterated the union’s importance, “Our people,” Doyle intoned, “have been exploited and enslaved for years. We now demand justice, and we can never secure it without the union.” The UMWA began in 1890 and soon became the largest labor union in the United States. Unions such as the UMWA became popular in the early 1900s as they promoted an eight-hour work day, payment in legal money, and enforcement in safety measures. The UMWA opposed the companies’ monopoly, short-weighing, the employment of children under fourteen, and the use of hired gunmen to enforce company policies. Once on strike, the union set up tent colonies for families to live in and maintain a structured daily life during chaos. The UMWA also provided stoves, coal, water, and $3.00 per striker, $1.00 per

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36 Ibid.
38 Edward Lawrence Doyle Papers 1910-1917, WH126, Box 2, FF52. “Special Conventions District #15,” Western History and Genealogy Department, Denver Public Library.
39 Long, Where the Sun Never Shines, 151.
40 Ibid, 152.
woman, and 50 cents per child every week.\textsuperscript{41} The union became essential in the strike effort. The UMWA understood that the strike was a community effort and sought to reform industrial labor to reflect family needs.

The strike, called by the UMWA, was a result of five allegations: ignorance of the mine owners of the actual conditions of the employees lives and labor, lack of personal responsibility of owners for grievances, the maintenance of operators of modern systems of monopolistic feudalism without many beneficial features, the operator’s right to conduct vast coal business regardless of how the conduct affects society at large, and the unwillingness of the operators to concede with the employees right of effective organization.\textsuperscript{42} These allegations did not explicitly include the miner’s families, but they did affect the entire family community. As families directly felt the effect of these allegations the strike became a family and community affair.

To provide a better life for miners and their families, the strike worked toward “industrial democracy.” Industrial democracy aimed to secure the employee’s right to make decisions and share authority in the workplace. The union intended to secure industrial democracy for the miners. However, the major mining companies, particularly the CF&I did not recognize the union and fired men for union activity. Thus, the union and the strikers in Colorado had seven demands: recognition of the union, a 10% increase in wages on the tonnage rates (miners were paid by how much coal they mined, not the hours they worked), an eight hour work day, payment for ‘dead’ work (such as collecting timber and laying track), the right to elect their own check-weightmen (miners suspected they were being cheated at the scales), the right to shop at any store, chose their own boarding places and their own doctors, and the enforcement of

Colorado mining laws and abolition of the company guard system.\textsuperscript{43} Industrial democracy was the source of better working and living environments for the miners, the women in the mining communities, and their families.

As the mining towns were family areas, the Colorado Fuel and Iron Strike turned into a revolt by whole communities against the economic, political, and social domination by the CF&I and smaller mining companies.\textsuperscript{44} This strike involved 11,000 coal miners, 4,000 miners’ wives, and 9,000 children.\textsuperscript{45} The CF&I held the power to discharge any worker for buying outside the company, which forced families into submission. Further, the company controlled housing, employment (including the hiring of teachers and doctors), the school board, and often the government of its towns.\textsuperscript{46} Thus, the company controlled the entire town creating an oppressive environment for its employees and their families. The miners paid rent and bought supplies from the company. Consequently, they were often so in debt they never saw a paycheck.\textsuperscript{47} In her testimony, Mary Hannah Thomas, a leading female during the strike stated, “most of the men were so in debt [at the company store], so that they did not see the color of money.”\textsuperscript{48} Further, coal mining was the most dangerous profession in the United States at this time. On a daily basis, wives faced the possibility of their husband’s death or disablement, both leading to economic despair. In Las Animas County alone, 200 married coal miners were killed between 1907-1912 leaving 200 widows and 700 children behind.\textsuperscript{49} After an incident, families only received compensation if the company-hired coroner found the reason of death to be the fault of the

\textsuperscript{43} University of Denver, Colorado Coal Field War Project “History of the Colorado Coal Field War” Online
\textsuperscript{44} CIR, \textit{Report on the Colorado Strike}, George P. West, 15.
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid, 66.
\textsuperscript{47} Mary Thomas \textit{Testimony in U.S. CIR, Report and Testimony}, vol. 7 (Washington D.C., 1915) p. 6,359.
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid.
company. In this way, entire families’ depended on the man’s labor, thus were connected and affected by the company’s policies.

The mining towns in Southern Colorado consisted of families, not just male miners. The miners, dedicated to their family-oriented goals, made their cause apparent. The week before the strike began they carried banners stating, “We are fighting for our homes.” The families of these mining towns depended on the miner’s labor and thus were affected by poverty, company monopoly, and dangerous working conditions. When the strike began, these families moved into the tent colonies. According to Pearl Jolly, a nurse and miner’s wife, the Ludlow tent colony included 200 tents with 500 women and 500 children. These families actively participated in the strike effort as they were passionate about reforming industrial policy to create better lives. The Colorado Coal Strike is typically perceived as a masculine struggle. However, the women in the mining towns, though not miners, struggled in the strike to gain better domestic roles. These women fought to improve their domestic roles, not challenge them. Their identity was female, though not feminist, as they fought for their families and working class social and political freedoms.

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Chapter II: Women of the Strike: Fighting for Domestic Goals through Public Activism

The mining town’s women inhabited complex social and political roles. During the strike these women were home makers, harassers of scabs and mine guards, marchers, picketers, defenders of the strike leaders, political educators, and instigators in the media. Unpacking these identities is complex as these women fought with political and social tools in a time of general women’s movements, but they were not feminists. Though tied to their husband’s labor, their identity was distinctly female. These women participated in their domestic roles but also understood the importance of political action to improve their daily lives. Thus, these women fought to improve their domestic roles, but also fought for political and class change. Many of these women were uneducated immigrants, making their objectives difficult to achieve. Their
gender, ethnicity, and class status generated negative responses in the media and hindered credibility in their cause. Despite their gender, class, and education levels, these women devoutly fought for their families and the working class. These women acted in a time of general women’s and labor movements which made their actions possible despite their social setting.

When the strike began, these women created a domestic environment in the chaotic tent colonies. The domestic realm included caring for the children, cooking for the strikers, and helping newcomers settle in. Anywhere from 40 to 100 percent of the workforce at various camps packed up their belongings and moved with their wives and children, in the sleet and snow, into the tent colonies. As strikers of all ethnicities moved into the tent colonies, their peers helped everyone get settled in. The “Hungarian and German women” cooked and brought hot food to the newcomers. These actions were minor; however, they created a supportive community and kept up morale. “The women played a special and indispensable role in helping to form a cohesive, unified strikers’ community—a community of resistance.” The women tended their homes, now in tents, and helped each other with the children. They supported each other as some held coffee “gossip” sessions every day. During the strike, the women played an important role in political activism, but they were also crucial in maintaining domestic life in the tent colonies.

Aside from creating a domestic environment and keeping up morale, the women performed small scale actions to demonstrate their cause. Women, with their children, picketed outside mines and harassed scabs, mine guards, and non-union men. On October 5th, 1913 women, with their men and children, planned the invasion of the Sopris mine in Southern

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54 Ibid.
55 Ibid.
56 Ibid, 72-73.
Colorado. The next day 250 strikers and women demonstrated at a school house near the Sopris mine. Though small, these actions reinforced their genuine desire for social and political change for the working class. Due to their gender and age, the women and children were able to intimidate mine guards, scabs, and the operators’ wives with little consequence. For instance, in November 1913 the women gathered with clubs to block a train escorting strike-breakers through the Ludlow Depot. Blocking the strike train was negatively received, but, when the train failed to arrive the women left without punishment. The women reminded operators, mine guards, and non-union workers that the strikers were serious in their demands and would not negotiate until reforms were made. These actions were militant and they affirmed that the strikers would not be easily ignored or replaced.

The women took it upon themselves to perform these small scale actions; however, they were not without leaders. Mary “Mother” Jones, the most prominent leader in Southern Colorado rallied the strikers to fight for their homes. Mother Jones was a strike and union leader across the nation who focused on all industries. Though a female, she focused on laborers, not their wives. She took no part in women’s movements outside of organizing the women to help labor strikes. Her role as a “mother” figure allowed her to become a leader to male workers. Her perception on women’s roles during the strike was congruent with that of the wives. She advocated domestic goals, “…we claim the right for that child to have a good education; we claim that right for the child to have a good home; and we want comfort for its mother; we want its father to know what rest is.” In this speech, Mother Jones reiterated the goals of the strikers, particularly the

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60 Priscilla Long, Mother Jones, Woman Organizer, 1
domestic goals of the women. Further, Mother Jones pushed the women to be active, “Until you get some backbone and stick together and organize against these mine operators, you will never be as valuable to them as those mules they own. And if you’re afraid to fight, we’ll get the women together to fight for you and beat the hell out of them.”

Mother Jones appealed to the women to draw in the men, and planned to use the women militantly.

Though she used the women to draw in the men, Mother Jones made the women accountable for their living conditions. She understood the strikers consisted of families, and used this to promote action for social and industrial reform. Mother Jones placed responsibility and action in the hands of the mothers stating, “Women have stood by and allowed their children to be starved and crushed and they have not raised a sword to strike down these murderers who are sacrificing their little ones.”

Mother Jones helped motive the women to participate in the strike. Though she was a catalyst in the women’s participation she was not the cause. The mining women moved into the tent colonies with their families, advocated for change, and harassed anti-strike organizers before Mother Jones arrived in Colorado. Without this female leader, women would have still fought for their family’s rights; Mother Jones simply acted as a facilitator.

Mother Jones stood by the strikers and their families, in turn, the miners’ wives stood by their leader.

Motivated by Mother Jones, the women participated in large scale actions and demanded reform for their families. On October 20th, 1913 in Trinidad two-thousand women and children, families of the striking miners, led 1,200 men in protest. The Denver Post reported, “This demonstration, which was witnessed by Governor Ammons, was the largest ever seen in this

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62 Long, *Mother Jones, Woman Organizer*, 18
63 Ibid, 23.
district and a remarkable spectacle.” Similarly, the *Chronicle-News* reported, “Never at one time were so many women and children assembled.” This parade consisted of striking miners and their families and made a state-wide impression. The involvement of women and children appeared impressive to the media, suggesting these movements were rarely done by the working class. This march, led by the women and children, declared the strike was a family movement and gave the women and children a voice in the movement. This parade advocated the strike was a family affair and a movement for a better life which was not only important to the miners but their families as well.

The miners’ wives paraded on account of their families, but they also paraded to defend their strike leaders and freedom of speech. On January 15, 1914 two-hundred women invaded the Columbian hotel in Trinidad demanding to see Mother Jones, who was being detained at the time (See Figure 3). Mother Jones, arrested January 12, 1913, was detained by General John Chase for being a “disturber and an inciter of violence.” General John Chase’s reason for detention expressed the states’ concern of strike provocation. The women, aware of this concern, marched for their strike leader’s freedom. Though these women focused on domestic goals, freedom to organize and freedom of speech underlined this detention. In order to promote reform, the women and their leaders first needed to voice their cause.

In order to protect the right to assemble, on January 22, 1914 the UMWA organized a demonstration where one-thousand women and children involved in the strike marched down Trinidad to protest the detention of Mother Jones. The women successfully expressed their

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goals as they fought for freedom of speech with their children, reinforcing their ultimate
domestic goals. A skirmish occurred after the parade between the militia and protestors which
resulted in the arrest of some female demonstrators. Mary Hannah Thomas, a woman in the
tent colony, was arrested during this demonstration. She was kept in jail for eleven days and was
never given a trial, though she requested one. Mrs. Thomas did not face charges, but her arrest
and refusal of a trial presented the need to advocate freedom of speech and peaceful
demonstrations.

After this parade, the women held a meeting and discussed political reform, the presence
of the militia in the strike zone, and organized the vote against Governor Ammons in the next
election. The mining women called themselves the Women’s Voting Association of Southern
Colorado, expressing their gender, location, and goal. These women attempted to gain the
support of a member of the Denver Equal Suffrage Association, Mrs. Katherine Williamson, but
the woman never showed. The Women’s Voting Association of Southern Colorado responded
to her absence with cries of “Quitter” and “Deserter of the Cause.” This response reflected the
need of these working class women to gain upper class suffrage support, particularly educating
the mining women on political reform. A reporter in the Chronicle-News reacted positively to
her absence stating, “…to her credit she did not appear.” This statement suggests that Mrs.
Williamson’s presence would have discredited her reputation as a prominent suffrage woman.
Here is an example of class bias, as Mrs. Williamson, though fighting for suffrage and women’s

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70 Mary Thomas, CIR, p. 6,358.
72 Ibid.
75 Ibid.
rights, is respected as an upper class woman of society. This perception of the upper class is counter to the “deluded and misguided” working class women.

The mining town women proceeded without her; many spoke in their native languages. The Women’s Voting Association of Southern Colorado promoted these women to vote and get the working class into office.\(^\text{76}\) This meeting urged an educational movement as one speaker stated, “We are not in a civilized part of the state.”\(^\text{77}\) The meeting ended with a “voting association” set up for the following week to educate the women to vote and elect the working class into office.\(^\text{78}\) Though the miner’s wives protested with small actions against mine guards and non-union workers, they initiated larger scale actions focused on political maneuvers to change labor laws. Further, these women were aware of their geographical isolation and working-class status. Political action became the solution to better domestic lives in the mining towns. These women, though not fighting for a feminist cause, understood they needed to utilize their right to vote in order to promote change in the field.

Though fighting as wives not suffragists, the feminist issue among these women is complex. The women needed to vote in order to get the working class into office. However, these women required the vote to reform their daily lives, not to promote feminist issues. Women gained suffrage in Colorado in 1893, but with conditions. In order to vote a woman had to be twenty-one years old, a citizen of the United States, and a resident of Colorado for a year before a given election.\(^\text{79}\) These conditions complicated the voting effort among the mining women as many were immigrants living in isolation and were uneducated about politics and voting. Further, the coal companies controlled elections, so any knowledge the mining women had of

\(^{78}\) Ibid.
electoral processes was skewed by company control. A goal among these women during the strike was to educate those who qualified to vote for the working class.\textsuperscript{80} Though their cause was not feminist, the mining women were aware that laws changed through electoral power, and intended to use their state suffrage to get the working class into office. This class consciousness aimed to create better working conditions to improve their domestic realm. Thus, it became crucial that these women use their political power to fight for their domestic cause.

These women were not feminists; yet, part of their fight for domestic freedoms came through political means. The push for political action was possible as women were fighting for suffrage across the country. However, these women differed from most suffragists in their class status. Most women fighting for suffrage were upper class and fought for feminist issues, whereas the mining women were working class and fought for class and labor issues. The suffrage women and the mining women differed in their political goals, but the mining women were not totally alone. Women were increasingly joining the workforce across the nation. Though the mining town women were not workers, there were women in the United States who fought for working class issues. Further, women helped to reform worker’s rights every day, even in the union. For instance, in 1914, the number of women involved in labor unions in New York grew 111%.\textsuperscript{81} As women joined the workforce, efforts for work reform among females increased. Thus, the Southern Colorado women were remarkable in their efforts, but these actions were possible due to this general time of women’s and labor movements.

The mining women in Colorado were not the first to participate in strike efforts. These women all acted in a time of general women’s and labor movements, some as workers and some as the families of workers. Though not workers, the women in Southern Colorado participated on

\textsuperscript{80} Unknown Author, “Eye-Witness Tells Story of Women’s Mass Meeting,” \textit{Chronicle-News}, 4

account of their families rather than their own labor experiences. However, these women were not the first to participate as mothers and wives. In Pennsylvania, 1900, Mother Jones formed a woman’s auxiliary known as the mop and broom brigade where the wives of strikers harassed a car-load of non-union men.\(^82\) In 1910 during another strike in Pennsylvania at least a dozen women were arrested for disturbing the peace.\(^83\) Women participated in the Lawrence textile strike of 1912. Like Colorado, many of these women were immigrants, but they were also workers differentiating these women from those in Colorado.\(^84\) The women in Colorado were not the first to protest, yet their participation was crucial to the strike and its domestic-oriented goals.

The Colorado Coal Field Strike holds a masculine perception; however, the mining towns consisted of families who participated devoutly to the strike cause. The strike was about family for both men and women as a week before the strike began, 225 coal miners paraded with a banner stating, “We are fighting for our homes.”\(^85\) The women of the mining towns, directly affected by the company, sought to reform its policies to improve their daily lives. These women intimidated anti-strike workers and mine guards, participated in large marches to protest the militia, and followed their leaders, particularly Mother Jones, into action. The mining women were fighting to improve their domestic roles, not challenge them. Though they were not feminists, these women understood they needed to act politically in order to get the working class into office to improve their lives. These actions of protest and reform were done in a time of general women’s and labor movements, making their movement possible though nonetheless remarkable.

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\(^83\) Ibid, 15-16.


The Colorado Coal Strike affected the entire nation as workers and merchants depended on coal for the new industry. Across the states, the media reported on the strike since the beginning. However, the climax took place on April 20, 1914 when the Colorado National Guard fired on the Ludlow tent colony. It is unclear who started the fighting but it ended in the death of eighteen strikers including twelve children and two women. Violence occurred throughout the entire strike; however, the “Ludlow Massacre” shocked the nation as innocent women and children had perished. This event pushed people all over the nation to get involved in the strike efforts. The Ludlow Massacre exemplified the need for corporate responsibility and government protection for workers and their families in times of labor and organized protest.

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Chapter III: The Ludlow Massacre, a Catalyst for Reform

The shooting began at nine o’clock on the morning of April 20, 1914. Tensions between the strikers and the state militia increased during the preceding months, and finally collapsed on this morning. When the shooting began, the tents turned into chaos as the men ran into the hills to deflect the militia, and the women hid their children. In her testimony, Pearl Jolly, a young mining town woman reflected, “[the militia] wanted to fight with the women.” However, this emotionally charged testimony appears skewed, as the only women who died were asphyxiated, not shot. During the battle, these women cared for the wounded, fed those fighting and hiding, and attempted to protect their children. The men tried to get the militia away from the women and children, but the militia stayed in the colony. Mrs. Jolly, a nurse, aided the wounded and made sandwiches for the men fighting and the women and children hiding. A little while later, a

\[87\text{ Andrews, Killing for Coal, 2.}\]
12 year old boy was shot in the head in front of his mother and five siblings trying to find food. Even during times of emergency, the women remained to assist their community. Their roles during this massacre were similar to their domestic roles in the tent colonies as they tried to keep up moral and protect their families. Despite their efforts, eighteen strikers, including twelve children and two women, died during the battle.

News of the battle at Ludlow spread quickly with a focus on the women and children’s deaths. The funerals for those who perished were held on April 25, 1914 in Trinidad. There were 1500 women, a few men, and many children at the funerals in Trinidad. Reporter Frances Wayne of The Denver Post wrote, “[Ludlow] became the synonym of grief, injustice, disaster.” He then described the ruins of Ludlow, and the burned little toys and photographs found scattered around. In his article, Wayne touched on the national sentiment following the Ludlow event. Branding Ludlow as a “massacre” presented the event not as a battle between two even sides, but as an offense by authorities on innocent victims. Not all reactions, however, agreed with Ludlow as a massacre. Coal officials and militia officers, in particular, presented the events at Ludlow as a striker’s plan to get militia out of the strike zone to stop importation of strike-breakers. However, the coal officials, especially Rockefeller, never gained the public support necessary to blame the massacre on the strikers.

After the Ludlow Massacre, public opinion on the event became important to gain sympathizers in the strike. To publicize the union’s side of the story, on May 18, 1914 a group of women involved in Ludlow and their supporters traveled to Chicago, Washington, and New

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88 Priscilla Long, “The women of the Colorado Fuel and Iron Strike,” 70
89 Frances Wayne, “Women Bow at Strike Funeral then Listen for Battle in the Hills,” The Denver Post, April 26, 1914, 4.
90 Ibid.
91 Andrews, Killing for Coal, 7.
York. Pearl Jolly, Margaret Dominiske, Mary Petrucci, and Mary Hannah Thomas gave their testimonies to the Commission on Industrial Relations. Rockefeller reacted to their stories with his own testimony, given by the CF&I director Jerome Greene, to the Commission on Industrial Relations. However, Rockefeller was unable to persuade people against the strikers. The prominent women of Denver openly blamed Rockefeller for the violence at Ludlow, “‘John D. Rockefeller, Jr., is the man at whom the accusing finger should point.” The Ludlow Massacre forced Rockefeller to face corporate responsibility. The idea of corporate responsibility spread from Rockefeller to corporations at large, “Guilty with him are other rich men who lust for gold.” To reconstruct his reputation, Rockefeller hired Ivy Lee, head of public relations, and began his campaign. Though these two opposing sides attempted to gain public support, the Ludlow victims took the lead in humanitarian sympathizers and socialists across the nation.

Despite Rockefeller’s efforts to push blame on the union, this battle became an issue of workers’ rights and humane strike practices. The Denver Post reported, “Ludlow has come to stand for something in our industrial and national history.” This event, particularly the death of women and children, brought the strike to light across the nation, especially in Colorado. Reporting on the strike increased in The New York Times and the Chicago Tribune. Political cartoons on this event were published in The Shreveport Times (See Figure 5), and in every Colorado newspaper. Before this event, the strikers experienced difficulty in gaining support. In one article The Chronicle-News published, “How many times has The Chronicle News called attention in this column to the falsehoods and atrocious fakes circulated in the circles of United

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92 Long, Where the Sun Never Shines, 299-300.
94 Ibid.
95 Andrews, Killing for Coal, 7.
96 Frances Wayne, “Women Bow at Strike Funeral Then Listen For Battle In The Hills,” The Denver Post, April 26, 1914, 4
This negative reaction, thought not congruent among the whole public, discredited the union and the strike cause. Further, as the miners and their families lived in isolation, the strike (before the Ludlow Massacre) was removed from most of the nation. Further, labor strikes and social movements (such as the suffragist movement) increased, making the Coal Strike one small piece in a nation of reform. The Ludlow Massacre brought the Coal Strike to the forefront of media and became a national tragedy, a symbol of oppression and a call to reform.

Figure 5: "Women and Children First" Shreveport Times: May 4, 1914.

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97 Unknown Author, “'Quite Lying’ Says Ammons,” The Chronicle-News, March 17, 1914, 4
The Ludlow Massacre pushed people to be passionate about strikers’ rights, particularly how these rights affected women and children. Renowned socialists such as Upton Sinclair picketed and went on hunger strike in New York and prominent women such as Jane Addams protested in Chicago. This event marked a shift in the women who participated in the strike efforts. Before the massacre, the mining women experienced difficulty getting more prominent suffrage women involved in their cause. After this event, the more prominent women, particularly in Denver, brought it upon themselves to protest the militia in the strike zone.

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98 Priscilla Long, Where the Sun Never Shines, 296.
Chapter IV: The Smoke Clears: Prominent Denver Women Advocate

Humanitarian Actions

Figure 6: Denver Women Protest to Governor Ammons: Denver Post: April 25, 1914.

The Ludlow Massacre promoted a national movement toward the protection of workers and their families both in times of labor and organized strike. The prominent Denver women protested with zeal the presence of the militia in the strike zone and demanded federal intervention and corporate responsibility for the violence which occurred. These women promoted “sisterhood” to aid the victims of Ludlow. Participating in such a cause gave the women authority in politics and reinforced their need to be involved in political decisions. Their actions after Ludlow reinforced their influence in political decisions, gave credibility to humane
labor and strike practices, aided Colorado’s reputation, and promoted a notion of “sisterhood” to the working class women fighting for their families.

The Ludlow massacre quickly became a national issue with an emphasis on the women and children’s deaths. Before this event, suffragist and club women showed reluctance in becoming involved in the strike efforts. This reluctance, evident during a meeting on January 22, 1914 in Trinidad when prominent Denver suffragist Mrs. Williamson failed to show, quickly dissolved after the battle at Ludlow. The Ludlow Massacre pushed prominent women all over the nation to get involved. On April 24th, 1914, two-hundred prominent Denver women held a mass meeting to plan a 1000-woman march to the capital in Denver. These prominent women demanded an intervention by President Wilson and the withdrawal of the Colorado militia in the strike district.99 Credibility for the violence in Ludlow, placed in state and federal hands, extended to these prominent women. State Senator Helen Ring Robinson even blamed the massacre on the ignorance of the strike conditions among these prominent women stating, “We are to blame because we have allowed to pass unchallenged the conditions which have resulted in this terrible warfare.”100 Similarly, Mary C.C. Bradford stated, “such things never would have happened had the women faced the situation during the last strike.”101 These upper class women were educated and respected in society and their voice in the violence at Ludlow added credibility to the strike cause, particularly on the side of women and children. The prominent women found passion for humanitarian practices in the coal mines after the Ludlow Massacre, and acted with full force as voters and citizens of the state.

99 Unknown Author, “Thousands of Denver Women to March to Capitol And Demand of Ammons Withdrawal of Militia” The Denver Post, April 24, 1914, 1.
100 Ibid.
101 Ibid.
The Ludlow Massacre shifted the club women’s involvement from virtually non-existent to an overbearing issue. These prominent Denver women understood the family condition in the mining towns as Mrs. James B. Belford said, “If they lose their jobs those men face bitter poverty; and their women and children always stand by them.” Once involved in the strike issue, these women focused on the family element, as the miners; wives did. These club women had two goals: to get the state militia out of the strike zone and get federal troops in to curb the violence. These women, more educated and less diverse than the working-class miner’s wives, looked to political change in order to help the women and children. The prominent women did not plan to act alone. In the *Rocky Mountain News*, these women published a call to action, “Women of Colorado—For the sake of your slain sisters and their murdered children…we summon you to a meeting at the capitol…” These women gathered strength from women across the state in a political and social reform movement. In the meeting held April 25, 1914, Mrs. Alma Lafferty, President of the Woman’s Peace Organization stated, “We are not here to take sides in this terrible trouble between the strikers and the operators. But we are here to demand of the governor that he at once take steps to bring this civil war to an end.”

On April 25th, 1914, 500 women marched to the capitol in Denver and demanded to see Governor Ammons (See Figure 6). This march included women from Capitol Hill, business women, and wives of laborers. The reporter stated, “This once they would assert their power as citizens and voters to the fullest extent.” As these women acted in a time of women’s political movements, they were able to use their power as voters and citizens. In this meeting, the

105 Ibid.
106 Ibid
suffragist women acted for humanitarian rights, not issues of suffrage, “….determined women come not to talk political rights, not to demand a share of political power, but to insist, as mothers and citizens of the state, that [Governor Ammons] end the warfare…”107 Though the mining town women previously fought for similar issues, they received negative feedback due to the negative connotations of striking.

The miners’ wives also battled negative connotations of class and ethnicity, an issue the prominent women in Denver did not experience. The Ludlow Massacre brought these two classes of women together with a common goal, to provide a safe environment for families. The Denver women promoted an idea of “sisterhood” between the upper class suffragists and the working class mothers. As voters, citizens, and mothers, these women felt compelled to work within their political power to aid those women in Southern Colorado. This cause gave the prominent women political purpose and supported their need to be involved in political decisions. These women wanted to share political responsibility, but with a distinct female identity. Mrs. Alma Lafferty, President of the Women’s Peace Association in Denver stated, “I ask you to be quiet and dignified in presenting these demands. We want to act with credit to all the women in the state.”108 Though politically active, particularly in Colorado, these women fought in politics with a feminine identity. Not all women desired to be “quiet and dignified”, “This is not a time to be ladylike,” Dora Phelps Buell demanded, “let us forget for once that we are ladies. Let us be women.”109 Whether it was “quiet and dignified” or militant, these Denver women acted with a distinct feminine identity.

107 Unknown Author, “1,000 Women will Demand end of Strike,” Rocky Mountain News, April 25, 1914, 3.
108 Unknown Author, “500 Women Corner Ammons in Capitol, Demand Strike End” The Denver Post, April 25, 1914, 3.
109 Ibid.
These prominent women became passionate about the humanitarian issue surrounding the strike, but this issue also gave them a change to reinforce their importance as voters for the general suffrage cause. The women felt they needed to be consulted in legislative matters concerning the strike as Mrs. Lafferty asked, “Why were not the women consulted before an extra session of the legislature was called and the militia ordered into the field once more…whose sons and brothers must go into the field?” As these women protested they also relinquished the fervor of their political activities “They have found out, now, that they can demand, instead of politely resolving and requesting.” The women of Denver gathered as sisters and political reformers, working as a female community while adding credibility to their need for suffrage.

The prominent women promoted political reform and smaller scale relief work. Many women in Trinidad opened their homes to the surviving women and children from Ludlow. The prominent women in Trinidad allegedly gathered arms for the striking miners. Before Ludlow, reports on the people of Trinidad aiding the strike effort was rare, but the Ludlow massacre got people passionate about the strike effort. The prominent women in Denver also got involved in relief work. Three women, including Mrs. Alma Lafferty, received authorization by Governor Ammons to do relief work and conduct an investigation in Ludlow. Citizens of Denver had a similar response, as ordinary men and women started to pay attention to resolutions in the strike zone. On April 26 5000-6000 men and women stood in the rain outside the capitol to

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111 Unknown Author, “Army of Women Camps All Day at State House And Compels Writhing Governor to Do Bidding.” *The Denver Post*, April 26, 1914, 6.
113 Ibid.
hear strike resolutions.¹¹⁵ These resolutions demanded the impeachment of Governor Ammons and Lieutenant S. J. Fitzgarrald accusing them as traitors to the people and accessories to the Ludlow Massacre.¹¹⁶ This procession blamed John D. Rockefeller for the violence in Ludlow, attempting to put political officials and corporate leaders in the line of credibility. These accusations, buttressed by the Denver women’s protests, reinforced the need for industrial and political reform.

The prominent women in Denver protested the presence of the militia in the strike zone and advocated the humanitarian treatment of strikers, women and children in particular. Portraying Ludlow as a massacre, thus victimizing the strikers, pushed these women to use their power as voters and citizens in Colorado to initiate reform. These women fought for Colorado’s reputation while reinforcing their influence in politics. Acting in a time of larger suffrage movements, these women took a stand and gave a voice to the larger suffrage cause. As these women were closely affected by the events at Ludlow, they protested quickly and with fervor. However, Ludlow turned into a national issue, and quickly players across the nation protested the conditions in Colorado.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.
Chapter V: Ludlow as “Massacre”: National Reactions and Protests

The women in Denver acted promptly after the Ludlow Massacre to aid Colorado’s reputation and help their “sisters” in the state. This sentiment, though most distinguished in Denver, blew up nation-wide in protests and relief work. Prominent women all over the nation were asked to get involved after the Ludlow Massacre. On April 24, 1914, the women of the Denver United Garment Workers of America telegraphed millionaire Mrs. J. J. Brown asking her to come aid the Blue Cross society in Ludlow relief.\footnote{Unknown Author, “Mrs. J. J. Brown Asked to Join Union Women in Relief Work,” The Denver Post, April 26, 1914, 6.} Mrs. J. J. Brown answered the need for relief and sent recruits to Colorado for aid.\footnote{Unknown Author, “Goes to Colorado as a Nurse: Mrs. J. J. Brown, at Newport, Answers Appeal of Denver,” The New York Times, April 27, 1914, 20.} Not only were people all over the nation helping in relief work, but they were also protesting the violence in Southern Colorado locally. In Chicago, reformer Jane Addams held a mass meeting to protest the Ludlow Massacre.\footnote{Priscilla Long, Where the Sun Never Shines, 296.} Prominent women all over the nation acted in relief work and protest against the Ludlow Massacre, making humanitarian rights more prominent nation-wide.

The most distinguished post-Ludlow activist was not a women, but socialist author Upton Sinclair. On April 29, in New York, Upton Sinclair led men and women dressed in funeral garb to picket the offices of John D. Rockefeller.\footnote{Unknown Author, “Pickets to Haunt J.D. Rockefeller, Jr: They’ll Wear Crepe on Their…” The New York Times, April 29, 1914, 5.} The picketing resulted in the arrest of Sinclair and four women.\footnote{Unknown Author, “Rockefeller Balks Sinclair Mourners: Crepe-Adorned Pickets Neither…” The New York Times, April 30, 1914, 5.} After Sinclair’s arrest, his wife took lead of the picket line. These arrests gave the picketing another cause, the freedom to picket, or “freedom of silence.”\footnote{Ibid.} The freedom to organize and protest, though more subtle than worker’s rights, was an overarching issue in the miners’ strike, particularly after Ludlow. Tied into the humanitarian issue in Southern Colorado.
was a citizen’s right to protest. Sinclair’s protests in New York made constitutional politics and the right to advocate for change more pronounced in the struggle for worker’s rights. The strikers in Colorado, less educated about politics, focused on work reform to improve their domestic lives. Sinclair, a known Socialist, bolstered the element of political reform.

In jail, Sinclair and his three female associates went on a hunger strike. In a speech, Sinclair described his goal as, “to teach [Rockefeller] that the poor people of Colorado count, and that they have a million friends…and that all of these millions of friends of the people in Colorado want the Rockefeller mines ‘socialized’ and administered in a humane and human manner.” Sinclair’s humanitarian standpoint pinpointed the attitude of many protestors across the nation. This demand for humane working practices was not new, and was done in a time of general labor strike and reform. The Ludlow Massacre and the death of women and children motivated movements toward reform.

Ludlow inspired national movements toward humanitarian reform, and as this occurred during a time of general women’s movements, women participated in movements for reform. The picketing in New York drew in women, as the New York Times noted, two “fashionably dressed women” wore crape paper and joined the mourners. Two prominent women joined the picketing as well, Miss Rodman a “leading apostle of feminism” and Marie Chaloupka. Sinclair’s actions inspired the Women’s Peace Commission in Colorado to picket with black crape paper on their arms to Governor Ammons at the capitol. Upton Sinclair, at the meeting, told these women that, “the time has come to quit being respectable and ladylike and do

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125 Ibid.
something that would produce results.”

The overarching issue of reform challenged women’s social norms and reinforced their positive influence in politics and corporate responsibility. The need to include women was not unknown, as Sinclair, a notorious socialist and controversial activist focused on the actions of women to help promote government and labor reform.

The strike and the events following the Ludlow Massacre focused on humanitarian reform within the mines and the strike effort; however, these events all focused around the overlying issue of political and corporate reform. Upton Sinclair, a socialist, focused heavily on the role of the corporation and the government. Sinclair focused on this issue, “I do this thing because Mr. Rockefeller is here at the very headquarters of the invisible government with all his prestige and his power and his control of the press and police.”

One issue around labor strikes across the nation was the connection of corporations and politics. In Southern Colorado, a main issue among the miners was the corporation’s control of the town’s schools, stores, and government. The Colorado Fuel and Iron Strike sought to resolve this issue and remove corporations from the power of government. Corporate and political credibility directly impacted the miners’ home lives. Resolving the underlying issue of corporate and political power would improve the miners’ domestic realm.

Many blamed Rockefeller for the violence in Ludlow, and demanded that Rockefeller claim a sense of responsibility. After the battle in Ludlow, the conditions in the mines, a direct result of corporate policy, became public. In a speech, Sinclair discussed the reasons for the strike, “The public does not understand that the whole history of mining strikes is a history of promises and concessions made that were retracted and withdrawn as soon as the company found it could destroy the leaders of the men,” Sinclair proclaimed, “the only reason the strikers want a contract

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in the union is that...no other kind of promise is any good.” Sinclair presented the issue of corporate responsibility, corrupt company policy, and the desire for union contract in an attempt to reform corporate practices. Further, Sinclair sought to reform government responsibility and action as he stated, “Why must all the work of reform be left to forces outside of our established institutions? Why is there no lawful way to protect...in a peaceful manner according to the law?” Sinclair focused on the underlying issue of government responsibility and law. As the working class and prominent citizens fought for change, it appeared the government remained stagnant in reform. These labor strikes occurring across the nation were about humanitarian, government, and corporate reform.

The Ludlow Massacre, prompted citizens across the country, including Upton Sinclair, to fight for industrial reform. Women across the country sent relief work to the strike zone, and were not ignored during public protests. Sinclair understood the women’s influence and rallied them in his fight for reform. These actions initiated reform in Rockefeller’s company through a “company union” and public relation campaigns. Though this “union” was more appearance than practice, it shifted the company toward reform. The women, through protests, made their significance in social and political reform known and were considered in Rockefeller’s campaigns.

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129 Ibid.
Chapter VI: The end of the Strike, a Defeat for the Union, the Beginning of Industrial Reform

The national reaction which followed the Ludlow Massacre asserted the need for industrial reform. The strike promoted industrial renovations which directly affected the daily lives of miners and their families. The actions following the Ludlow Massacre promoted humane practices of the government and corporations during an organized strike. The Ludlow Massacre, not necessarily an industrial tragedy, became known as a social tragedy in which innocent women and children died. After this event, Rockefeller focused on rebuilding his reputation and his company through public relations and the incorporation of a “company union.” This event forced the government to examine their involvement in industrial relations and organized strikes. Aside from political and industrial reform, the women’s involvement, both the mining women before Ludlow and the prominent women who followed, demonstrated the need for women’s involvement in politics. This strike gave the working class women a voice for their domestic roles and the suffragist women a voice in political action.

Though the Ludlow Massacre brought the Colorado Coal Strike to the forefront of corporate and political issues, the strike ultimately ended in defeat for the strikers and the union. The corporations had more resources than the strikers: lawyers, government persuasion, and money. Further, coal fueled the economy and, “…production was so great there was no chance of winning the strike.” The union did not have enough resources to continue the strike and it eventually ended in defeat. The coal company suffered losses during the strike as well. By 1914, the CFIC lost $800,000 in profit. It was in government, corporate, and union interest to put an end to the coal strike. Though the strike ended in defeat for the strikers and the union, in a

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130 Priscilla Long. Where the Sun Never Shines, 302.
131 Ibid, 305.
broader long-term sense the strike really was victorious in public relations, corporate reform, and government responsibly in labor. The events at Ludlow strengthened anti-capitalist reform ideas and linked the need for reform to the middle and upper classes. The events which occurred during the strike brought national attention on labor conditions throughout the United States.

The public felt suspicious of large corporations, particularly Rockefeller and the CF&I, for some time. The Ludlow Massacre happened to be the tipping point for industrial reform, and Rockefeller began to focus heavily on public relations. The women’s actions after the massacre made an impression in public relations as Ivy Lee, public relations, stated, “Women are voters in this state and their influence in important in every way.” Women were important as voters, and their actions after the Ludlow Massacre were not ignored by the company, or the public. The Colorado Coal Strike, particularly the events at Ludlow, forced corporations to demonstrate legitimacy to the general public, particularly the people of Colorado. Though the company prevailed victorious in the strike they never gained public respect and had no choice but to reform their reputation and industrial practices.

After the strike, Rockefeller created the Industrial Representation Plan. The Industrial Representation Plan was a “company union” which sought to bring employees and employers together to discuss concerns. This plan, a step towards corporate liberalism, created the appearance of change to improve public opinion. The rise of corporate liberalism made the corporate system humanly tolerable yet gave those who held power a system of control. Corporate liberalism was a compromise between profit and public opinion. The new company union sought to maintain the rights and wealth of corporations, while appearing to consider workers’ rights. Part of the compromise between profit and worker’s rights was the federal

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132 Priscilla Long, Where the Sun Never Shines, 309.
133 Ibid, 300.
government's role maintaining a social and political environment in which large corporations could thrive. The Ludlow Massacre put political pressure on President Woodrow Wilson and Governor Ammons for humanitarian practices. Thus, it became the corporation’s responsibility to reform working conditions so the government would create an environment for profit.

Rockefeller had to reform his company and his personal reputation. After the strike, Rockefeller met with Mother Jones and asked to speak with her about the strike. In 1915 he travelled to Colorado to present his Representation Plan with company employees. Later, he danced with miners’ wives and played with their children. These actions attempted to change public opinion and promote Rockefeller as a humane and relatable business owner. Most workers accepted this plan, though the mine owners rejected aspects such as opening mines to the public. The UMWA also opposed this plan, as its purpose was to defeat the union. However, the plan promoted improvements such as allowing organizers into the mines, fixing up the mining towns, and giving raises to its employees. It was a small step, and ultimately strikes broke out in the coal mines again in the 1920s and the 1930s; however, this reform was a step toward better work and living conditions.

Examining the involvement of the government in corporations, implementing corporate reforms, and incorporating public relations developed out of public demand after the Ludlow Massacre. The government needed to create an environment where corporations could thrive without hindering the workers’ rights. Improvements in workers’ rights came through the “company union” and public relation campaigns. These steps toward reform aided the strikers’ goals of healthier working environments and domestic lives. Women became crucial after this

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137 Ibid, 320.
strike, as their involvement demonstrated their political and social influence. The mining town women influenced women in strikes following the Colorado Coal Field Strike to fight for their domestic goals. These women also challenged working class roles, particularly in politics. The suffragist women, active after the Massacre, reinforced the need for women’s actions in political decisions and strengthened women’s voices in political and social matters. The prominent women adopted the working class mothers as their “sisters,” giving credibility to their cause and support for their families. These women, though not the first to act, were remarkable and sparked long-term reform and the need for women’s involvement in politics.
Conclusion

The Colorado Coal War (1913-15), a direct result of the Industrial Revolution, was a revolt by entire communities against the coal corporations in Southern Colorado. Tensions between strikers and the militia exploded on April 20, 1914 when the Colorado National Guard opened fire on the Ludlow Tent colony and killed twelve children and two women. This battle sparked protests nation-wide and sparked industrial reform in the CF&I. The Colorado Coal War holds a masculinized history, though women played a crucial role throughout the strike. The mining women, mothers and wives of the miners actively participated in the strike’s effort. These women moved into the tent colonies with their husbands and children and created a domestic realm in the midst of chaos. These mining women inhabited complex social and political roles as they fought politically to extend their domestic roles, not challenge them. The miners’ end goals were similar, as they fought for industrial democracy to improve their domestic realms. However, these working class women fought with an agenda that was distinctly female.

The mining women harassed mine guards and scabs, followed leaders such as Mother Jones, participated in large scale demonstrations, and fought politically to get the working class into office. These women were working class immigrants and held a distinct class consciousness due to their social status. They understood they needed to use political elections to get the working class into office to achieve their goals. They worked within the realm of Colorado Female Suffrage (as much as they could given restrictions of citizenship and residency) to educate women to vote and push working class agendas. These women were not the first to participate in labor movements, but their actions in the Colorado Coal were remarkable and crucial to their domestic goals.
These mining women participated in the strike from the beginning, but the Ludlow Massacre acted as a catalyst to get prominent women involved in advocating for humanitarian reforms. These women, particularly in Denver, were upper class and better educated in politics. They protested the presence of the militia and advocated humanitarian strike practices. These upper class women brought the mining women into a realm of “sisterhood,” adding credibility and support to their cause. By participating politically, the prominent women of Denver gave support in their fight for national suffrage as they demonstrated their importance in political decisions. They acted as voters and citizens, but with a feminine identity. These women acted in a time of general women’s movements, making their protests possible and significant to the public.

These women became a symbol for future laborers and suffragists. They demonstrated that the mining camps, among other industries, were family areas and women’s actions during strikes were crucial in support. The more prominent women presented their significance in political decisions and public opinion of corporations. Women were citizens and voters in Colorado, and their actions after Ludlow showed they would use this power to their full capability. The Colorado Coal War stands with significance in industrial history, but when considering the women’s actions, it becomes significant in women’s social and political history as well.

The strike remains a symbol of industrial reform and violence in America’s labor history. Though the strike ultimately ended in defeat for the strikers it did spark reform in the CF&I. The strike also sparked discussions of workers’ rights, humanitarian strike practices, and the role of the government in industry and organized demonstrations. Discussion of humanitarian work practices and the responsibilities of large corporations carried into the “Progressive Era” and are still discussed today. When adding women into this industrial discussion, a better understanding of working class social and industrial history is gained. Women played a crucial role in the
Colorado Coal Field strike, both the working class and the prominent Denver citizens. They advocated for change and demonstrated their importance as mothers and voters in the state of Colorado.
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