

The existence of brothels and houses of "ill-fame" were not new to the West. Places like these have existed for nearly all of time. In early-day Aurora some of the witnesses at the trial of the Daly gang, four of whom were hung for the murder of W. R. Johnson in February of 1864 were prostitutes in the town. After Hawthorne was established as the division point of the Carson and Colorado Railroad in 1881, mentions of minor incidents occurring between the "ladies of the night" living on "Maiden Lane" there, were reported in the local newspaper.

When the Aurora Consolidated Mines Company undertook to mine and mill at Aurora in the early part of the Twentieth century, one of the original company owners, Jesse Knight, did not take kindly to all the saloons and other "businesses" that blossomed overnight in old Aurora to accommodate the influx of miners and mill men. Knight built the little mining camp town of Mangum, north and over the hill from Aurora near the company's mine and mill, declaring that no saloons would be allowed.

When several of the Company's mines were surveyed in 1914, including the Mangum mine, Mineral Survey plat No. 4219 showed the locations of several of the buildings the company had erected in its little village. In addition to the Superintendent's house, there were three bunk houses, a boarding house, and a hospital building, all located northeast of the state of the art Mangum mill, close to the "Upper Road" that led to Aurora. South of the mill site were a carpenter shop, machine shop, blacksmith shop, assay office, store house and a small office building. Not a saloon in sight!

In 1900, the federal census enumerated approximately 38 persons living at Aurora. The boom town had seen its best days many years before, but a small contingent of miners and others had held out hopes for a return to better times. In 1900 there was but one saloon found at Aurora. The census of 1910 did not show any significant increase in the population of Aurora, most of those enumerated were found living or working on Pine Street. Only one saloon was identified in 1910.

When Jesse Knight and others from Utah formed the Aurora Purchasing and Reduction Company in 1913 to build a mill near Aurora, the town that was nearly deserted saw a burst of new energy. In June, 1913, Mrs. Mary Wilson was opened a hotel at Aurora and several saloons seemingly sprang into existence. And with the increase in miners and mill men, also came an opportunity for the "ladies of the night."

In that same month of June, 1913, at its meeting of June 2nd the County Commissioners received a petition from residents of Aurora asking the Board to establish a "Restricted District." The minutes of the Commissioner's meeting reported this as follows:

"In the Matter of a Restricted District at Aurora, Nev.

Petition of Hy. (Henry) Boerlin + 20 other citizens of Aurora, accompanied by a map of the townsite, asking the Board to prohibit the establishment of houses of Ill-fame within the limits of the following boundaries, viz, Commencing at the intersection of Juniper & Mack St; thence North along Mack St. to Patten St., thence East along Patten St. to Matthews St., thence West along Juniper St. to Mack St., was read and considered.

Letter from W. J. McKeough asking that no action be taken in the matter at this time.

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Ordered First that the road leading from Del Monte to Aurora & Pine Street therein, are hereby declared to be public highways & main travelled streets.

2^d That the petition of Boerlin et al asking for prohibition of establishment of house of ill-fame within the bounds set out in the said petition be granted."

The area included in the newly ordered restricted district encompassed the whole of the interior of the town proper, extending south of the town a short distance and including the area on the north edge of the town to Wide West Street.

The Board took up the matter again later that day, the minutes of which reported:

"Walter J. McKeough, of Aurora, presents a petition signed by 64 residents of that town, asking that a restricted district be established with the following bounds, to wit: From Roman & Spring, west to Wingate St. on South Spring.

After addressing the Board at length in support of the petition and asking that the action of the Board heretofore taken be rescinded, the Board advised McKeough that the order made would stand until revoked for good causes shown, & declined to grant the prayer of the second petition.

In early July, the Commissioners approved 26 license applications for saloons located within the county. Five of the saloons were located at Aurora: E. F. Grandon's "The First and Last Chance," V. C. Bernard, keeper of "The Bank Saloon," Sprague & Chappell's "The Tavern," W. J. McKeough's "The Tunnel," and Rogers & Lally's "The Northern." At the same time, a petition from citizens to deny Grandon's application was denied by the Board.



Rogers & Lally's Northern Saloon, northeast corner of Pine and Silver Streets, Aurora
(Photo courtesy of Mary M. Glazier)

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On August 4, 1913, the Commissioner's once more addressed the issue of the "restricted district." This time the Aurora Consolidated Mines Company chimed in:

"A Petition from citizens of Aurora, numerous (46) signed asking the Board to suppress certain house of ill-fame existing within the prohibited bounds heretofore set aside by the Board, was presented by J. H. Lavell, Supt. of the Aurora Consolidated Mines Co., who spoke in support of the petition."

After careful consideration of the matter, the minutes reflect the Board's action:

"The Board having personally investigated the entire matter find that the present "Red Light" district now exists within the bounds heretofore set aside by the Board, wherein houses of ill fame were prohibited, & in settlement of the controversy over the location of such district, now, Order that the place known as the Chinese Garden west & south of Aurora, be selected as the place for location of such (Red Light) District, on the west and south side of the road, and no building is to be built within 150 feet of the main traveled road."

The next day, the Board considered an application for a new saloon license, recorded as follows:

"J. H. Glazier of Aurora makes application for a saloon license to conduct The Midway Saloon. Same was read & refered (sic) to the Sheriff for approval & granted after due consideration, upon the express condition that the saloon be established at the Chinese Garden, west & south of Aurora."

After this, the Board also considered the boundaries of the restricted district again:

"The Board having under consideration the matter of boundaries of a restricted district at Aurora, within which no house of ill fame should be established, now amend the previous order made on June 2^d establish the following bounds & prohibit the establishment of any disorderly house within the same, to wit:

Commencing at Aurora & Sacramento streets, thence Northerly two (2) miles, thence Easterly four (4) miles, thence Southerly four (4) miles to place of the beginning."

The area set aside in the last order of the Board commenced approximately 1,000 feet south of the intersection of Pine and Antelope streets (one of the few recognizable points in the town today), apparently far enough south of the area known to be generally inhabited in this period of time.

This then settled the matter of where the "Red Light" District of Aurora would be allowed to be established, south and west of Aurora in the "Chinese Gardens." Only J. H. Glazier's saloon license for "The Midway Saloon" was specifically limited to operate within the "Red Light" district.

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J. H. Glazier's Midway Saloon, "Red Light" District, Aurora, Nevada
(Photo courtesy of Mary M. Glazier; J. H. Glazier is standing in the doorway)

None of the other saloons in the town were similarly restricted, but E. F. Grandon's saloon license was soon after revoked.



Grandon's Saloon occupied the building once used as the Centre Market
(Photo by Nell Murbarger; courtesy Stanley Paher)

In her book, *Ghosts of the Glory Trail*, author Nell Murbarger used the above photograph from her visit to Aurora around 1948. Murbarger wrote that the "last building standing in the former business district of Aurora" was "the Last Chance Saloon..." She noted that on the second floor of the saloon "had flourished

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a bawdry house made conveniently accessible to patrons by means of an outside stairway." From the notes of the Commissioners' meeting, it is most likely that Grandon's saloon with its upstairs room was the motivation to create Aurora's Red Light district outside of the main business sector.

Aurora's "Red Light" District was set aside at the "Chinese Gardens" by the Board of County Commissioners in August of 1913. The Board granted J. H. Glazier a license to operate a saloon, under the "express condition" that Glazier's Midway Saloon only be established at the "Chinese Gardens, west and south of Aurora," no less than 150 feet from the main traveled road.



Interior of the Midway Saloon, "Red Light" District, Aurora
(Photo courtesy of Mary M. Glazier)

The "Chinese Gardens" are found mentioned in news items on the pages of the *Esmeralda Herald* newspaper in the late 1870's and early 1880's. An early ordinance passed in 1864, banned Chinese residents from living in the town of Aurora proper and it is believed that the Chinese Gardens, or China Gardens as some referred to it, became a locality acceptable to the white residents of the town.

In 1881, Tong Man Bow & Co. was assessed taxes on "1 Lot Spring St. opposite McLeod's Toll House known as the Chinese Gardens," with improvements thereon. Previous to this the assessment roll of 1879 listed "Chinese Garden" as the party assessed, noting it was a "lot of land on North side of Spring St. with Chinese thereon."

In 1882, the County Assessor itemized the place as "China Garden," as he did again in 1883. Thereafter, it seems, the place was assessed using that description naming various Chinese owners. In 1893, the Assessor listed property described as "House & China Garden on Spring St aurora [sic] opposite McLeod

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toll house," assessing it to Ed Wood. This was Edwin Wood, a resident of Aurora at least as early as 1878, when he married his wife in the former boom camp. (Mr. Wood died in 1896 and was buried in the Aurora Cemetery.)

When Glazier obtained the saloon license for the Midway Saloon, he apparently did not own the property. In 1914, he was assessed for two town lots in Block F and one town lot in Block 8 of Aurora, but was not assessed for the property at "Chinese Gardens." J. H. Glazier did not purchase the property until September of 1916, when he acquired it from J. R. Wood, son of Edwin Wood, for the sum of \$100 "Gold coin of the United States of America."

Wood had sold Glazier all that "ground commonly known as the "China Gardens", situated on the Bodie Road, now occupied by the Midway Resort; Comprising of about 5 acres, under fence, or established corners..." From this language, it is clear that Glazier erected the Midway Saloon on Wood's land, probably while leasing it from him. The "Red Light" district property was called out as a "resort."



"Midway Resort" – China Gardens, Aurora
(Photo courtesy of Mary M. Glazier; close up view shown)

The small portion of roadway, running behind the frame house in the foreground of this photo, was the Aurora to Bodie Road, also known as Haskell's Toll Road. In 1917, Charles Abrel was assessed taxes for two lots "below Midway Saloon." That same year Lillian Montague was assessed taxes for a building "below Aurora," a piano and saloon and bar fixtures. She may have been operating one of those houses of "ill-fame." Montague moved to Hawthorne by 1920.

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Less than a year after acquiring title to the place, J. H. Glazier sold it to Nick Prijanovich in February of 1917, for eight hundred dollars. Glazier described the property sold as:

"All that ground commonly known as "The China Garden", situate on the County Road between Aurora, Nev. and Del Monte Station, Nev., comprising about 5 acres under fence or established corners, and now occupied by the "Midway Resort". (Said Ground and Midway Resort being immediately West of the town of Aurora, Nev.)

Also that certain building known as the "Midway Saloon", together with all furniture and fixtures contained therein.

Also six small cottages situated west of Midway Saloon, together with all furniture and fixtures contained therein.

Also one cellar situate on the premises near Saloon."

It appears from Glazier's description that the majority of the "Red Light" district was included in the property transaction, all portions of it evidencing all that was needed to support an operation of "houses of ill-fame."



"Red Light" District, looking west toward Bodie Road
(Photo courtesy of Mary M. Glazier)

In this photograph, the Midway Saloon is at right and the Midway Café is shown in the background between the houses and the road.

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By 1920, only five persons were enumerated as living at Aurora and but one man, caretaker of the mill at Wingfield (formerly Mangum), was also counted. Not one saloon existed in the town of Aurora. In 1922, Prijanovich was assessed for "10 buildings lower end of town," the exact number of buildings located in the area of the Red Light district.

By 1924, the "Midway Café" that was once part of the "Midway Resort" in Aurora's "Red Light" District, was assessed to Henry Boerlin. Boerlin was also assessed for buildings in the lower end of Aurora, the Assessor noting "(Prijanovich)" in relation to the buildings. These are believed to have been the structures used as the "houses of ill-fame" sold by Glazier to Prijanovich, who owned them until the time of his death around the year 1922. By 1927, Perry Morgan, son of Henry S. Morgan of East Walker River, owned the "Poganovich building in Aurora" that was also identified as the Midway Café.

John H. Glazier, the original owner of Aurora's official "Red Light" district for a brief time in the early Twentieth century, was a native of Fairview, Pennsylvania. In 1910 Glazier was a married man and a veteran of the Spanish-American war. He was enumerated on the 1910 federal census living without his wife in the Island Mountain precinct of Elko County, Nevada, where he worked as a miner and prospector.

Glazier was divorced from his wife, whom he had married at Rawlins, Wyoming in 1907. Mrs. Glazier filed for the divorce in Utah in the fall of 1910. Three years later J. H. Glazier opened the Midway Saloon at Aurora.

John Glazier remained at Aurora through at least the early fall of 1918, when he registered for the draft during World War I. At some time during his ownership of the Midway Saloon and resort, Glazier was married according Indian cultural rites to Sadie Sam, a young Mono Lake Indian maiden.

In the census of 1920, John H. Glazier was enumerated at Mina, in Mineral County, where he was ranching on a stock ranch. Sadie and the couple's two sons, Jimmie and Jack, lived in the Wichman precinct of the county, in the East Walker River region, with Sadie's brother Bill and mother, Mattie Sam.

During the prohibition years of the 1920's, like so many regular citizens Glazier ran afoul of the law while attempting to support his family. He had endeavored to make contraband alcohol using honey as he lack the money to purchase the sugar normally used in the distilling process. As a result of his arrest by the prohibition officers, Glazier may have found it necessary to sell the home property where Sadie and the children resided in the Wichman precinct, along the East Walker River to two Yerington men in 1924. The Glazier property was located within Section 27, in T8N R27E, and included "one four room cabin, one one room cabin, one stable" and other outbuildings. He did not, however, have title to the land on which his home was situated.

In 1930, the Glazier family lived in Bridgeport Township in Mono County, but by 1938 they resided at Sweetwater, then in Lyon County, Nevada. In that year, "Jack Glazier," as he was popularly known, was appointed as a School Trustee for the Sweetwater school. By 1940, the family had moved to Smith Valley where they remained.

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John H. Glazier, the last of those who had been associated with Aurora's "Red Light" District, died at the Reno Veterans' Hospital in December, 1958. He was buried at the Hillcrest Cemetery in Smith Valley, and was survived by his wife Sadie and his son James. Sons Jack and William had predeceased their father. Sadie Sam Glazier died four years later, in 1962, and is buried next to her husband.

Writer's Notes: J. H. Glazier's granddaughter and great-granddaughter visited the Mineral County Museum in early March, 2012. The photographs provided by the family are the only known photos of the "Red Light" District known to exist. We are grateful to the Glazier's for having shared these views of this part of Aurora's past.

Assessment list information as provided by Emily S. Dale, in her thesis titled Archaeology on Spring Street: Discrimination, Ordinance No. 32, and the Overseas Chinese in Aurora, Nevada, December 2011; pp. 143 ("China Gardens"), 146 ("Tong Man Bow & Co., and 151 ("Ed Wood"). Additional assessment information derived from official county tax assessment rolls.

Much gratitude goes to County Clerk Cherrie George and her predecessors for the excellent preservation of the early minute books of the Board of County Commissioners.