

Guide to the Antonio Morelli Papers

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Summary Information

Repository:	University of Nevada, Las Vegas. University Libraries. Special Collections and Archives.
Creator:	Morelli, Antonio, 1904-1974
Title:	Antonio Morelli Papers
ID:	MS-00558
Date [inclusive]:	approximately 1910s-1970s
Physical Description:	2.5 Linear Feet (5 boxes)
Language of the Material:	English
Abstract Note :	The Antonio Morelli Papers include materials spanning from the 1910s to the 1970s that chronicle the professional and private life of longtime Sands Hotel and Casino orchestra conductor and musical director, Antonio Morelli and his wife Helen. The collection includes snapshots from Morelli's early life, three scrapbooks, one box of sound recording tapes, and a box of slides from Thailand. The collection also documents Morelli's efforts to provide classical music concerts for the Las Vegas, Nevada community and his involvement with the Guardian Angel Church on the Las Vegas Strip.

Preferred Citation Note

Antonio Morelli Papers, 1910s-1970s. MS-00558. Special Collections and Archives, University Libraries, University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Las Vegas, Nevada.

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Biographical Note

Longtime orchestra conductor at the Sands Hotel in Las Vegas, Nevada, Antonio Morelli worked throughout his life to bring music to the public and provide music education through his scholarship fund at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Anthony "Tony" Morelli was born on July 22, 1904 in Rochester, New York, but grew up in Erie, Pennsylvania, as one of nine children. His father took him to Italy in 1914 to be educated, first briefly in Milan's San Celso Military Academy and then at the Royal Conservatories of Music in Milan and Parma. Returning to the United States in 1925, Morelli traveled the country as a pianist, promoted vaudeville acts, and wrote music and arrangements for theater productions, including several Radio City Music Hall productions. He

also conducted theater and civic orchestras around the country throughout the 1930s and 1940s. When he married Helen Collins in 1935, he was the orchestra leader for the newly opened RKO Palace Theater in Albany, New York.

Morelli first visited Las Vegas, Nevada in 1953 with the Olsen and Johnson comedy team. Jack Entratter, the Sands Hotel president and impresario, offered Morelli a position as the hotel's new musical director and the following year Morelli stepped into a newly minted realm of entertainment where he became known as "Antonio" Morelli. Entratter, who had known Morelli from the Copacabana Club in New York City, believed that Morelli's reputation as a classically trained musician and his courtly demeanor would bring a polish that would attract a wealthy and well educated audience to see the performances.

Though never a major headliner in Las Vegas show business, Morelli exemplified the new culture of entertainers that helped turn Las Vegas into a popular entertainment venue. The billing on the Sands Hotel sign read "Antonio Morelli and his Orchestra." He worked with all the great entertainers of the day and also played a role in the Rat Pack appearances at the Sands in 1960. In films of the performances, Morelli can be glimpsed as the tall, smiling, mustachioed bandleader behind the Rat Pack's antics.

Soon after his arrival in Las Vegas he produced and conducted free Las Vegas Pops concerts call "Shirt Sleeve Symphonies." He composed and conducted special religious liturgical services for the public as well as those for civic holiday events. With a lead gift of \$5000, Morelli initiated the Antonio Morelli Friends of Music Scholarships for young musicians at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. A devout Catholic, he commissioned several stained glass windows for the Diocese and the Guardian Angel Catholic Church. Antonio Morelli died on June 17, 1974 in Las Vegas, Nevada.

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Scope and Contents Notes

The Antonia Morelli Papers include photographs, scrapbooks, slides, and audio recordings spanning from the 1910s to the 1970s that chronicle the professional and private life of longtime Sands Hotel and Casino orchestra conductor Antonio Morelli and his wife Helen. There are three scrapbooks spanning the years 1920 through the 1970s, and one box of sound recordings. Also included is a box of slides from Thailand and snapshots from his early life in Pennsylvania dating back to 1910. The collection also documents Morelli's efforts to provide classical music concerts for the Las Vegas community and his involvement with the Guardian Angel Church on the Las Vegas Strip.

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Arrangement

Papers are arranged in alphabetical order. The scrapbook, slides, and early snap-shots are housed separately.

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Administrative Information

Access

Collection is open for research.

Publication Rights

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Acquisition Note

The material was donated in 2009 by the Junior League of Las Vegas; accession number 2009-017. The Morelli House, originally located on the Desert Inn Hotel golf course, was moved from this location in 2001 to Ninth and Bridger to save it from demolition, and has been preserved as a historic residence by the Junior League of Las Vegas. Just prior to moving from this house after her husband's death in the 1970s, Helen Morelli gave this material to a neighbor for safekeeping. After Helen's death, this neighbor presented it to the Junior League of Las Vegas, who took possession of the house and donated this material to UNLV Special Collections in 2009.

Processing Note

Material was processed by Joyce Moore in 2011. In 2014, as part of the legacy finding aid conversion project, Hana Gutierrez revised and enhanced the collection to bring it into compliance with current professional standards. Subsequently Hana Gutierrez entered the data into ArchivesSpace.

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Related Materials

Separation Note

Some photographs have been removed to create the Antonio Morelli Photograph Collection, PH-00365.

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Names and Subjects

- Entertainers
- Entertainment -- Nevada -- Las Vegas
- Morelli, Helen, 1905-1996
- Sands Hotel & Casino (Las Vegas, Nev)

Collection Inventory

Title/Description	Containers	
Catholic Church involvement, May 14, 1955-1989	box 01	folder 01
Christmas Concerts, December 11, 1960-1963	box 01	folder 02
Correspondence and Poster, 1944, 1971	box 01	folder 03
Easter Sunrise, 1963	box 01	folder 04
Good Friday Missal, April 8, 1966	box 01	folder 05
Las Vegas Community Chorus, 1958	box 01	folder 06
Mass cards, July 20, 1950-March 2, 1974	box 01	folder 07
Murals in Rockefeller Center, New York City, undated	box 01	folder 08
New York Philharmonic, 1960		

	box 01	folder 09
Photographs and Portraits: Antonio Morelli, 1960s	box 01	folder 10
Photographs:		
Family, approximately 1910-1960s	box 01	folder 11
Family, 1940s-1950s	box 01	folder 12
Family, 1950s-1970s	box 01	folder 13
Family members, 1956-1974	box 02	folder 01
Helen Morelli, approximately 1940s-1950s	box 02	folder 02
Las Vegas home construction, 1959	box 02	folder 03
Las Vegas Home, exterior views, 1960s-1970s	box 02	folder 04
Las Vegas home, interior views, 1962-1969	box 02	folder 05
Miscellaneous, 1932-1974	box 02	folder 06
Pleasant Valley Cascade Mobile Home Park, 1970s	box 02	folder 07
Poems by Mildred Breedlove, 1963	box 02	folder 08
Red Skelton Family, 1960s	box 02	folder 09
RKO Palace theater: Albany, N.Y. , 1931	box 02	folder 10
Scrapbook, 1920s-1940s	box 02	folder 11
Scrapbook, 1920s-1940s	box 02	folder 12
Scrapbook, 1950s	box 02	folder 13
UNLV Scholarship establishment, May 05, 1969	box 02	folder 14
Reel to reel tapes of commercially recorded classical music and some religious music recordings.	box 03	

Physical Description: 0.70 Linear Feet (12 reel to reel tapes)

Slides taken in Asia and early snapshots of family, 1950s-1970s	box 04
Scrapbook, 1930s- 1940s	box 05
