



Dawson Historical Complex National Historic Site of Canada

Dawson, a historical complex, is commemorated for its association with the full extent and impact of the Klondike Gold Rush from 1896 to 1910



Historic Photo of Dawson. H.J. Woodside Parks Canada
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Dawson City, Yukon Territory

BACKGROUND

In August 1896, gold was discovered on Rabbit Creek, later named Bonanza. When word reached the outside world, the Klondike Stampede began. Over 100,000 people started out for the Klondike goldfields and some 30,000 actually reached Dawson City in the summer of 1898. At this time Dawson City was the largest centre west of Winnipeg and north of Seattle.

A modern community quickly emerged at the junction of the Yukon and Klondike Rivers. Dawson City became the supply and service centre for the miners and was capable of providing the newcomers with all that they needed from champagne to oranges.

It became obvious during the Gold Rush that there was an immediate need for the enforcement of Canadian law and the firm administration of Canadian policies. To address this issue the Canadian government established the Yukon Territory and a large civil service was soon in place.

Dawson became the centre that provided the administrative and legal role for the running of a mining community and a territory.

The decline of Dawson City was almost as rapid as its rise and with the development of industrial mining, the days of the individual miner was over. Though the population declined, those who stayed remained optimistic. Between 1899 and 1905, Dawson passed from a frontier town to a sophisticated community and was truly the “Metropolis of the North”, a rival to any city in the south of similar size.

Dawson remained the service and supply centre for an industrial region and the commercial and administrative headquarters of the Yukon until the mid 1950’s.

Dawson’s survival as a community was the result of years of mining activity by the Yukon Consolidated Gold Corporation and its fleet of dredges. Nonetheless, the town and the economy continued to erode slowly over the decades. It was in response to this gradual decline that Parks Canada became involved in the late 1950’s. Over the next 30 years, Parks acquired and stabilized designated structures and artifacts. Today, the Dawson Historical Complex is a vibrant historic community.

REASONS FOR NATIONAL HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

Dawson City is a complex of over 17 buildings that are associated with the story of the Klondike Gold Rush. The site reflects the social, economic and political features that shaped the Yukon region over the last century.

Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, 1967-1982

MILESTONES

- 1896** Gold was discovered on Bonanza Creek. Joe Ladue stakes out a town site at the confluence of the Yukon and Klondike River.
- 1897** Word reached the outside about the gold strike. The settlement of Dawson consisted of a tent town surrounding Joe Ladue's saloon and sawmill.
- 1898** In all 100,000 people set out for the Klondike, but only 30,000 actually reached Dawson. The Yukon became a territory and Dawson became its capital.
- 1898** Over 300 businesses opened their doors from saloons and dance halls to hardware and grocery stores to dress shops and blacksmiths.
- 1899** The population of Dawson began to dwindle with the rush to the gold fields of Nome, Alaska and the development of large dredge companies and corporate mining.
- 1900** Dawson took on the look of a permanent Edwardian community. It was a city of churches, theatres, newspapers, sophisticated municipal services and a vast number of shops and stores.
- 1902** Dawson City was incorporated as a city and the Canadian government erected a number of public buildings.
- 1918** Dawson's population had declined to less than 1 000 people.
- 1959 – 1967** Seventeen buildings in Dawson City were designated nationally significant.



Historic photograph of the Palace Grand Theatre
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LOCATION

Dawson Historical Complex NHS is located 541 km north of Whitehorse on the Klondike Highway.



FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT

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