

Guide to the James Reece Photographs of El Rancho Vegas

This finding aid was created by Lindsay Oden. This copy was published on August 28, 2019.
Persistent URL for this finding aid: <http://n2t.net/ark:/62930/f11w4w>

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Summary Information

Repository:	University of Nevada, Las Vegas. University Libraries. Special Collections and Archives.
Creator:	Reece, James
Title:	James Reece Photographs of El Rancho Vegas
ID:	PH-00048
Date [inclusive]:	approximately approximately 1950-1962
Physical Description:	0.2 Linear Feet (1 hanging folder)
Physical Description:	0.013 Cubic Feet (1 hanging folder)
Language of the Material:	English
Abstract:	The James Reece Photographs of El Rancho Vegas depict the Las Vegas Strip's first hotel, El Rancho Vegas, in Las Vegas, Nevada, from approximately 1950 to 1962. The photographs depict a craps table and its operators, owner Beldon Katleman with Eleanor Roosevelt, the hotel's exterior, and military servicemen photographed with one of El Rancho's entertainers, Yvette Dare.

Preferred Citation

James Reece Photographs of the El Rancho Vegas, approximately 1950-1962. PH-00048. Special Collections, University Libraries, University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Las Vegas, Nevada.

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Historical Background

In 1940 Californian hotel operator Thomas Hull visited Las Vegas, Nevada to purchase land for a new hotel. Enticed by local businessmen Robert Griffith and James Cashman, Hull bought a parcel on Sahara Avenue and Las Vegas Boulevard (then Highway 91) and opened El Rancho Vegas, the first hotel on what became the Las Vegas Strip. The location was outside of Las Vegas city limits, which allowed Hull to avoid city taxes. El Rancho Vegas opened in 1941 and was the largest hotel in Las Vegas until 1942.

Hull sold El Rancho Vegas, and the hotel changed hands several times, temporarily belonging to several owners with connections to organized crime. In 1947, Beldon Katleman bought El Rancho and invested \$750,000 for renovations, increasing the hotel's size by 220 rooms and enlarging the casino.

In 1960 a fire destroyed El Rancho Vegas. Despite promising to rebuild the hotel, Katleman sold the property. Billionaire entrepreneur Howard Hughes purchased the empty site but never developed it. In 2004 the Hilton built a timeshare tower on the land.

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

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Scope and Contents Note

The James Reece Photographs of El Rancho Vegas depict the Las Vegas Strip's first hotel, El Rancho Vegas, from approximately 1950 to 1962. The six black-and-white photographs depict a craps table and its operators, owner Beldon Katleman with Eleanor Roosevelt, the hotel's exterior, and military servicemen photographed with one of El Rancho's entertainers, Yvette Dare.

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Arrangement

Materials remain in original order.

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Administrative Information

Access

The collection is open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

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 1975 by James Reece; accession number 75-119.

Processing Note

Materials were processed by Special Collections staff. In 2016, 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:

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

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Names and Subjects

- Photographs
- Hotels
- Casinos
- Gambling
- El Rancho Vegas (Casino)

Collection Inventory

Title/Description	Containers
El Rancho Vegas craps table, boxman Hyman Newman, dealer Leslie Ethridge, and stickman, approximately 1956 (0048_0001) (view online)	folder 01
El Rancho Vegas craps table, boxman Hyman Newman, dealer Leslie Ethridge, and stickman, approximately 1956 (0048_0002) (view online)	folder 01
El Rancho Vegas craps table, boxman Hyman Newman, approximately 1956 (0048_0003) (view online)	folder 01
El Rancho Vegas Opera House, (0048_0004) (view online)	folder 01
El Rancho Vegas owner Beldon Katleman, Eleanor Roosevelt, and others, (0048_0005) (view online)	folder 01

Servicemen in Jeep with dancer, possibly Yvette Dare of the El Rancho Ranchettes, folder 01
(0048_0006) ([view online](#))