



Guide to the El Rancho Vegas Collection

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Summary Information

Repository:	University of Nevada, Las Vegas. University Libraries. Special Collections and Archives.
Creator:	El Rancho Vegas (Casino)
Contributor:	Watts, Frank Frederic, 1911-2004
Title:	El Rancho Vegas Collection
ID:	MS-00194
Date [inclusive]:	1953-1961
Physical Description:	1.2 Linear Feet (2 boxes)
Language of the Material:	English
Abstract:	The El Rancho Vegas Collection (1953-1961) is comprised of materials and memorabilia from the El Rancho Vegas Hotel collected by former hotel controller, Frank Watts. Records include financial documents including endorsed checks to performers at the resort. Other items included unused stationary, copies of the menu, and memorabilia from the hotel. The collection also contains a bathmat, hangers, and a drinking glass from the hotel.

Preferred Citation

El Rancho Vegas Collection, 1953-1961. MS-00194. Special Collections, University Libraries, University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Las Vegas, Nevada.

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Historical Background

The El Rancho Vegas opened in 1941 on Highway 91 (now Las Vegas Boulevard) as the first casino resort on what would become the Las Vegas Strip in Las Vegas, Nevada. Thomas Hull, encouraged by Las Vegas businessman and booster James Cashman, built the El Rancho. Hull had previously built El Rancho motor hotels in Sacramento and Fresno, California. He purchased a parcel of land near the intersection of what is now Sahara Avenue and Las Vegas Boulevard and hired the architectural firm of McAllister and McAllister to design the resort. The El Rancho Vegas opened on April 3, 1941 and featured a showroom, cocktail lounge, casino, steakhouse, and a few stores. Guests stayed in bungalows surrounding the main building.

The resort changed ownership several times in the 1940s before Beldon Katleman took ownership in 1947. Katleman updated the El Rancho Vegas to keep pace with newer Las Vegas resorts such as the Flamingo. He added 220 hotel rooms to the resort and continued to book world class entertainment. On June 17, 1960 the main building of the El Rancho caught fire and was a total loss. The El Rancho Vegas never reopened.

Source: Burbank, Jeff. "The El Rancho Vegas." *Online Nevada Encyclopedia*, October 6, 2010, <http://www.onlinenevada.org/articles/el-rancho-vegas>. Last accessed June 24, 2015.

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Scope and Contents Note

The El Rancho Vegas Collection (1953-1961) is comprised of materials and memorabilia from the El Rancho Vegas Hotel collected by former hotel controller, Frank Watts. Records include financial documents including endorsed checks to performers at the resort. Other items included unused stationary, copies of the menu, and memorabilia from the hotel. The collection also contains a bathmat, hangers, and a drinking glass from the hotel.

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Arrangement

Materials are arranged by format.

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Administrative Information

Access Note

Collection is open for research.

Publication Rights

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Acquisition Note

Materials were donated in 1978 by Frank Watts; accession numbers T120 and 78-100.

Processing Note

Materials were processed by Special Collections staff. In 2015, as part of a legacy finding aid conversion project, Angela Moor revised and enhanced the collection description to bring it into compliance with current professional standards. In 2017 Joyce Moore added materials and updated the ArchivesSpace finding aid.

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Related Materials

Related Collections

The following resources may provide additional information related to the materials in this collection:

Frank Watts Photographs. PH-00169. Special Collections, University Libraries, University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Las Vegas, Nevada.

Separated Materials

Some of the materials in this acquisition were removed from the collection and placed in Promotional and Publicity Material: El Rancho Vegas. HD9999.G254 E45x 1943 Special Collections, University Libraries, University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Las Vegas, Nevada.

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Names and Subjects

- Casinos -- Nevada -- Las Vegas -- History
- Memorabilia
- El Rancho Vegas (Casino)

Collection Inventory

Title/Description	Containers
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Financial Papers: endorsed checks to entertainers Joe E. Lewis, Sophie Tucker, Jack E. Leonard, Nat "King" Cole, Ted Fio Rita Group, Georgia Gibbs, The Goofers; copy of Elranco, Inc. stock certificate book, 1953-1955	box 01
Stationary: El Rancho Vegas envelope with cancelled silver centennial stamp; "Las Vegas Loot" gag money, 1959	box 01
Correspondence: letter about the Fifth Annual Gin Rummy Tournament; press release about American Hotel Association's supervisory development program, 1961	box 01
Program for Las Vegas Community Fair with Judi Watts on cover, 1958	box 01
Copy of breakfast menu; postcard; unused stationary; "Las Vegas Loot" gag money; postcard for show starring Julius La Rosa and Buddy Hackett; postcard for show starring Miss Lili St. Cyr, undated	box 01
Containers with drawing of El Rancho Vegas, undated	box 02
Pink clothes hangers from Hotel El Rancho Vegas, undated	box 02
El Rancho Vegas paper cup, undated	box 02
El Rancho Vegas drinking glass, undated	box 02
El Rancho Vegas bathmat, undated	box 02
Newspaper clippings of the fire that destroyed the El Rancho, 1960	box 02
Correspondence, postcards, paper coasters, 1960, 1972, undated	box 02