

The Dawson Tragedies

by

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THERE IS STILL A LITTLE LIFE left in Dawson. The few families that protect the Kaiser Steel Corporation interests and other property belonging to the electric company keep Dawson alive. Perhaps the greatest tragedy that befell the city was its abrupt change of hands from a coal mining company to a steel corporation, and moving off of homes that once housed (according to some) six thousand or more people to change the contours of teeming activity to gaping holes that became the grave stones of homes that had been. When a demolition company from Arizona bought Dawson from the Phelps-Dodge Corporation, sixteen houses and some property were not included in the deal because of the large P-D cattle interests. The company had branched out to ranching along with its coal interests in Dawson.

J. B. Dawson, the man who once owned the land on which the mining city was built, had bought it from L. B. Maxwell. Dawson did some small scale mining just before the turn of the century. Dawson was not only a rancher, he was also a businessman. He had a hand in the Dawson Fuel Company, the Dawson Railroad and other interests. A little town was already in the building. By August 1901 fifty miners were digging coal; a year later there was a small school boasting forty pupils and the town itself had fifty homes. With most of the coal going to the new town of Santa Rosa and adjacent area, the Phelps-Dodge Company invested in the Dawson property and acquired it. Dawson is on a paved road. The easiest way to go is to take

Highway 63 out of Raton to Colfax — about half the distance to Maxwell, then right about seven miles. It is in Colfax county. This is placed here because in the last two editions of the American Guide Series, the volume dealing with New Mexico, fails to show Dawson on the map although it does in the completely revised edition of 1962 — so called — list Dawson with a population of 1206 when in actuality it is 32. Then again it lists the hamlet of Colfax close by (population 18) with a population of 13,806. Wonder what Raton has to say to that? It is not the purpose here to give the historical background which had already been covered in an earlier booklet, but to tell of the several tragic events that made the happy little city a place of tears, a Calvary for many, a tombstone for hundreds. More people died in Dawson than in many battles. Valverde was not the only bloodstained place in New Mexico.

This is not the story of Dawson, but rather a review of some of the tragic events that took place there, because the world forgets too soon a place of tears, erecting more monuments to joy and laughter, yet secretly inquisitive about the tragic. The assassination of a president will sell more TV space, newspapers, magazines and books than the visits of all the heads of states. More people know Shakespeare for his tragedies than his comedies. Hamlet is better known than the Merry Wives of Windsor. Thus it goes. The strange thing about the Dawson tragedies is that no one from Dawson ever mentioned them when writing their memoirs. Yet they are part of the history of the town. I have been in and out of Dawson for years; I have met and spoken to hundreds that once called Dawson home; I have read articles by people who lived in Dawson from the first day it gathered its folds and tightened its community life but never once anywhere, by any person, at any time, did the subject come up except a mention in passing that the explosions took place. Unhappy memories are not cherished, but they should not be consigned to oblivion. No one denies the dead a tombstone; every war calls forth a Memorial Day. Dawson no longer has its weeping wall, widow weeds, nor even a townsite. How then shall the muffled

drum beat down memory lane if only to preserve the memory of all those who gave their lives that people might have coal to warm themselves in winter, to feed iron horses puffing up hills and along mountain sides? Many were foreign born. But they rest in American soil. Flanders Fields may have many white crosses, so picturesque in the sun, but there isn't a boy living there that wouldn't want to come home some day where the soil may be no different than death itself, but it is native. The hundreds who gave their lives in Dawson seek not the Glory Road nor even a place in the sun, only a page in New Mexico's history because they died here, which is more than Coronado did. True, Dawsonites begged no one's tears, nor pity, nor help. If this be Calvary, they knew how to make the Way of the Cross. Beyond a few scant Territorial papers, scant attention was paid to these happenings. It seemed a local problem. Ghostly Dawson awaits the Day of Atonement.

The first of the tragedies struck on September 14, 1903. A fire broke out in Mine No. 1. It was later decided that the blaze was started when a curtain in the mine was accidentally ignited. It was fortunate that five hundred miners were able to evacuate the mine before the fire got out of control. Three men were not so fortunate. A negro superintendent and two other men named Serapio Ragel and Miguel Salazar were trapped. Dawson was known for its rescue squads from the very beginning. At one time it boasted a squad of six men whose combined ages totaled three hundred and sixty years. These rescue squads worked in shifts and made some headway. Just when it was thought they would soon reach the three men a violent explosion took place, burning many of the men so that they had to be hospitalized. It was impossible now to save the three men. The fire in the mine was still raging three days later. When all was brought under control and the three finally reached, they were dead. The bodies were shipped to the nearest known relatives. They were well known and popular in Dawson and their deaths cast a gloom on the town not easily cast off. The damage was soon repaired and work went on as usual. The company took every precaution to

prevent another disaster. It was the best equipped mine in the whole area and spared no expense trying to keep it the safest. For a number of years all went smoothly. A large school system was installed and became the pride of northern New Mexico. Five buildings made up the school compound. The civics department held special courses in citizenship and gave seventy pupils diplomas for the course. The State Department was so impressed with the work being done at Dawson that it sent a special letter of congratulations to the superintendent and his staff. George Lewis Fenlon was the type of superintendent to inspire his students. Some of the courses taught under his supervision were first aid, mining, electrical work and other such programs much in advance of their times. One thousand students took these courses. The Federal government, the Phelps-Dodge Corporation, Highland University in Las Vegas all co-operated in making the program a success. Fenlon was a native of Nebraska. When he came to New Mexico he taught in Folsom before coming to Dawson. He married Josephine Mary Toohey.

Another person connected with the growth of Dawson was Harvey Springer, a native of Indiana. He was a school teacher for a time before becoming a miner. He served in the Spanish-American War. After the war he became a postmaster in the mining town of Cambria, Wyoming. He succeeded Postmaster Clark at Dawson. He married Anna Ferguson. They had two daughters, Juanita, who married Earl Scott of Dawson, and Louise. Dr. F. C. Diver was the chief surgeon of the Stagg Canyon Fuel Company, and second chief surgeon of the Phelps-Dodge Company. A native of Michigan, he came to New Mexico in 1907, and took an active part in civic affairs. He married Dazy Hoagland of Kalamazoo, Michigan. They had two daughters, Dorothy Frances and Nedra Leona. Diver, Springer and Fenlon were looked up to by the citizens of Dawson and proved themselves a great help when occasion demanded.

The second tragedy occurred on October 22, 1913. It was a pleasant afternoon. There had been the usual banter among the men; talk of Sunday's ball game; talk of Satur-

day night's dance, shopping, school, the situation in Europe, the demands of the Kaiser, the demands of the Communists (then called Marxists and Bolsheviks). Some of the miners were wondering whether a war might not break out any day. Not a few were thinking that perhaps they might have to give up mining to join the army in the event of war. Some were hoping that the old country, where their parents were born, would not get itself involved. So the talk went as the last cigarette was smoked before preparations for the descent into Mine No. 2. For a time the work went on as usual. It would seem that this afternoon would be no different than any other. In an unguarded moment there was an explosion — a flame and a flash, and the town stood still. Every person in Dawson was petrified. Each one was faced with a question. Is it my Joe? My father? My uncle? My brother? The reporter from the RATON RANGE arrived on the scene. He said that the disaster was so great, so overwhelming that "as you look from face to face upon the silent groups about the street, the homes, the mines, you see written but one word — incomprehension. More than a day has passed, and yet the people on whom the dreadful blow has fallen do not understand. They cannot as a body grasp the horror in its fullness, and are quiet, stunned. Only now and then is heard the keen wail of a stricken woman as the body at the pit mouth is identified. General and violent mourning, so common under similar circumstances, is entirely absent. Heads to the wall, a silent, fast lengthening line of mercifully sheeted figures stretch on the floor of the former commissary, testifies to the truth that is so hard to comprehend. Last night there were twenty-seven of them. Today there will be many more. When the tally is complete it is practically certain that there will be more than two hundred victims. Thus far only seventy-five have been taken out alive. There is no well-founded hope that more than this survive, though it is possible that in remote chambers some may be found.

"Within the fated mine — the 'high line' of No. 2 — lie men in heaps in more spots. The searchers are rightly giving their time to finding any that survive rather than

moving the dead. Trained rescue crews, from Dawson camp, the camps of the Rocky Mountain and the New Mexico-Colorado Coal Mining Companies, as well as the Southern Colorado field, are working in succeeding shifts throughout the day and night under the leadership of Dr. Roberts, of the United States Bureau of Mines, who was fortunately in Trinidad (Colorado) with a government mine safety car when the alarm was sounded, and hastened to the scene. Dr. Roberts also ordered a car from Rock Springs, Wyoming, and another from Pittsburg, Kansas, both of which will arrive sometime today. The splendid response of these volunteers, and the equipment which they carried with them, did much to relieve conditions quickly, and the crews are now working with wonderful efficiency. There are more than enough men on hand to meet all of the requirements.

"Mine Superintendent, Allan French, of the Rocky Mountain Company, was early on the ground and rendered invaluable aid in the organization and direction of the rescue forces. Dr. S. P. Morton, representative of the national Red Cross organization, was directed by his president to go to Dawson and render every possible aid, and through him an offer was made by the society to Governor McDonald of \$1,000 in cash for immediate relief work if desired. This offer was declined with expressions of appreciation, and the statement that if Dawson needed outside help the State (of New Mexico) stands ready to give it. To every such suggestion Dawson has but the invariable answer — 'We can take care of ourselves.' But the appreciation is great.

"The explosion occurred at 3:10 Wednesday afternoon. The first sound was like a sharp high-powered rifle shot, immediately followed by a prolonged muffled roar and a distinct vibration of the earth for several hundred feet around. A solid body of flame shot out at the tunnel mouth more than one hundred feet and was succeeded by volumes of dense smoke. Within a few minutes fifteen living men emerged, many of them stupified and dazed, and some not knowing what had happened nor how they got out. Later a few more were found by rescue crews alive within the mine and resuscitated. Altogether, twenty-five have escaped

alive to date, the following being nearly a complete list: A. Stringer, B. U. Bartee (or Bartel), R. L. Stringer, O. E. Stringer, Charles Short, Eli Cucchi, Andy Donati, C. Uli-barri, Angelo Baski, Joe Marxletti, Marco Nissi, Lorenzo Natali, David Morrison, Vergins Forni, Joseph Larai, Natali Aristidi, George Mavrides, Passoni Paolo, Etienne Pages, Andres Zanardi and Bonocosi Tarieli.

"The men who entered the mine on the fatal day numbered two hundred and eighty-four. It is estimated that about one hundred of these were Greeks, one hundred Italians, twenty Poles and Slavs, and the remainder English-speaking men, of whom a few were colored. The proportion of the married men is unknown. The cause of the explosion is unknown and probably will never be. State Inspector of Mines, Beddow, had left only Monday, after spending two weeks in a thorough inspection of all the mines. It is stated that he was very vigorous in his work, and pronounced Mine No. 2 totally free from traces of gas, and in splendid general condition. Inspector Beddow returned to Dawson on receiving the news of the explosion, and is now on the ground studying conditions.

"The mines of Dawson have long had a reputation for safety, and this is the first disaster to occur there. The company has spared no effort nor expense to safeguard the men, and possesses a marvelously well equipped rescue station. The men have been thoroughly drilled in rescue work, and were well prepared for service in his terrible emergency. Under the terrific test applied to the general organization, within the camp, the men and the officers alike have shown up magnificently, though handicapped by being deprived of their natural leader, Mine Superintendent William McDermott, who, caught in the explosion, has not as yet been found.

"Besides Superintendent McDermott, others who could have rendered invaluable service because of their familiarity with the workings of the mine were counted with the dead. The death of Superintendent McDermott, which is accepted as a fact, is universally mourned in Dawson. He was reckoned as a very able and experienced man, and high-

ly esteemed for his personal worth. He leaves a wife and charming family of six children. It will be many days before the record at Dawson is complete, and the full toll of death disclosed. The known dead are: B. Ulaparri, Arthur English, Walter Johnson, Juan Trujillo, Felix Garcia, Ernest Montoya, Frank Rodrich, Tom McLennon, Ben Logar, Frank Nardi, Giocome Dellaco, Battalon, Dan Romero, E. Simoncini, William Morgan, Hillo Sando, Marselino Romero, G. Diamchi, Michael Angelo, P. Klibarri, G. Bianchi, Baldo Marchelli, Fritz Sitko, Sam Lindsay, M. McShane, two others unidentified. The terrific blast of the explosion precipitated many falls of rock of such dimensions that cross-cutting would have to be resorted to to get around them. Masses of rock and debris fill the main entrance, at which point many men have been vigorously at work from the time of the accident. They must timber as they go, and progress is slow. The mine timbers within are torn out and lie in one direction in some passages and are opposite in others, indicating the direction of the blast in each. In some cases the fall of the rock is reported to be one hundred and fifty feet in height. The extent of the mining operations has been very great, covering a wide area. The passages are intricate and the rooms manifold. A large force of undertakers from surrounding points is on the ground performing the last service to the dead. Schools are closed . . ." (o.c.)

Such tragedies are not enacted on Broadway. But the deeds of William Poyser and James Laird are worthy of the pen of Arthur Miller or even Christopher Marlowe. These two were at the Koehler mine when they heard the news. They rushed to Dawson, and despite the protests of the people, entered the mine to aid in the rescue work. There was a sudden rush of escaping gas and they were asphyxiated. Their bodies were also brought to the old commissary and covered with sheets. "Greater love than this hath no man," the Great One once said. His doctrine, His faith, His love was in action that fatal day. How could the world have changed so in a little over a decade? Thirty-eight people watch a young lady being stabbed to death in a large city; others hear the pleas of a girl being raped and beaten in an

office building; a girl uses a knife to defend her virtue and she is arrested — the apathy, the decline of the moral code; the meanness and dog eat dog attitude — The bravery of the women, heroic deeds of others, love for the stricken, and so many other things that made Dawson proud in spite of its tears. These miners were hard working men. Over in Europe many will have no bread because the payments ceased as of this day. More than a mine was blasted. Hope died, for not a few who the counted coins that would eventually add up to passage to the Land of Freedom. Greeks, Italians, Slavs, Poles, Japs, Chinese — they weren't working in the Dawson mines for love of mining but for love of those left behind in the "Old Country." The promise was there and might have been faithfully kept if these did not have a rendezvous with death. So tears were shed on both sides of the ocean. Only the dead knew no tears. Rev. Cellier came in from Springer. How many blessings; how many anointings. Yet the thought was ever there: Who would write their loved ones of the terrible news? The Rev. Harvey H. Shields, Episcopal minister from Raton, came in to offer consolation to the bereaved. Rev. Samuel Magill, Presbyterian minister of Raton, also arrived to help. It was pathetic—so many widows, so many brotherless, husbandless, when just a few hours before all was gaiety and laughter. Dawson was a place of laughter; it was a place of music, song, dance, games, piety, happiness — it was also a place of tears. So the coffins were brought in from Las Vegas, Raton, Trinidad, Albuquerque and other places. The possessions started to various points where they would be deposited in the earth. Superintendent William McDermott was taken to Trinidad. It was quite a funeral. There he lies in the Colorado soil forgotten after all these years; a martyr of friendship and loyalty to his men. Superintendents usually don't move into mines with employees. He did, and gave life's full measure of devotion. It is the American way of life. One is almost tempted to say — it was. Dawson seemed to have a monopoly on fellowship and friendship which is why these deeds should be recorded for future generations. James Laird was also buried in Trinidad. Poy-

ser was buried in Fairmount in Raton next to his brother who had been killed several years before in another mine explosion at Blossburg. Giovanni Nissi was buried in St. Patrick's Cemetery in Raton. G. W. McGaw, T. S. Pattison — the list of the dead continued, who but the lonely heart would know and count? Time has dimmed the memory of that day. But why should it be forgotten? It wasn't as if these men were doing a day's work. They were not selfish people — gold or silver prospectors; they were men working for a cause; dedicated men anxious to unite their families and educate them to the American way of life. Under the ground digging coal they were all equal — Greeks, Slavs, Latin Americans, Poles, Chinese, Japanese, Italians, Germans — negroes. Every time they lifted a pick, every hour that passed, every dollar earned envisioned new hopes, new dreams, new possibilities — another day, another month, my Maria, my Pepita, my loved ones would arrive and we will make our home in Raton or Springer or Trinidad and my kids will be great Americans. So the explosion came. So hopes died, so Maria and Pepita and all the others never came to the Promised Land because there was an explosion in Dawson that Wednesday afternoon.

When the dead are laid away the living return to the daily routine and their memories. The first anniversary of the tragedy soon rolled around and Dawson held its memorial service for the two hundred and sixty-three men lost in the blast. The company remembered each widow at Christmas and she received five hundred dollars. Later they were paid fifteen hundred in compensation, and those with children received two hundred extra for each minor. In those days the value of the dollar was much more than it is today even though all the money in the world would not bring back the beloved lost on that fatal day. But the living, though mourning silently, had to carry on. It is the way of the world. Soon Dawson dried its eyes or at least locked away in its inner recesses the scenes of all those coffins being moved out, and returned to work, to play and to living. Others replaced the dead. It is always so, for no one is indispensable. Dawson was aware that from coal

miner to president "the show must go on." And it did. All went well until 1920 when several more lives were lost in No. 6 and No. 1. It has been said that two hundred and eighty-six lives were the final toll (some dying later) in the 1913 explosion. Then came that afternoon, February 8, 1923. Time: 2 p.m. W. D. Brennan was manager of the camp. One hundred and forty men had checked in for work that day; eighteen checked out at various times. One hundred and twenty-two men were busily engaged in digging coal. Scott Dupont, the underground superintendent, was but a few feet from the entrance, on his way in, when an explosion occurred hurling him several feet. Gabe Zeller of Raton was talking to Elmer Sherfick of Dawson near the car barn when falling debris flattened them. The scenes of 1913 were repeated. The force of the explosion was so great that the entrance to the mine, which was of re-inforced concrete, resisted the shock no more than so much paper, being torn to atoms. One now saw an immense gap in the side of the hill where the entrance had been. No hope was offered for the one hundred and twenty-two trapped men. But Charles Cantalie and Ferlini Martin did come out alive. They had no explanation for it, nor did anyone else for the mine quickly filled with gas.

The escape of two men offered hope that others might be alive. It was a strange thing indeed that the miners in No. 6 mine were not aware of the explosion or of the dead in No. 1 mine. Yet the two mines were but fifty feet apart. The first they learned of the tragedy was at four-thirty in the afternoon when they were through with work. The explosion occurred when of No. 1 entered to work. If it had been but a few minutes before at the change of shifts perhaps no one would have been killed since the mine was emptied of the earlier shift and had not yet received the next. One of the pathetic cases of this particular tragedy was that of Albert English, Jr. This young man was well known and well liked in Dawson. His sunny disposition was indeed infectious; his ready laughter part of the life-line of the youth of Dawson. He actually had no connection with No. 1 mine but had transferred from another to

replace a man who had gone home ill, and had decided to work in No. 1 just for a day. It was the customary thing to do. Nor was it uncommon at Koehler, Van Houten, Brilliant, Sugarite, Yankee and Gardiner. He had lost a brother in the small explosion of 1920. It also chanced that his father belonged to the No. 1 mine crew. A. E. English was one of the first bodies brought out by the rescue squad. In this squad was Fred English, at that time seventeen years of age, and the star forward on the high school basketball team. It was a bitter pill to swallow to learn that he would assist at the funerals of both his father and brother.

The mine proper was about two miles from the town-site. In short order the distance between was crowded with people. One witness said that what he remembered mostly was the terrible and pitiful confusion; the cries of the affected wives and mothers. Some fainted. School was immediately closed, and the children ran to the scene. They added their screams and cries to the crabbed condition already a pandemonium. All the people could do was stand and wait. Many prayed that their beloved ones would be taken out alive even though hurt. After the first shock wore off all quieted down and awaited the results — one way or the other.

Out of the chaos came order. Although the Rocky Mountain Company offered aid by way of its rescue squads, Dawson thanked the company and said it would take care of things without outside help. The men of the town volunteered to serve on the rescue squads; the women worked all night preparing warm lunches and served as volunteer First Aid workers. The rescue crews were in constant danger because of the falling rock and dirt that hampered their operations. Many mine cars were pinned down by huge rocks and dirt. The men worked in four-hour shifts. Once above ground again the ladies served them hot lunches and coffee. Over three thousand sandwiches were consumed in the three days that the rescue work was carried on. Mrs. G. M. Hanson, head of the Red Cross in Dawson, masterminded the women and kept things rolling. This was a feat in itself since many of the women she had to deal with knew no

English. Many of the families were poverty stricken. The loss of the bread-winner added to the gloomy outlook for the future. Judge T. L. Kinney was the coroner. He called together a jury composed of Celso Chavez, Jacob Grubrsic, Ralph Trini, J. Trini, J. Q. Welch, Frank Morehead and Paul Carson to make the pronouncements as to cause of death and to identify the bodies as they were carried out of the disaster area. The Dawson company undertaker and Errington of Raton were assisted by the two undertakers from Las Vegas. Coffins came from all over the state as these mortuary men were not equipped to attend so many at once. After all the bodies were checked out they were prepared for burial. Many were buried right there in the Dawson cemetery. A number were buried in Raton. It was a Saturday afternoon long remembered with the various processions to cemeteries. Rev. Russell accompanied the body of his son-in-law, Robert Holmes, to Roy, New Mexico, for burial. It was an old fashioned hearse drawn by two white mules. The people of Roy gathered to pay their respects and to grieve with the minister and the Holmes family. So the white crosses, the tombstones marked the resting places in Dawson, Trinidad, Roy and Springer. Masses were chanted, sermons preached, services read, condolences extended and Sunday dawned.

There had been a ball game scheduled for that Sunday afternoon. This was not unusual for during those years Dawson was the sports capitol of New Mexico. It sponsored baseball, boxing, wrestling, handball, tennis, swimming, drama, football and other sports and was advanced in many of its programs for youth. A person had to be very sick not to be sports minded in Dawson. The question was whether the game should be canceled. It was decided to go ahead with it since that is the way those who departed would have wanted it. Some of those killed in the explosion were members of the team. It was considered as a sort of Memorial Service and the hearts of many were not in it but they felt they were doing it for their former companions. Some of the teams played at this time were Raton, Trinidad, Yankee, Sugarite, Brilliant, Koehler, Springer, Roy,

Morley and Maxwell. The "arch-rival" was Van Houten. Dawson would rather beat Van Houten than win any other game. After the game there was a picnic. In the evening there was a dance. This was the way of life in those days. Gone now, like a ship in the night, as is the city of Dawson itself. So many stories made the rounds as is usually the case in such incidents. Stories of near happenings, heroic happenings and might have happenings. There were the usual letters to the Old Country explaining why no more checks would arrive.

The known dead were: Nick Arvas, Martin Kemp, Paul Stamos, Frank Tomasoni, Gust Scopelitis, Ernesto Tozzi, George W. Lemming, Criss Scapelitis, Anton Lira, Tomasi Guiseppe, Antonio Geronimo, Francisco Romero, Evangelos P. Chibonkis, Nick J. Retsias, Antonio Scantalis, Angelo Polumbo, Claude Litchford, Marcial Alamillo, Nick Volanis, Jesus Varranco, Anacedo, Alamillo, Mich Stavocich, Odorino Gatti, Frank Nardini, Floryan Papis, George Liguzos, George K. Psyhas, Joseph Pokorn, Earl Graves, Ben H. Mullins, John Janakas, Toni Zanoni, George Kallas, Harry Morrison, Jose Cortez, Burley Cenotto, Earl Duke, Albert E. English, Alec Kerr, Clifton C. Estes, W. R. Holmes, Rode Maricich, Fred Trujillo, Albert English, Roy Trujillo, Antonio Montoya, Pete Santella, Joe de Lost, Mike Kapich, Luigi Cassai, Jim Lorenzo, Pacifici Santi, Pete Vucinich, Nick Papas, George Markis, John Dallas, John Karamougis, Nick Perovich, John Stoyhoff, Genero Gatti, Alex Aguilar, Julian Domingues, Fermin Gallegos, Ponfilo Cordova, Filiberto Vialpando, Juan Pinedo, Julian Archuleta, Felix Gardea, Cruz Rodriguez, Gios Marachino, Nazarene Curzi, Baldo Pellegrino, Frenche Bonaventura, Carlos Necas, Isidoro Gomez, Ben Sena, Miguel Rosales, Marcelo Velesquez, Pat Chavez, Juan Cruz, Jose Anastacio Maestas, Gregorio Duran, William S. Davis, Gabino Calderian, Manuel R. Ybarra, Segundo Ybarra, Benceslado Maisz, J. Austin Green, E. C. Fimpel, Jesus Mares, John Wilson, Al Trujillo, Matt Gasparac, J. A. Mondragon, Alonzo Carlozar (Salar), Cruz P. Costa, George Charette, Louis Capen, Tony Oblock, Leandro Gonzolez, Pete Kapech, Aaron Simpson,

and the bachelor employees. There is a church in charge of an Episcopal clergyman, but free for services of all denominations (Catholics later had their own church and a resident clergyman. It also sponsored a Knights of Columbus group, Altar Society, Ladies Aid, Christian Mothers). There are also three commodious public schools; lodge rooms; a fine theatre which has yearly contracts with some of the best circuit troupes; billiard hall; bowling alleys; stores, where all necessities and many luxuries may be procured; and a bank, where foreign and domestic exchange is issued. These and other modern utilities furnish the town with most of the conveniences and means of instruction and recreation to be found in towns of metropolitan pretensions. Buildings and streets are lighted by electricity; good water is supplied free, and the town is policed by efficient officers.

"The machinery of the mines is operated by electricity and has a capacity of 2,310 horsepower. Sixteen motors, Jeffreys, Westinghouse and Goodman types, haul the loaded cars from the partings within the mine to the yards outside at No. 1 and No. 2 mines, to the tippie at the No. 5 mine, and the parting at the head of incline to the tippie at No. 4 mine, whence the cars are loaded by rope to the tippie. The motors haul the empty cars back to the mines. At mines No. 1 and 2 five steam locomotives — Porter, Vulcan, and four Goodman and two Sullivan mining machines are used intermittently, about two percent of the coal produced being mined by machine. Each mine has a water system for protection against fire and for humidifying the mine air. The water mains along the main entry are 3-inch pipe in all laterals and cross entries. Although little fire damp has been found in the mines, the management gives careful attention to keeping the mines clear of gas and maintaining thorough ventilation. Eleven fire bosses are employed in the four mines. The fire bosses examine all workings for indications of fire damp or other noxious gas before the men are allowed to enter the mine. A record book is kept in a check cabin, near the mouth of each mine, wherein a record is made of gases found, and the miners are prevented from going into a locality where gas is con-

sidered dangerous.

"A very commendable method put in practice during the past year is to have each fire boss report any unsafe conditions in the working places which it is his duty to examine. He notes unsafe conditions in a memorandum book supplied him and marks the unsafe spot or locality. This record applies to timbers lacking, timbers broken, unsafe roof, etc. When the fire boss comes from the mine he copies these notes in a record book, duplicated by carbon sheet, stating particularly where there is imminent danger and need of immediate attention. It is the duty of the pit boss, when he comes on shift, to examine this record, and if any place needs immediate attention he keeps the workmen out, and either goes himself to the place or sends an experienced workman to remedy the dangerous condition at once. The pit boss tears out the duplicate record from the book and carries it into the mine, and it is mandatory that he visit each place noted as requiring attention before noon that day and remedy the conditions the fire boss complained of. By this method, some person is made responsible for a knowledge of conditions at every place within the mine, and if an accident occurs the responsibility can be placed definitely. It is true that a workman may change a safe condition to a dangerous one, as by a few blows of the pick; but such changes, made after rooms or entries have been shot, usually the preceding night, are easily discernible. The company employs a mine inspector. The company uses the Smith gob pump at the mines. This pump is the invention of Jo Smith, general superintendent of the Stag Canyon Fuel Company at Dawson. The main building of the rescue station is built in mission style. It is of pleasing appearance and built against a hill. It had an office, library, meeting room and drill rooms. Practice meetings at which the men familiarize themselves with the use of helmets in rescue work, are held two nights each week. Night-school classes are held two nights each week for men taking correspondence courses and for anyone who may care to attend. A technical library is being installed . . ." The inspector went on to describe the rescue station building in

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detail, even including a diagram and cutaways of the building. He next went on to describe each mine and what he found there. In fact, he is more specific about Dawson than Brilliant, Yankee and all the other mines put together. His pages of coverage of the Dawson mine by far exceed the complete inspection of all the Rocky Mountain camps. Not that the Rocky Mountain people were not just as particular, but that no one could ever say that the inspector took his job too lightly. His inspection was minute to the detail. His report the year before was even more detailed. He is particular about everything. "On top of the shaft an explosion door is so adjusted as to give vent to any violent action from below and divert pressure from the fan. A steel stairway, with landings at frequent intervals, is built in the fan shaft to afford access in case of an accident." Dry reading, this, but it does bring out that the inspection was thorough.

Despite all the latest equipment, the inspections, the rescue squads, the constant drills, the safety measures, helmets and what have you, still these disasters took place. There's the rub. One suspects that safety is not measured in precaution. Car manufacturers have tried and tried but still the accidents continue. Dawson could not afford to walk at the edge of sadness or it would always be the razor's edge. To have been born in Dawson is a distinction not accorded many. These have memories different from most of the country.