



Guide to the J. T. McWilliams Photograph Collection

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Summary Information

Repository:	University of Nevada, Las Vegas. University Libraries. Special Collections and Archives.
Creator:	McWilliams, J. T. (John Thomas), 1863-1941
Contributor:	McWilliams, Iona, 1876-1969
Title:	J. T. McWilliams Photograph Collection
ID:	PH-00025
Date [inclusive]:	approximately 1900-1970
Physical Description:	0.1 Linear Feet (1 hanging folder)
Language of the Material:	English
Abstract:	The J. T. McWilliams Photograph Collection contains photographs and postcards from Nevada and Southern California from approximately 1900 to 1970. The materials include postcards depicting Las Vegas, Nevada casinos such as El Rancho Vegas and the Golden Nugget Gambling Hall. The materials also include postcards depicting towns and scenes in Nevada such as Carson City, Rhyolite, Red Rock Canyon, and covered wagons traveling to Las Vegas. Lastly, the materials contain several photographs of the McWilliams family, possibly while they were living in what is now Las Vegas, Nevada.

Preferred Citation

J. T. McWilliams Photograph Collection, 1900-1970. PH-00025. Special Collections, University Libraries, University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Las Vegas, Nevada.

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Biographical Note

Pioneer, engineer, and surveyor J. T. McWilliams was born in Owen Sound, Ontario, Canada, on December 10, 1863. In 1879, McWilliams moved to Detroit, Michigan, before settling in Chicago, Illinois in 1883. While in Chicago, McWilliams studied civil engineering at the University of Chicago, and in 1884 he began surveying for the Northern Pacific Railroad. In 1893, he was appointed a delegate to the National Irrigation Congress in Los Angeles, California by the governor of South Dakota. While in Southern California, McWilliams pursued surveying work in Needles,

California. While in Needles, he met his eventual wife Iona, and they were married at Fort Mohave in 1897.

For the next four years, McWilliams designed municipal water systems for towns in Arizona and California. In 1901, the McWilliams Family moved to Goodsprings, Nevada, and they moved again when he was asked to survey the Stewart Ranch in Las Vegas, Nevada in 1902. In 1904, he purchased land from Helen Stewart in what is now downtown Las Vegas, and he called it McWilliamstown. McWilliams participated in the 1905 land auction that helped establish the Las Vegas townsite.

McWilliams feuded with the Union Pacific Railroad over several issues, including water rights, land claims, and timber claims. His reputation in Southern Nevada was built in part on defeating the railroad when it was dumping waste in Las Vegas Creek and forcing the railroad to pump water into "Old Town," or present day Las Vegas.

McWilliams died in 1941. J. T. McWilliams Elementary School was named in his honor.

Source: K. J. Evans, "J. T. McWilliams," *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, February 10, 1999. <http://www.reviewjournal.com/news/jt-mcwilliams>

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Scope and Contents Note

The J. T. McWilliams Photograph Collection contains photographs and postcards from Nevada and Southern California from approximately 1900 to 1970. The materials include postcards depicting Las Vegas, Nevada casinos such as El Rancho Vegas and the Golden Nugget Gambling Hall. The materials also include postcards depicting towns and scenes in Nevada such as Carson City, Rhyolite, Red Rock Canyon, and covered wagons traveling to Las Vegas. Lastly, the materials contain several photographs of the McWilliams family, possibly while they were living in what is now Las Vegas, Nevada.

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Arrangement

Materials remain in original order.

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Administrative Information

Access

The collection is open for research.

Publication Rights

Materials in this collection may be protected by copyrights and other rights. See [Reproductions and Use](#) on the UNLV Special Collections website for more information about reproductions and permissions to publish.

Acquisition Note

Materials were donated in 1971; accession number T62.

Processing Note

Materials were processed by Special Collections staff. In 2015, as part of a legacy finding aid conversion project, Lindsay Oden wrote the collection description in compliance with current professional standards.

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Related Materials

Related Materials

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

Iona McWilliams Collection, 1936-1960. MS-00153. Special Collections, University Libraries, University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Las Vegas, Nevada.

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Names and Subjects

- photographs
- Las Vegas (Nev.)
- Water rights

- Carson City (Nev.)
- Rhyolite (Nev.)

Collection Inventory

Title/Description	Containers
Postcard: Artesian well, Las Vegas, Nevada, undated (0001) (view online)	folder 01
Postcard: Fremont Street, Las Vegas, 1937 January 13 (0002) (view online)	folder 01
Postcard: El Rancho Vegas exterior, undated (0003)	folder 01
Postcard: Golden Nugget Gambling Hall, undated (0004)	folder 01
Postcard: Tango Game, undated (0005) (view online)	folder 01
Postcard: State Prison, Carson City, Nevada, undated (0006) (view online)	folder 01
Postcard: Main Street, Carson City, Nevada, undated (0007) (view online)	folder 01
Postcard: Bottle House, Rhyolite, Nevada, undated (0008) (view online)	folder 01
Postcard: Red Rock Canyon, undated (0009) (view online)	folder 01
Postcard: "Heading for Las Vegas," covered wagons, undated (0010) (view online)	folder 01
Postcard: Winter in the desert, undated (0011) (view online)	folder 01
Postcard: Joshua tree, undated (0012) (view online)	folder 01
Postcard: "House of the Third Little Pig" and "Cinderella's Doll House," Santa Claus, Arizona, Boulder Dam Highway, undated (0013) (view online)	folder 01
Postcard: Calico, California, undated (0014) (view online)	folder 01
McWilliams house, undated (0015) (view online)	folder 01
Possibly Mrs. J. T. McWilliams, undated (0016) (view online)	folder 01
Tintype: two people posing, undated (0017) (view online)	

folder
01

People on porch, undated (0018) ([view online](#))

folder
01

Four people, 1920 July 01 (0019) ([view online](#))

folder
01

Five people, undated (0020) ([view online](#))

folder
01

Postcard: Badlands, Death Valley, California, undated (0021) ([view online](#))

folder
01