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Graybow riot

Wanting better working conditions and pay, workers at the little sawmill town of Grabow, Louisiana, had organized and joined the Brotherhood of Timber Workers. This was part of what is considered the 1911–1912 timber war fought between timber companies and workers in the Piney Woods of west Louisiana and east Texas. The companies had organized to cooperate in setting conditions such as wages, and most employed private police or militias to suppress union activities and labor unrest.

Given the state of arms and control, violent confrontations were frequent over labor issues in Beauregard Parish during this period. The BTW had announced its intention to strike against the major mills in DeRidder, Louisiana, and the surrounding area, and the mill owners and operators were determined to shut down the mills, and lock out and blacklist union workers before acceding to their demands. But the Hudson River Lumber Company, the Long-Bell Lumber Company's subsidiary in DeRidder, was not part of the Southern Lumber Operators Association. It honored the Brotherhood of Timber Workers (BTW) and paid cash rather than scrip to workers.

The Grabow Riot is the term given to an armed confrontation between the Galloway Company's militia and attendees at a union meeting that evening, at around 6 p.m. on July 7, 1912. Three workers and one of the armed thugs were killed. The company and police arrested numerous members of the BTW: ultimately more than 50 were tried and convicted on charges of conspiracy and murder. They were ultimately acquitted.^[2] The Galloway Mill was not affiliated with the sawmill operator's association; it employed some 60–80 workers, of whom only 8–10 were present at the mill at the time of the riot.

Approximately 200 workers had been demonstrating earlier over the weekend at the large corporate mills in Bon Ami and Carson, Louisiana. They were going home from Bon Ami, some 6 miles east of Grabow, when they decided to demonstrate at Grabow. This instantaneous decision led to a violent confrontation at Grabow, resulting in 4 deaths and 50 wounded in a shoot-out of around 15 minutes and an estimated 300 shots. The timber workers and their associates, including the notorious gunman Charles ("Leather Britches") Smith, took part in this exchange of gunfire. Subsequently, 58 of the timber workers' group were tried on charges ranging from inciting a riot to murder. The trial ended in Lake Charles, Louisiana, on November 2, 1912. Most of the men were acquitted and set free; none was charged with murder or inciting a riot. Smith died soon after in a hail of gunfire from 4 deputies on September 25, 1912. There is a historical marker at the site of the riot, on what is now the property of DeRidder Airport, Louisiana.

Louisiana and Texas timber war

Mills

The Louisiana and Texas timber war of 1911–1912 had its origins in the labor uprisings that fought for better conditions in sawmills in Louisiana. The owners of these mills were rich and powerful. Men such as Richard H.