

Guide to the Henderson Public Library Photograph Collection on Henderson, Nevada

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**University of Nevada, Las Vegas. University Libraries. Special Collections
and Archives.**

Box 457010

4505 S. Maryland Parkway

Las Vegas, Nevada 89154-7010

special.collections@unlv.edu

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Summary Information

Repository:	University of Nevada, Las Vegas. University Libraries. Special Collections and Archives.
Title:	Henderson Public Library Photograph Collection on Henderson, Nevada
ID:	PH-00254
Date [inclusive]:	approximately 1940-1988
Physical Description:	1.5 Linear Feet (11 hanging folders, 1 shared box of negatives)
Physical Description:	0.35 Cubic Feet
Language of the Material:	English
Abstract:	The Henderson Public Library Photograph Collection on Henderson, Nevada (approximately 1940-1988) depicts life and growth in Southern Nevada. The collection documents the growth of Henderson, Nevada through images of Basic Magnesium Incorporated, housing throughout the area, and events. The documentation of Basic Magnesium Incorporated, its activities, personnel, and buildings from 1942 through 1944 is prominent in this collection.

Preferred Citation

Henderson Public Library Photograph Collection on Henderson, Nevada, approximately 1940-1988. PH-00254. Special Collections, University Libraries, University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Las Vegas, Nevada.

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Historical Note

Basic Magnesium Incorporated formed in June 1941 as a joint business venture of Basic Refractories, Incorporated of Cleveland, Ohio and Magnesium Elektron, Limited of England. Basic Refractories, Incorporated owned a magnesium ore mining claim named Brucite in Gabbs Valley, Nye County, Nevada and Magnesium Elektron, Limited owned a patent for the electrolytic process of extracting metallic magnesium from magnesium ore. The United States Federal Government required magnesium, a lightweight metal, for the creation of an aluminum alloy used in the production of incendiary bombs, munitions casings, and airplane bodies during World War II. In August of 1941 the Federal Reconstruction Finance Corporation subsidiary the Defense Plant Corporation granted Basic Magnesium Incorporated a contract to build a magnesium manufacturing complex codenamed Plancor 201. The contract also allowed Basic Magnesium Incorporated to extend mining operations in the Gabbs Valley. With funding from the Defense Plant

Corporation the mining camp grew to include open pit quarries for the mining of magnesium oxide and magnesium carbonate, concentrating and roasting plants, and a town named Gabbs for employee housing. The United States Army ordered Basic Magnesium Incorporated to build the magnesium manufacturing complex at least 250 miles inland from the Pacific Ocean and Basic Magnesium Incorporated selected an area of 18,400 acres southeast of Las Vegas, Nevada in the unincorporated land now known as Henderson, Nevada. The location met Basic Magnesium Incorporated's requirements for electricity and water needed for the electrolytic process due to the proximity of the Hoover (Boulder) Dam and Lake Mead, the Hoover Dam reservoir. Basic Refractories, Incorporated, under the leadership of Howard P. Eells Jr., held majority control of Basic Magnesium Incorporated and completed roughly 80% of construction at the Henderson, Nevada site until November 1941 when Anaconda Copper Mining Company gained control of Basic Magnesium Incorporated. Basic Magnesium Incorporated contracted companies to build chlorine, refining, and magnesium metal plants at the site which eventually employed approximately 14,000 workers. Basic Magnesium Incorporated also constructed a railroad for the transportation of raw magnesium from Gabbs located 350 miles northwest of the Henderson, Nevada site and a line from Henderson, Nevada to the Union Pacific branch line in Boulder City, Nevada. Additionally, Basic Magnesium Incorporated established an area for employee housing named the Basic Townsite, codenamed Plancor 201-H. Basic Magnesium Incorporated paved 27 miles of road, erected phone and telegraph lines, built the Henderson, Trailer Camp and Carver Park schools, a theater, a baseball park, protestant and catholic churches, and the Basic Magnesium Industrial Hospital, now known as St. Rose Dominican Hospital-Rose de Lima Campus. For the thousands of Basic Magnesium Incorporated workers, Basic Magnesium Incorporated planned two segregated housing projects for both families and single individuals north of the Las Vegas-Boulder Highway, Carver Park designated for African American and Victory Village for white employees and their families.

Basic Magnesium Incorporated reached the capacity output of refined magnesium required by the Defense Plant Corporation and the Federal Government in June 1943. From October 1942, the first operable month, until November 1944, the Henderson, Nevada Basic Magnesium Incorporated plant produced 166,322,685 pounds of refined magnesium metal. The plant continued operating above production capacity until April 1944 when the War Production Board issued a curtailment order, cutting the magnesium output by 40%. Production reduced until the Henderson, Nevada Basic Magnesium Incorporated plant shut down in November 1944. In 1947 the War Asset Administration offered the Henderson, Nevada site for sale as war surplus property and the Nevada State Legislature approved a bill granting the Colorado River Commission authority to purchase the Basic Magnesium Incorporated complex in Henderson. Basic Townsite and the town of Pittman incorporated in 1953 into the city of Henderson, Nevada. In 1949 Basic Refractories, Incorporated purchased the mining operation in Gabbs, Nevada, built a refining factory, and continued to sell refined magnesium to the private sector.

Henderson, Nevada obtained its own city council on May 27, 1953, thus starting the new city. The new town was named after Charles Henderson, a former United States senator from Elko, Nevada. He chaired the federal Reconstruction Finance Corporation that loaned the money to Howard Eells and C.J.P. Ball to establish Basic Magnesium Incorporated.

Source: Schumacher, Geoff. *Sun, Sin, and Suburbia: The History of Modern Las Vegas*. Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2015.

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Scope and Contents Note

The Henderson Public Library Photograph Collection on Henderson, Nevada (approximately 1940-1988) depicts life and growth in Southern Nevada. The collection documents the growth of Henderson, Nevada through images of Basic Magnesium Incorporated, housing throughout the area, and events. The documentation of Basic Magnesium Incorporated, its activities, personnel, and buildings from 1942 through 1944 is prominent in this collection. Three images depicting a letter between William Hosokawa and his friend prior to Hosokawa being forced into a Japanese-American internment camp in the United States are also in this collection. The items described include photographic prints and negatives; some of the prints have corresponding negatives which are not listed separately. Items listed are photographic prints unless otherwise specified. Images listed specifically as negatives exist only in that format.

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Arrangement Note

This collection is organized into three series:

Series I. Basic Magnesium Incorporated, Henderson, Nevada, 1941-1949;

Series II. Henderson, Nevada, 1940-1988;

Series III. Southern Nevada, 1942-1945

Many of the photographic prints have corresponding negatives. Negatives have been housed separately and can be found in box 17.

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Administrative Information

Access

The collection is open for research. Portions of this collection have been digitized and are [available online](#).

Publication Rights

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Acquisition Note

Materials were donated on December 12, 1990 by Carroll Gardner of Henderson Library; accession number 1990-89.

Processing Note

Materials were processed by Special Collections staff. In 2016, as part of a legacy finding aid conversion project, Maryse Lundering-Timpano wrote the collection description in compliance with current professional standards.

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Related Materials

Related Collections

Basic Magnesium Inc. (BMI) Records, 1933-1965. MS-00126. Special Collections, University Libraries, University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Las Vegas, Nevada.

Southern Nevada Historical Society Records, 1948-1983. MS-00205. Special Collections, University Libraries, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Nevada.

Southern Nevada Historical Society Photograph Collection on Basic Magnesium Inc., 1941-1942. PH-00230. Special Collections, University Libraries, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Nevada.

Howard Eells Photograph Collection on Basic Magnesium, Inc., 1941-1942. PH-00154. Special Collections, University Libraries, University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Las Vegas, Nevada.

Dow Metals-BMI Collection, 1940s-1950s. MS-00242. Special Collections, University Libraries, University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Las Vegas, Nevada.

Scholl Rostine, Irene B. *Our Turn: Working Women In The Las Vegas Valley*, 1940-1980. Las Vegas, 2013.

White, Claytee D. *The roles of African American women in the Las Vegas gaming industry, 1940-1980*. Las Vegas, 1997

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Names and Subjects

- Southern Nevada -- 20th Century
- Gabbs Valley (Nev.)
- Henderson (Nev.)
- Las Vegas (Nev.)
- World War, 1939-1945 -- Women -- United States
- Basic Magnesium, Inc.

Collection Inventory

Basic Magnesium Incorporated,	
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Loading a Wells Incorporated truck, 1944 May 06 (0102) (view online)	folder 04
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Tent City seen from sewer outlet, Pittman, Nevada, 1944 April 27 (0254_0240)	folder 09
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Abandoned and capped well, Midway City, Nevada, 1944 April 27 (0254_0279)	folder 10
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