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HENDERSON HISTORIC WALKING TOUR

Southeast corner of Water and Basic

Education

The construction of the Basic Magnesium plant instantly transformed the desert lands east of Las Vegas into a populous tent and trailer city, complete with children of all ages. The nearest elementary school district, Railroad Pass, a school district with a one-room building and one teacher, was expanded to include the new community. The name was later changed to the Henderson School District, until it was merged into the Clark County School District in 1965. The humble origins of education in Henderson were supplanted during the next 60 years as Henderson became home to a community college, state college, six high schools, six middle schools, and 26 elementary schools.

Constructed by the Federal Government on 16.5 acres, the 1942 Townsite School consisted of 18 classrooms and an auditorium-gymnasium. Its doors opened to more than 1,000 students. The school's population grew rapidly; one local newspaper reported in late November 1942, that an average of 40 new students enrolled each week, stressing the already overcrowded facilities. School officials named the first high school Railroad Pass when it opened in 1942 and renamed it Basic High School in 1945. In January 1943, 16 students received diplomas as members of the school's first graduating class.

In 1955, Henderson added significantly to its educational facilities. In March, residents turned out for the dedication of the new Basic High School with superintendent Lyal W. Burkholder. He later moved the high school from Water Street to 355 Van Wagenen St. During the ensuing years, some of Nevada's most prominent leaders graduated from the school, including U.S. Senator Harry Reid, while others taught at the school such as Governor Mike O'Callaghan. In 1972, a third Basic High School was built at 400 North Palo Verde Drive. The former Basic High building was converted to a middle school and served as Lyal W. Burkholder Middle School until 2004.

In 1977, the educational offerings of Henderson grew again when the City Council approved a 20-acre site to house a community college. The first state college in Nevada opened on Water Street on Sept. 3, 2002.

