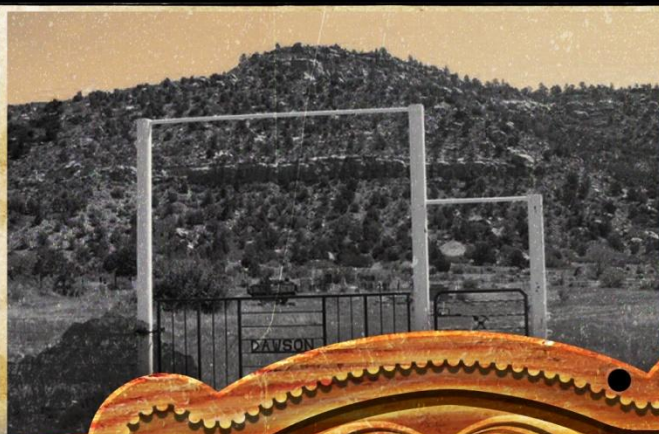




# REPORT

## DAWSON CEMETERY

INVESTIGATION



*Dawson  
New Mexico*

**NM070**

### SOUTHWEST GHOST HUNTERS ASSOCIATION

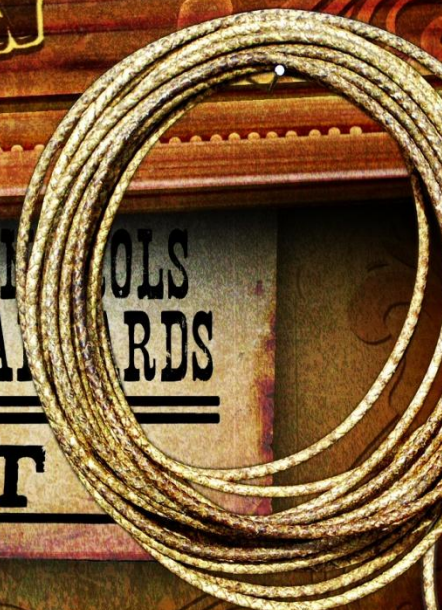


**SOLVED**

**2000**

COMPLIMENTS  
STANDARDS

**WWW.SGHA.NET**





## Forward

The word “investigation” is defined as  
“a searching inquiry for ascertaining facts; detailed or careful examination.”

The key word here is “facts”. Do ghosts exist? No, it has not been proven.  
Therefore are no facts to investigate.

What we do have is the testimony of the witnesses and this is where an investigational process will work. Investigations are often viewed as a skeptical activity because the main goal is trying to determine what the witness actually saw. Is it explainable or not? This is done through critical thinking and an event replication process developed by SGHA. This is an important concept because what defines a haunting or ghost sighting is “Multiple witnesses reporting unusual phenomena over a period of time”. If these phenomena can be explained, the witness reports are no longer validating paranormal activity as a cause and thus there is no ghost or haunting. Additionally historical research may be done in an attempt to validate facts.

It is important to understand that the goal of an investigation is not to find evidence of the paranormal but to attempt to identify any natural or manmade causes of the reported phenomena

### Definition of Terms

**Investigation Status:** Unsolved investigations will have either an open or closed status. An investigation is given an “Open” status if:

The investigators were unable to replicate all of the witness events. Something significant remains that is still unsolved.

It is important to understand that an “open” investigation does not mean that the unsolved facts are paranormal in nature. It simply means that we have exhausted our resources and cannot solve the “open” items/events.

A “Closed” status indicates that there is insufficient data or confounding variables that prevents replication or identifying possible explanations. This often occurs when investigators do not have direct access to witnesses or some other environmental change have occurred that creates confounding variables.



## Confidentiality Notice

Many of the witnesses interviewed have wished to remain anonymous in exchange for presenting their accounts of paranormal experiences. We honor that request and thus witnesses will often be identified by aliases. Any coincidence between aliases and actual persons is unintentional.

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## Part 1: Location Information

Dawson Cemetery

Dawson, New Mexico

## Part 2: Location History



In 1906, the mines were purchased by the Phelps Dodge Corporation. The corporation needed to attract workers to the remote location, so they built homes for the miners, along with numerous other facilities including a hospital, department store, swimming pool, movie theater, and a golf course. With these amenities,

Phelps Dodge was able to maintain a stable employment rate despite the inherent dangers of mining and the isolation of northern New Mexico. Many of the miners were recent immigrants.

In total, the Dawson coal operations had ten mines, numbered 1 – 10 in the immediate vicinity of Dawson. The mines are generally referred to as "Stag Canyon #", a reference to the operating company, but they are also often referred to as "Dawson Mine #", in reference to their locale. Different web pages which use GNIS data have the Dawson Mine No. 5 as being located eight miles north of the other mines. In looking at other source documents found in Google Books, this appears to be an error. The actual Dawson Mine No. 5 was located along the Vermejo River, near the town of Laurretta.

Several of these mines were connected to the coal processing and loading facilities in Dawson by means of an electric powered narrow gauge (36 inch gauge) railroad. This railroad was apparently 6,600 feet in length, running along Rail Canyon from the entries of Mines 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6. Mines 5 and 7 also connected to this line through underground connections to the other



mines, but they also had their own tipples. Cars would be loaded inside the mines, taken outside and then transported in trains of cars to the facilities in Dawson proper. This line served the No 1 & 2 Tipple, located in Rail Canyon.

Mines 8, 9 and 10 are located to the SW of the town of Dawson, and early research indicates that they had their own mine tipple for coal cleaning and loading into standard gauge railroad cars for delivery to customers. These three mines also had an electric powered railroad inside the mines which led to their own tipple, but they apparently were not connected to the other mines.

The coal was cleaned of non-combustible debris and sorted into general sizes for different uses. In addition to the coal processing facilities, there also were coking ovens which processed the coal, transforming it into coke which was used for metal processing by Phelps Dodge at other facilities. The coking ovens produced carbon monoxide gas, which was captured and then burned to create steam for generating electricity for mine machinery and electric lighting, both in the mines and in the towns around the mines.

The Dawson Railway was purchased by Phelps Dodge at the same time and made part of its El Paso and Southwestern Railroad system. The EP&SW was later purchased by the Southern Pacific Railroad, which also purchased long term contracts for the coal production from Dawson. The SP used steam locomotives which were mostly fueled by oil, but the operating division located at Tucumcari utilized coal fueled steam engines, the only group of such locomotives on their roster.

### **MINERS BURIED ALIVE**

### **RESCUE PARTIES RUSH WORK CLEARING DEBRIS.**

### **FORMER MINE EXPLOSION AT DAWSON, N. M., CAUSED THE DEATH OF 263 MEN.**

Dawson, N. M. – A terrific explosion that rocked the workings of coal mine No. 1 of the Phelps-Dodge Corporation here entombed 122 miners working inside.



The explosion occurred at 2:30 o'clock in the afternoon and tore away all of the heavy concrete work at the mouth of the mine entry. Within a short time after the blast rescue workers had cleared the debris from the mouth of the mine and a rescue crew, led by W. D. Brennan, general manager of the mine, entered. The imprisoned miners were about 5,000 feet from the portal of the mine.

The cause of the explosion is a mystery. A statement by the company declared the mine was well sprinkled and was not gaseous.

The explosion did not wreck the mine fan and ventilation soon was established.

The explosion was the second in Phelps-Dodge property here, a similar accident in mine No. 2 wiping out 263 lives in 1913.

While company workers who volunteered for rescue duty were continuing their efforts the United States bureau of miners started a rescue car here from Hanna, Wyo., and a second car sent by the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company was sent from Trinidad.

Almost before the reverberation from the explosion ended, scores of women and children, members of the families of the miners, ran to the mouth of the property. Weeping for their loved ones inside they pressed forward about the cordon of guards formed in front of the mouth of the mine. The guards kept them back so that the work of rescue parties would not be hampered.

The loss of life may be large, although the usual precautionary measures taking in the mining operations will undoubtedly result in saving those in the inner workings of the soft coal mine beyond the immediate field of the explosion. The mine is one of the largest operated by the company at Dawson and was previously the scene of a subterranean tomb as the aftermath of the blast.

For more than a week rescue [sic] crews braved the dangers of falling debris, fire, and gas, before the last bodies of the miners killed in the blast and fire were recovered. Officials at the time were unable to account for the disastrous explosion in the Stag canon mine No. 2, but officials, following the accident, declared it was their belief that a miner, with an open lamp



had encountered an unknown pocket filled with gas, which was exploded, wrecking the mine.

Dawson is one of the largest coal mining camps in the United States. Four mines are operated at that place, the total population of the camp numbering about 5,000.

(Akron Weekly Pioneer Press, Akron, CO 16 Feb 1923)

**125 ENTOMBED BY BLAST IN MINE  
WHERE MANY WERE KILLED IN 1913**

EAST LAS VEGAS, N. M., Feb. 8 (Associated Press.)—Approximately 125 miners are entombed in Mine No. 1, a soft coal pit, at Dawson, N. M., following an explosion late today, according to a telephone message received here. Many lives were lost in an explosion in the same mine in 1913.

The explosion, which occurred at about 2.30 o'clock (mountain time) wrecked telephone lines out of Dawson and direct communication with the town was impossible. The information received here came from Dawson Junction, nearby.

At 4.30 o'clock all the miners of the day shift who were in the mine when the explosion is reported to have occurred were still entombed, according to the message.

All the heavy concrete work at the mouth of the main entry was ruined by the explosion, indicating that the extent of the blast in the deeper workings was tremendous.

The debris choking the mouth of the entry was partly removed at 4 o'clock this afternoon and a rescue crew entered, accompanied by W. D. Brennan, general manager of the mine.

Mine No. 1 at Dawson, the largest in the district, is owned by the Phelps-Dodge Corporation. Calls for help have been sent to the St. Louis, Rocky Mountain and Pacific Mining Company at Raton.

Dawson did not become a ghost town until 1950, when the Phelps Dodge Corporation shut down the mines. At closure, Mine 6 was the largest producer, and several other mines had been previously closed out because of declining demand. The closures were also due in large part to the completion of the twenty-five year coal contract with the Southern Pacific Railroad. The entire town was sold or razed, with some of the miners' houses moved to other locations.

([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dawson,\\_New\\_Mexico](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dawson,_New_Mexico))



### **Part 3: Witnesses**

We were not able to locate any witnesses to the reported phenomenon. The sources of the information we used to conduct our investigation was a 3rd hand account from an employee at the St. James Hotel in Cimarron.

The site is also listed in the book "The National Directory of Haunted Places" by Dennis William Hauck.

### **Part 4: Reported Phenomenon**

Many people have reported feeling strange cold spots near certain graves on otherwise very hot days. These cold spots and other strange stories of male voices whispering words of warning and danger and moans. People also claim to see human-shaped patches of fog drifting through the area. These forms dissipate into the night air leaving no trace.

### **Part 5: Investigation**



Historical investigations of the claims failed to turn up any witness or historical accounts of the haunting or any other unusual events occurring at the town site or cemetery. If the "ghosts" really were of the miners from 1913 there should be some sort of report of the unusual activity going on at the cemetery since the town did not "close

down" until 1950. Several detailed references, including "Coal Town: The Life and Times of Dawson, New Mexico Paperback – January 1, 1995, by Toby Smith" do not mention anything unusual about the old town site or its cemetery.

We conducted three investigations of the site with observation teams watching the cemetery and surrounding area looking for anything that could have been interpreted as paranormal or a ghost. The observations from the teams are as follows;

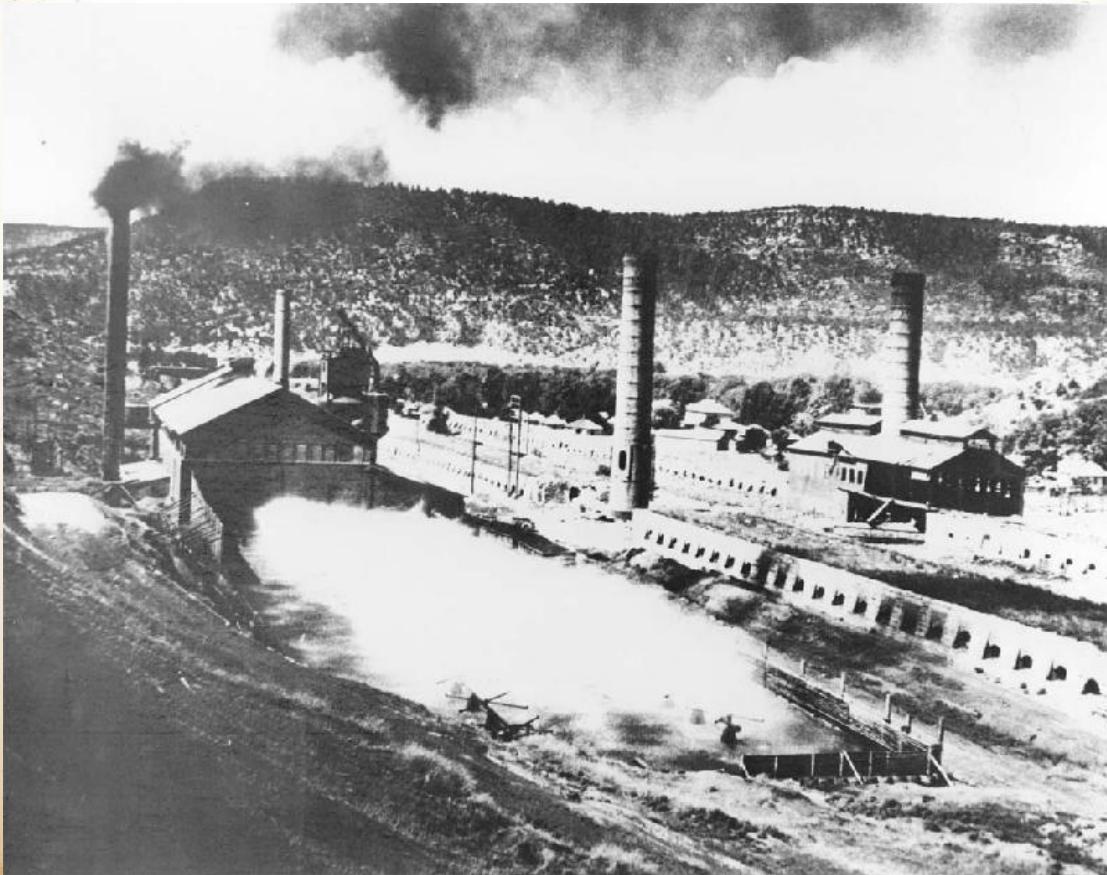


- The wind whipping through the canyon creates some unusual sounds as it moves through the graves that are fenced off. To us, it sounded more like a whistling noise than a moan that is suggested by the story.
- There are small groups of some type of insect (gnats?), that when illuminated by a flashlight, may be source of the "apparitions" seen by the original story tellers. Looks more convincing when viewed from a distance over twenty feet.

## **Part 6: Conclusion**

As with most sites where a tragedy has occurred, the town of Dawson became the location of another ghost story. The "haunting" of its cemetery appears to be an urban legend. The "reported phenomenon" of the story has several rational explanations.

## **Part 7: Photographs and Images**







**DAWSON COMMUNITY** . . . The Post Office was established in 1900 and served the community through 1954. Dawson was located 26 miles southwest of Raton. Coal was first found on the Dawson Ranch in 1895. The Dawson Fuel Company was formed and the first coal mine was opened in 1901. In 1906, Phelps Dodge purchased the property. An increasing market for coal and coke brought rapid development and a prosperous city eventually supported approximately 9,000 residents. Two major explosions (1913 and 1923) took the lives of 386 men. Phelps Dodge closed the mines in 1950.



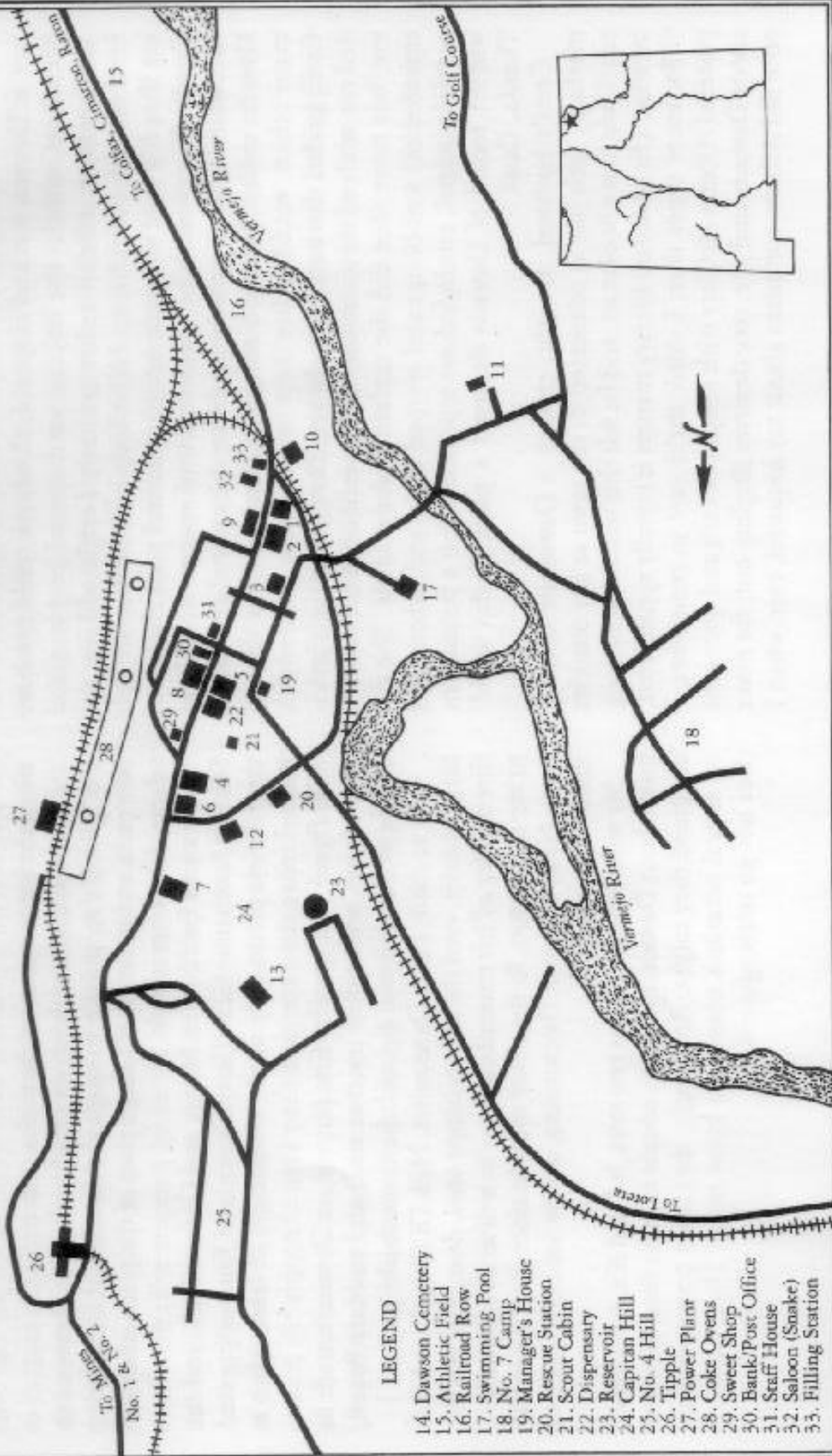


# DAWSON, NEW MEXICO

CIRCA 1936

International Surveying & Mapping Company  
Eureka, California

Compiled by Bob McClary



## LEGEND

- 14. Dawson Cemetery
- 15. Athletic Field
- 16. Railroad Row
- 17. Swimming Pool
- 18. No. 7 Camp
- 19. Manager's House
- 20. Rescue Station
- 21. Scout Cabin
- 22. Dispensary
- 23. Reservoir
- 24. Captain Hill
- 25. No. 4 Hill
- 26. Tiptle
- 27. Power Plant
- 28. Coke Owens
- 29. Sweet Shop
- 30. Bank/Post Office
- 31. Staff House
- 32. Saloon (Snake)
- 33. Filling Station





1. Gymnasium



2. Phelps Dodge Mercantile



3. Central School



4. Opera House



5. Hospital and Dispensary



6. Teacherage



7. Catholic Church



8. Main Office



9. Hotel



10. Depot



11. Ranch House



12. Community Church

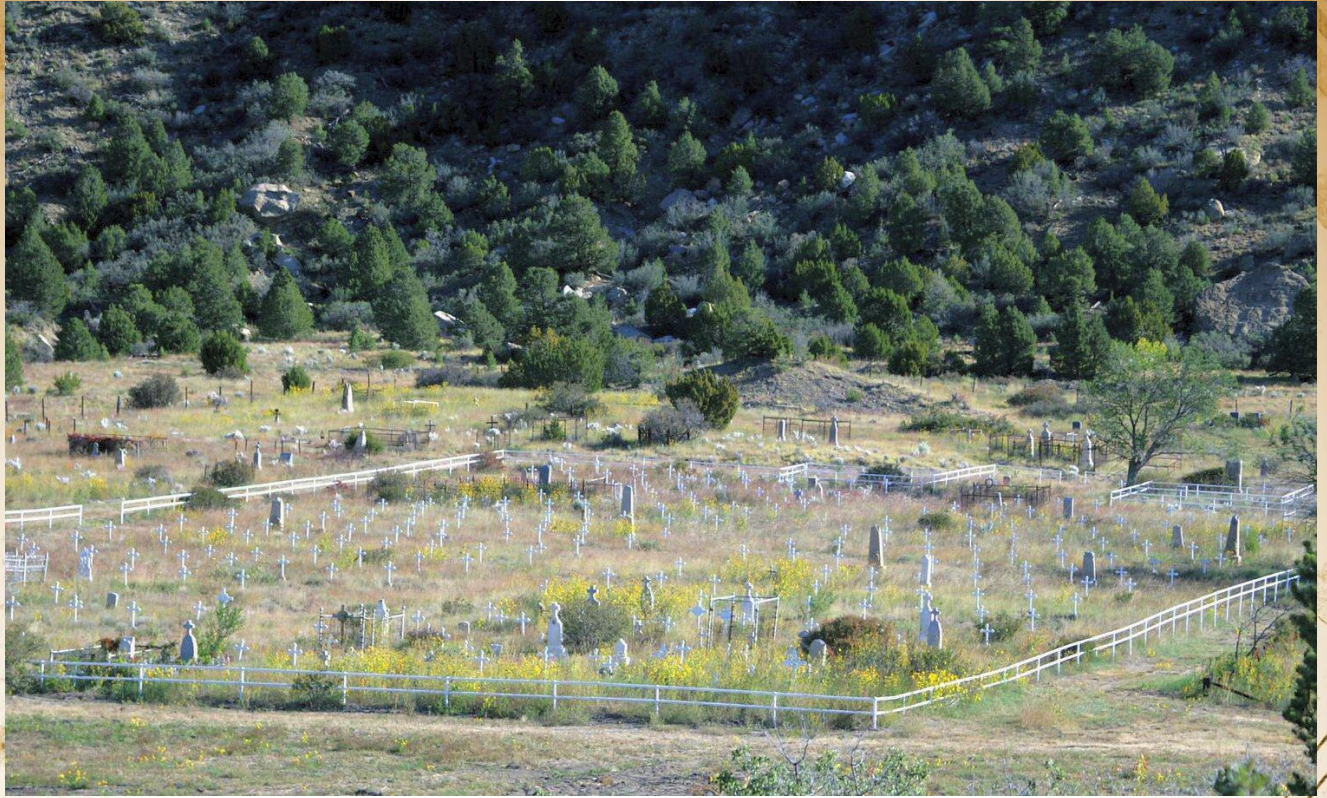


13. Douglas School

Significant buildings are identified by number on facing page.









*The wind kicks up lots of dust and whistles through the fenced off graves*





*The white dots in many of these pictures are insects*



References:

([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dawson,\\_New\\_Mexico](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dawson,_New_Mexico))

Akron Weekly Pioneer Press, Akron, CO 16 Feb 1923