



DAWSON

"Now fades the glimmering landscape on the sight,
And all the air a solemn stillness holds."

Thomas Gray, "Elegy in a Country Churchyard"

A friend and I were talking about shooting stars. He said that something so beautiful and brilliant should have an associated sound, and yet there is none.

That's the way I think about Dawson.

QUICK STATS

- **COUNTY:** *Colfax*
- **LOCATION:** *14 miles northeast of Cimarron*
- **POST OFFICE:** *[1895-1954](#)*
- **NAME ORIGIN:** *Named for the original owner of the property*
- **RATING:** 👤👤👤👤
- [GNIS Info & Map](#)

If you've heard about Dawson at all, chances are you've heard it was the site of two of the world's worst mining disasters. It was, but it was also a town of over 9,000 people, complete with schools, an opera house, a hospital, a hotel, a gymnasium, a church - even a bowling alley. It was a company town, owned and operated by Phelps Dodge, and a home for miners who had come from all over the world.

People fell in love in Dawson. Little girls cried when they skinned their knees. Someone dreamed about leaving, seeing the world and becoming famous. Dawson could have been Anytown, USA. But two terrible mining disasters, one on [October 22, 1913](#), and another in [February of 1923](#), ensured that Dawson would forever be remembered with sadness as well, and that may be the worst tragedy.

Over 350 white iron crosses in the Dawson Cemetery mark the graves of those who perished in the mining disasters. The cemetery is now the only part of Dawson still open to the public after Phelps Dodge shut the town down in [1950](#). These silent sentinels, some with individual names and some unmarked, are moving reminders of the tragic deaths of the victims. And, more importantly, their lives.

I visited the Dawson Cemetery at twilight. The air was cool and I was alone, and yet, of course, not. I walked slowly through the dried grass, thinking that the crosses would always be here, guarding the mountain.

A childish but persistent thought nagged me: Are they cold?

Now, many miles and many days away from my visit, I remember the miners sleeping in the cemetery at the foothills. When I reflect on my visit, I feel that just by thinking about the place I am intruding on its solitude, interrupting it mentally. I know that the crosses - larger in memory than they probably actually are - still exist, still guard, still remind. I know that the air still hangs heavy with something that should be making a sound but isn't. Can I hear it now that I'm gone? I listen harder, but nothing comes. Dawson, like a shooting star, is silent.

ADDITIONAL PHOTOS

(click on the thumbnail image to see a larger picture)



A finely-crafted wrought-iron gate marks the entrance to the cemetery.



Lonely iron crosses guard the mountain.



The crosses are silent reminders of tragic times.



The Dawson Historical Marker shines in the twilight.

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