

# HOME MEANS NEVADA - 3

(SunStriders-October 10, 2018)

## Mineral County , NV



Historical population		
Census	Pop.	%±
1920	1,848	—
1930	1,863	0.8%
1940	2,342	25.7%
1950	5,560	137.4%
1960	6,329	13.8%
1970	7,051	11.4%
1980	6,217	-11.8%
1990	6,475	4.1%
2000	5,071	-21.7%
2010	4,772	-5.9%
Est. 2016	4,449	-6.8%

U.S. Decennial Census  
1790-1960<sup>[6]</sup> 1900-1990<sup>[8]</sup>  
1990-2000<sup>[9]</sup> 2010-2013<sup>[1]</sup>

Mineral County was carved out of Esmeralda County in 1911 shortly after the county seat of Esmeralda was moved to Goldfield in 1907. Its name came from the surrounding area, which is heavily mineralized. Hawthorne has always been its County seat. The County is listed as Nevada Historical Marker 16. The marker is located on U.S. Highway 95 at Walker Lake.

They call Hawthorne "America's Patriotic Home," and the red, white and blue streets and American flags blowing in the breeze stand as a testament to Hawthorne's great national pride. Part of that pride is rooted in the Hawthorne Army Depot, an ammunition storage site south of nearby Walker Lake State Recreation Area. Construction began on this facility in 1928, and it served as an ammunition staging area for World War II. It is said to be the largest facility of its kind anywhere in the world, covering more than 147,000 acres of terrain. Additionally, the historic 1942 USO AKA Hawthorne Convention Center has just been restored and has special events for locals and visitors alike.

Originally established in 1881 as a division point on the Carson and Colorado Railroad and remained a modestly sized community until it was selected to host a national arsenal during World War II. Only having a few hundred residents since its founding, the population quickly grew to 13,000 by 1944, hosting more than 7,000 armed forces and civilian workers during the war.

Today, roughly 3,200 people call Hawthorne home. Several mountain ranges surround the community, protecting Hawthorne from extreme weather and allowing for mild temperatures and nearly 365 days of sunshine every year. It's the kind of environment that encourages outdoor enjoyment, and around here, the heart of outdoor recreation is at Walker Lake State Recreation Area. The lake, fed from the north by the Walker River, was once part of Glacial Lake Lahontan, a prehistoric sea that covered much of Nevada. Those looking for other incredible adventure options should search no further as Mineral County has over 1,000 miles of unfenced, dirt roads and trails. Hawthorne truly is the perfect gateway to all your OHV, ATV and four-wheel drive excursions.

If it's history you're after, visitors to Hawthorne can get a closer look at some of the old ammo stored here with a trip to the Hawthorne Ordnance Museum. It's also a great place to see a variety of military uniforms, photos and memorabilia. If you're staying overnight, there are several hotels and motels to choose from, as well as restaurants that suit any craving.

Mineral County has a rich history



Walker Lake



Historic 1883 Mineral County Courthouse

It is part of what was once known as Esmeralda in the Nevada Territory.

Actually you could say that we were once part of Western Utah Territory because gold was discovered at Aurora in 1860 one year before the Territory of Nevada was formed. But most of our written history starts in 1861 when the miners of all types began to arrive in Aurora looking to

strike it rich. Aurora was such a rich area that both Nevada and California claimed it for their own. This lead to a great deal of confusion when Aurora was the County Seat of Mono County California and Esmeralda County Nevada Territory at the same time. But when the dust finally settled Aurora was found to be in Nevada and went on to be one of the wildest towns in the wild west. Click on this link for Aurora, Nevada.

#### **While most people think of 1861 as the start of our local history it is far from the being.**

What is now called Walker Lake, just out side of Hawthorne, Nevada, has long been the home of the "Agai Ducutta Numa" members of the Paiute tribe who's name means Trout Eater People. Another earlier influence were Spanish Miners who traveled this way from Mexico in the early 1800's. At the Mineral County Museum you can see a collection of Mission Bells that were found buried in the ground about 15 miles southeast of Hawthorne, Nevada.

### **Hawthorne**

#### **History**

The first permanent settlement at Hawthorne was made in 1880.<sup>[3]</sup> The community was named after William Hawthorne, a local law enforcement agent.<sup>[4]</sup> Hawthorne has been county seat of Mineral County since 1911.<sup>[3]</sup>

#### **Geography**

Hawthorne is located at 38°31'31"N 118°37'23"W (38.525198, -118.623053).<sup>[5]</sup> According to the United States Census Bureau, the CDP has a total area of 1.5 square miles (3.9 km<sup>2</sup>), all of it land. It sits between Walker Lake, Babbitt and under the peak of Mt. Grant, and its summit of 11,239 feet (3,426 m).

### **MINA**



Mina



Sodaville, a ghost town near Mina

#### **History**

Mina was founded as a railroad town in 1905 and was named for Ferminia Sarras, a large landowner and famed prospector known as the 'Copper Queen'.<sup>[2]</sup> The Carson and Colorado Railway, a division of Southern Pacific Railroad, had a station in the town. The railroad is long gone, but at one time a local shuttle called the "Slim Princess" allowed Native Americans to ride for free on top of the railcars, and passengers and crew would shoot wild game such as jack rabbits, ducks and sage hens from the open windows. The train moved slow enough that hunters had time to retrieve their game and hop back on board.

Gee Jon and Hughie Sing were convicted of the August 27, 1921, Mina, Nevada murder of Tom Quong Kee and, as a result, Gee Jon, a 29-year-old member of the Hop Sing Tong, became the first person in the world executed by lethal gas. The execution was at the Nevada State Prison on February 8, 1924.<sup>[3]</sup>

#### **Name**

Some sources states that the name is derived from a Spanish word meaning 'mine'.<sup>[4][5]</sup> However, other sources state that John C. Fulton (or John M. Fulton), division general manager for the Southern Pacific Railway, named the town after Fermina Sarras (or Serrias), a Nicaraguan<sup>[2]</sup> woman who was operating nearby copper prospects.<sup>[6] [7]</sup>

Initially, a railroad station was intended to be at Sodaville, Nevada, but an agreement between the railroad and land speculators could not be reached, so Mina, Nevada was platted two miles north of Sodaville.<sup>[6]</sup>

#### **Geography**

Mina in the Soda Spring Valley of eastern Mineral County along U.S. Route 95, 32 miles (51 km) southeast of Hawthorne and 70 miles (110 km) northwest of Tonopah. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the Mina CDP has an area of 2.4 square miles (6.2 km<sup>2</sup>), all land.<sup>[1]</sup>

## Schurz, NV



**Schurz** is a census-designated place (CDP) in Mineral County, Nevada, United States. The population was 658 at the 2010 census. It is located on the Walker River Indian Reservation. It is the burial place of Wovoka, the Paiute messiah who originated the Ghost Dance movement.

### History

Schurz was founded in 1891.<sup>[1]</sup> The town was named after Secretary of the Interior Carl Schurz.<sup>[2]</sup> A post office has been in operation at Schurz since 1891.<sup>[3]</sup>

### Geography

Schurz is located at the junction of U.S. Route 95 and U.S. Route 95 Alternate.

According to the United States Census Bureau, the CDP has a total area of 60.5 square miles (157 km<sup>2</sup>), all of it land.

As of the census<sup>[4]</sup> of 2000, there were 721 people, 281 households, and 180 families residing in the CDP. The population density was 11.9 people per square mile (4.6/km<sup>2</sup>). There were 312 housing units at an average density of 5.2 per square mile (2.0/km<sup>2</sup>).

## WALKER LAKE



**Walker Lake** is an unincorporated town and census-designated place in Mineral County, Nevada, United States. As of the 2010 census, the population of Walker Lake was 275.<sup>[1]</sup>

### Geography

The Walker Lake CDP is located in western Mineral County, Nevada, along the west shore of Walker Lake. U.S. Route 95 runs through the community; it is 12 miles (19 km) south to Hawthorne and 59 miles (95 km) north to Fallon. Walker Lake State Recreation Area is located immediately north of the CDP.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the CDP has an area of 1.4 square miles (3.5 km<sup>2</sup>), all land.<sup>[1]</sup>

## Aurora, Nevada



**Aurora** is a ghost town in Mineral County in the west central part of the US state of Nevada, approximately 22 mi (35 km) southwest of the town of Hawthorne, three miles from the California border.

Today the townsite is much diminished, having been damaged by vandals. After World War II many of the buildings were razed for their brick.<sup>[2]</sup>

The road to Aurora was once difficult to navigate except via four-wheel drive, as the winter snows and spring run-off damaged the road in the canyon leading to the town. In recent years the operations of a nearby mine have improved the road so that even non-4WD vehicles can reach the town site.

## History

James M. Cory, James M. Braly and E.R. Hicks founded the town in 1860.<sup>[3]</sup> When Esmeralda County was founded a few years later, Aurora was one of the few places that were explored in the county.<sup>[4]</sup> Cory is credited with having named the strike Esmeralda but, in the late 1860s, he is reported to have changed the name to Aurora for the goddess of dawn.<sup>[3]</sup>

At one point its population was approximately 10,000.<sup>[5]</sup> Aurora's mines produced \$27 million worth of gold by 1869. The town was governed by both California and Nevada until it was determined that the town lay entirely in Nevada.<sup>[6]</sup> At one point it was simultaneously the county seat of both Mono County, California and Esmeralda County, Nevada. Its California assemblyman was the speaker of the house while the Nevada legislative member was elected as president of the Nevada Territorial Legislature.<sup>[7]</sup>

The town cemetery has suffered from vandalism over the years. The most notable destruction was the headstone of William E. Carder, a notorious criminal and gunfighter who, on the night of December 10, 1864 was "assassinated" by a man whom he had threatened in the preceding days.<sup>[8]</sup> The headstone erected by his wife Annie was toppled by thieves who attempted to steal it, and broken into several pieces, where they now lie sunken into the ground.<sup>[citation needed]</sup>

## Rise of Aurora

Soon after its founding, a small crowd of miners quickly moved into the area after hearing about the deposits in the area. Crude homes and businesses were constructed using mud and other local materials or were easily imported. By April 1861, the population was 1,400, and town lots were selling for around \$1,500. By 1862, the city had a newspaper, the Esmeralda Star. In 1864, the population was 6,000. The peak population was roughly 10,000 people.<sup>[5]</sup>

Prior to 1860 and the discovery of the mines, fewer than 100 people lived in the Aurora area. The biggest rush of population was in the Spring of 1863 after the Wide West Vein provided many jobs.<sup>[9]</sup> Aurora's mines were so rich that miners came from all over the west.<sup>[10]</sup> Travel in the spring was much easier than in the winter or colder months. In the Spring of 1863, Aurora had 760 houses, 20 stores, and 22 saloons. Like most mining boom towns, the population had a small number of women and children compared to a large male population.

Travel to Aurora was difficult, but the Mono Trail and the Sonora Pass Route were important paths to Aurora. After it was built, the Esmeralda Toll Road connected Aurora to San Francisco through Carson valley. This allowed for Aurora to receive supplies directly from San Francisco, which contributed to its growth. As Aurora grew, agriculture grew as well with people farming hay, livestock, dairy products, grain, and vegetables.<sup>[9]</sup>

## Life in Aurora

Aurorans quickly learned that the climate was harsh and the weather unpredictable, making life difficult for its residents. The majority of the population was male and saloons were numerous. Gambling houses and brothels were common and provided late night entertainment to the men of the town. There were numerous Chinese brothels that existed on the most public of streets and roughly half the women in the town were prostitutes. Other recreational activities for the men were hunting, fishing, dog fights, and dog and badger fights. Skiing was a recreational activity in the town thanks to the mountains surrounding the town. It was probably the most popular recreational activity among residents.

Violence was a major problem. Most men carried guns and knives daily, and armed conflict was not rare. These conflicts often ended in death. There are numerous examples of disagreements leading to armed violence. Family life was almost non-existent due to the low number of women and children in the town. This allowed the men to frequent the saloons, brothels and gambling houses that were in the town.<sup>[10]</sup>

## Fall of Aurora

Aurora had a difficult time maintaining its success due to the nature of the mines. Most mines were less than 100 feet deep, and of minimal endurance. The gold and silver in the area had been completely mined by 1870. Many people deserted the area but left all buildings, stores and homes intact. Eventually, these buildings were stripped of their resources (bricks, lumber, etc.) to be used for fireplaces in California and other building needs.<sup>[5]</sup> Because of its isolation—Aurora was miles from any major city and surrounded by rugged mountainous terrain—furnishing supplies for the town became difficult. Food, fuel, lumber, machinery, tools, hardware, and clothing were scarce. They had to be shipped in on difficult roads and stage lines. Travel in winter months was very difficult. The town was dominated by a harsh climate with violent and unpredictable weather, which made a permanent settlement increasingly difficult without outside support.<sup>[10]</sup>

By 1864, 7 of the 17 mills were shut down and the remaining mills were operating at a fraction of capacity. By 1865, production declined and more mills were shut down. By 1870, half of the town's houses were deserted and most of the mills and buildings had been dismantled. There were a few attempts to revive the city, but those were not successful with the last attempt ending in 1918.<sup>[9]</sup>

## Luning, Nevada



Fullmoon Night at Luning Nevada, Nevada Post Office



**Luning** is an unincorporated town in Mineral County, Nevada, in the United States. Luning is on U.S. Highway 95, between Hawthorne and Mina. Luning had an active railroad loading facility for many years. Magnesium ore from Gabbs was trucked to Luning and transferred to railroad cars bound for the West in World War II. The Basic Refractories mine in Gabbs was opened in 1955; it produced magnesium that was also trucked to the Luning loading platform, where most men in town worked.

A sign on the Long Branch Saloon says "Settled 1864." The saloon - still open in 1980 - has since closed. The town's one-room school is well maintained, but is also closed. It is often listed as a ghost town, but it is not. The population of Luning, Nevada, as of 2005 is 87. There is also an active page for the "ghost" town on Facebook, maintained by residents.

The town once had a small store with attached gas station, a saloon, volunteer fire department station, and a post office. Except for the post office at 202 Plymire Street, all have since closed. The ZIP Code of Luning is 89420. Luning has two recent improvements: cell phones and a highway rest stop.

A station on the Southern Pacific Railroad between Thorne and Mina as a supply center for the Nevada Brucite quarry. Named for Nicholas B Luning, a bondholder of the Carson and Colorado Railroad. The town originally called Deep Wells started in 1881 and changed its name to Luning when the railroad arrived.<sup>[1]</sup> The post office opened in 1882.

### Main Street

Luning's main street - Plymire Street - is named after a long-time resident, Dr. Fred A. Plymire.

Fred was a dentist, an inventor, and a stone man. Born in West Virginia in 1867, he travelled with his parents and five siblings to California where the family operated a marble monument company.

In 1894 Dr. Fred is listed in Stone, an illustrated magazine, in Notes from Quarry and Shop: "Fred Plymire, recently of Vallejo, and L. McCoy from Red Bluff, will establish marble works in Redding, Cal." Fred is listed in the Official Catalogue of Exhibitors; Panama-Pacific International Exposition, San Francisco, 1915, Department of Mines and Metallurgy, State of Nevada, Group 153; Plymire, Dr. F. A., Mina. Polished marble.<sup>[3]</sup>

Dr Fred is listed in 1910 in the San Francisco Genealogy, Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite List of Members. "California Bodies" Comprised California Lodge of Perfection, No. 10; California Chapter of Rose Crois, No. 7; California Council of Kadosh, No. 7; California Consistory, No. 5. Dr. Fred holds a patent for an improved carburetor.<sup>[5]</sup>

After 20 years in Luning, Dr. Fred returned to California where he retired. He died in 1929 at Napa State Hospital in "general paralysis of insane."

### Ghost Town YouTube Video Links and Resources

<https://youtu.be/DHXklwqYeFU>

<https://youtu.be/Qm2z4RLKQRE>

[https://youtu.be/05H852-XM\\_Y](https://youtu.be/05H852-XM_Y)

<http://www.mineralcountynv.us>

<https://en.wikipedia.org>