



In 1850, Mormon emigrants on their way to the California Gold Rush discovered gold in Nevada (then part of the Utah Territory) and by 1858 prospectors were permanently camping in the area around what is now Virginia City. In 1859, gold was found with bluish chunks of silver ore, which was later identified as the first silver from what became the Comstock Lode. Numerous mills appeared along the Carson River and Virginia City grew to over 20,000 people. However, the costs to transport ore down to the mills and to transport lumber and supplies up to the mines made only the highest grade ores financially viable. Enter William Sharon, Nevada agent for the Bank of California, which owned many low-grade mines through foreclosures. He planned a railroad to run from Virginia City to the mills along the Carson River and ending at the state capital, Carson City. Ground was broken on the Virginia & Truckee Railroad in February 1869, the first track was laid in September 1869, and the first passenger train pulled into Virginia City in February 1870. In late 1872, the V&T extended the line from Carson City to Reno to connect with the Central Pacific Railroad (1869) and the national rail network. This connection completed the V&T mainline, which ran 30 - 45 trains per day at the peak of operations in 1876 - 1877. In 1906, the V&T built a branch line south from Carson City 14 miles to the agricultural center of Minden, Nevada (this location). By 1924, the V&T was no longer profitable and in 1938 went into receivership and dismantled the Virginia City branch. In 1950 the entire line, including the Minden Branch, was abandoned.

The V&T Minden Branch (1906) entered town from the north and split into a wye, which connected to an east-west track that extended 1,800 feet to the east and 1,900 feet to the west of the wye. Minden businesses grew up along the 3,700 feet of east-west track, including the Minden Flour Milling Co., located immediately west of the wye. The building was built in 1906, when the V&T arrived, and was the largest of five flour mills in the Carson Valley. All traces of the railroad have been obliterated.





The Minden Butter Manufacturing Company, also known as the Minden Creamery, was originally built in 1908 (2 years after the arrival of the V&T) and was replaced by this building in 1916. The company sold butter and other products under the Windmill brand name and eventually became the largest creamery in Nevada. The west branch of the V&T wye ran through the area in front of the building, which in 2017 (when this photo was taken) was being re-graded for a parking lot.