

Guide to the Stardust Resort and Casino Photograph Collection

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Summary Information

Repository:	University of Nevada, Las Vegas. University Libraries. Special Collections and Archives.
Creator:	Seagrave, Jim, 1939-
Title:	Stardust Resort and Casino Photograph Collection
ID:	PH-00319
Date [inclusive]:	approximately 1970 to 1979
Physical Description:	0.25 Cubic Feet (3 hanging files)
Physical Description:	0.25 Linear Feet
Language of the Material:	English
Abstract:	The Stardust Resort and Casino Photograph Collection, approximately 1970 to 1979, consists of black-and-white and color photographic prints of the Stardust Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas, Nevada. The photographs depict the interior and exterior of the hotel before and after its renovation in 1975.

Preferred Citation

Stardust Resort and Casino Photograph Collection, approximately 1970-1979. PH-00319. Special Collections and Archives, University Libraries, University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Las Vegas, Nevada.

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Historical Background

The Stardust Resort and Casino operated in Las Vegas, Nevada from 1958 to 2006. Conceived by Tony "The Hat" Cornero (1899-1955), the Stardust opened as one of the largest hotels and casinos in Las Vegas. The casino held several connections to organized crime into the 1970s, a trait made infamous through controversial news coverage and popular media representation, such as its operational history serving as the base for the fictional hotel and casino Tangiers in the 1995 film *Casino*. The Stardust hosted many shows and entertainers including *Lido de Paris*, *Enter the Night*, Wayne Newton, Siegfried and Roy, B. B. King, the Temptations and the Four Tops, Joan Rivers, George Carlin, Anthony Cools, Rick Thomas, Chicago, and Kansas.

In the early 1950s, Cornero first conceived the name "Starlight," but later changed it to Stardust. In 1954, after seeing the growth of hotels and casinos on the Las Vegas Strip, Cornero paid \$650,000 for thirty-six acres on the Strip's north side, between the El Rancho Vegas and the Hotel Last Frontier. Governor Charles Russell prevented Cornero from obtaining a gaming license due to his criminal past, forcing him to lease the casino to the United Hotels Corporation, headed by Desert Inn Hotel and Casino investor Moe Dalitz. On July 31, 1955, after personally spending three million dollars on the Stardust's construction, Cornero suffered a heart attack and died while playing craps at the Desert Inn. His death delayed construction for two years until Jake "The Barber" Factor arrived from Chicago, Illinois to take over the project.

The space-age themed Stardust opened on July 2, 1958. The original sign, built by the Young Electric Sign Company, stood as the largest cantilever in the world at opening, with nighttime visibility reported three miles away. The hotel contained over one thousand guest rooms, regarded as a world record, and possessed the largest swimming pool (105 feet long) and casino (16,000 square feet) in Nevada. The Stardust also included Horseman's Park, a rodeo complex with corrals for 300 horses. The Café Continental Stage, considered the most technically advanced stage in Las Vegas at the time, possessed the latest lighting and sound equipment along with hydraulic lifts to raise performers ten feet above and thirty feet below the stage. The Stardust also imported the cabaret and burlesque show, Lido de Paris, staged by Donn Arden from France. The troupe arrived in Las Vegas on June 20, 1958, and performed at the grand opening of the Café Continental on July 4, 1958.

In the late 1960s, the U.S. government blocked billionaire Howard Hughes from purchasing the Stardust from Dalitz to prevent Hughes from gaining a monopoly on Las Vegas hotels. Instead, Delbert Coleman and his Recrion Corporation purchased the Stardust, and later sold it in 1974 to Argent Corporation, headed by California real estate investor Allen Glick. During this time, former Chicago bookmaker Frank "Lefty" Rosenthal became the unofficial boss of the casino. Under Rosenthal's management, the Stardust became the first casino to include a sports book. The Stardust later developed into the center of a major scandal when accusations of organized crime syndicates siphoning money alerted taxing authorities. In 1983, a federal grand jury indicted fifteen people in a conspiracy to skim at least 1.6 million dollars from the Stardust. This resulted in several convictions and the Gaming Control Board banning Rosenthal from all Nevada casinos for life.

In 1984, Las Vegas businessmen Allen Sachs and Herb Tobman attempted to purchase the Stardust from Argent and failed. The State of Nevada then offered ownership to Sam Boyd and his son, Bill, who later were known as the Boyd Group. They continued day-to-day operations at the Stardust, and officially purchased the property in 1985. Boyd replaced *Lido de Paris* with *Enter the Night* in 1992, and altered the futuristic lettering on the Stardust's 1967 sign. The Stardust continued with varied success, bringing in entertainers for recurring shows, such as Wayne Newton, George Carlin, and Andrew Dice Clay. The resort and casino closed in 2006, and was imploded on March 13, 2007. Genting Group later bought the Stardust site for the construction of Resorts World Las Vegas.

Sources:

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Koch, Ed and Mary Manning. "Mob Ties." *Las Vegas Sun*. May 15, 2008. Accessed February 14, 2019. <https://lasvegassun.com/news/2008/may/15/mob-ties/>

Schwartz, David G. "The Stardust Hotel, Longtime Cash Cow For the Mob, Debuted 60 Years Ago On the Las Vegas Strip." The Mob Museum. July 2, 2018. Accessed November 8, 2018. <https://themobmuseum.org/blog/stardust-hotel-debuted-60-years-ago-las-vegas-strip-dream-gambler-checkered-past/>.

Sun Staff. "Gala Stardust Hotel Opening Today." *Las Vegas Sun*. July 3, 1958. Accessed February 14, 2019. <https://lasvegassun.com/news/1958/jul/03/gala-stardust-hotel-opening-today/>

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Scope and Contents Note

The Stardust Resort and Casino Photograph Collection, approximately 1970 to 1979, consists of black-and-white and color photographic prints of the Stardust Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas, Nevada. The photographs depict the interior and exterior of the hotel before and after its renovation in 1975.

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Arrangement

Materials remain as they were received.

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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 2006 by Jim Seagrave; accession number 2006-017.

Processing Note

Material was processed by UNLV Special Collections staff in 2006. In 2014, as part of a legacy finding aid conversion project, Ian M. Baldwin revised and enhanced the collection description to bring it into compliance with current professional standards. Subsequently, Ian M. Baldwin entered the data into ArchivesSpace. In 2020, as part of an archival backlog elimination project, Sarah Jones revised the finding aid.

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Names and Subjects

- photographs
- Casinos
- Las Vegas Strip (Nev.)
- Stardust Resort and Casino (Las Vegas, Nev.)

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