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HENDERSON HISTORIC WALKING TOUR

Southeast corner of Water and Pacific

Industry

Henderson's origins can be traced to the groundbreaking for Basic Magnesium Inc. on Sept. 15, 1941. McNeil Construction, which later built Disneyland and the Dunes Hotel, constructed the plant.

During World War II, BMI's work was heralded as critical to the war effort. In July 1943, the plant reached full production capacity of magnesium at 112 million pounds annually, and the Flying Fortress Memphis Belle with its original crew commemorated the event. As the war ended, demand for magnesium decreased. In November 1944, the world's largest magnesium plant shut down after having produced more than 165 million pounds.

With BMI's closing, the Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce sought help to save the plant and bring more jobs to the Southern Nevada economy, petitioning the Nevada Legislature for the state to buy the facility. Following a tour of the plant by 40 legislators, a deal was negotiated whereby the Colorado River Commission would purchase BMI and the Henderson townsite. While Basic Magnesium no longer existed, a new entity, Basic Management, Incorporated, was eventually created to manage the plant area.

The BMI plant became home to a number of industrial firms including Chemstar Lime Inc., Kerr McGee Chemical Corporation, Pioneer Chlor Alkali Co., and Timet. By the 10th anniversary of the townsite's founding in 1952, Henderson had begun to brand itself as Nevada's Industrial Center.

Henderson's industrial heritage has remained central to the city's identity, as it is still the home to many industrial facilities.

