

THE HISTORY OF DAWSON

NM Mine File No. 476

---Ruth McKinley

Dawson never was a coal camp. It was a city. Over 6,000 people once resided here; it was a city in government, in civic pride, in progressiveness. Dawson was the banner coal producer, the mammoth mineral deposit, the almost sole fuel source for an area equal in size to one-sixth of the United States, all of which will be admitted as evidence that it was a place of considerable importance.

Many years ago, before New Mexicans thought much of any industries besides sheep, cattle, ranches, freighting over the Santa Fe Trail, and a little gold and copper mining, the ground occupied by Dawson and the tributary coal lands was a part of a ranch and supported, perhaps, a score of souls.

The environs of the place lead you to expect anything but a coal camp. Your arrival adds to this impression, and a glance up the street, as you start across toward the park, where the hotel stood until it was dismantled in March, 1939, confirms it. There must be some mistake about this, you meditate, this is a cozy, hustling little western city, with a great many comfortable homes, instead of the bleak, ugly, mineral painted, raw-pine-and-corrugated-iron collection of shacks that experience tells you to anticipate when arriving in a mining settlement.

Dawson and all its environs are now owned by the Phelps-Dodge Corporation, which is well known in New York, New Mexico, and Arizona. This corporation is the fourth owner since the days of the original grantees. Maxwell, who received it as part of the "Maxwell Grant" from Beaubien and Miranda, sold it to J. B. Dawson, who sold it in October 3, 1901, to the Dawson Fuel Company. In December, 1905, the present owners, the Stag Canyon Fuel Company, bought it. This was five years after the first mine had opened.

The houses themselves are worthy of comment. As has been stated, there are no shacks. The Company provided good substantial houses. There was no and still is no "poorer section" in the sense in which the term is used in cities. So it happens that the miners are of the better class, of the type that appreciate the beauty of nature, and perhaps because of the long hours spent underground, enjoy the flowers and lawns and urge vines to clothe their homes.

Dawson, until July 3, 1931, had a bank which was capitalized at \$50,000 but having deposits of \$170,000.

The city telephone system is worthy of mention.

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The paved road which was constructed in 1948 was indeed a great asset to the town.

There were four schools in Dawson at one time. Central School had two buildings and five teachers. In District No. 2, there were four teachers. And the Lorita school had one teacher. They were supported largely by the company. Today there are only two, Central and Douglas.

The company hospital was a very large one for a coal camp, there being twenty-six beds in wards and private rooms. It still stands but was closed in 1946.

There were nine mines at one time; all are closed now except one, which will close on April 28, 1950. More than 33 million tons of coal have been dug at Dawson.

It has been forty-four years since Dawson was first sold to J. B. Dawson, for whom it was named; it will close April 28, 1950.

Dawson will be dismantled.