

Guide to the Dunes Hotel Photograph Collection

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Summary Information

Repository:	University of Nevada, Las Vegas. University Libraries. Special Collections and Archives.
Creator:	Gershen, Helen
Title:	Dunes Hotel Photograph Collection
ID:	PH-00281
Date [inclusive]:	1950-1993
Physical Description:	1.5 Linear Feet (5 hanging folders 1 shared box of negatives 1 over sized folder)
Language of the Material:	English
Abstract:	The Dunes Hotel Photographs (1950-1993) consist of administrative, publicity and entertainment images documenting the history of the Dunes Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas, Nevada. In addition to materials focusing on day-to-day activities at the hotel (correspondence, contracts, personnel, budgets, etc.) the collection provides insight into the hotel's entertainment and public relations activities. Although there are chronological gaps in the collection, particularly during the later years of the Dunes (1970s-1990s), it provides a significant amount of historical documentation on the famed Strip hotel that was long known to tourists and residents alike as the "the Miracle in the Desert."

Preferred Citation

Dunes Hotel Photograph Collection, approximately 1950-1993. PH-00281. Special Collections, University Libraries, University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Las Vegas, Nevada.

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Historical Background

The Dunes Hotel and Casino, along with the Riviera and the Royal Nevada, was one of three resorts that opened on the Las Vegas Strip in 1955. The hotel, constructed at a cost of \$3.5 million, was designed by Robert Dorr Jr. and architectural engineer, John Replogle. Its exterior was distinguished by a giant fiberglass sultan figure that towered some 30 feet into the air on the hotel's roof for many years. In later years, the figure was moved to the rear of the property where it faced the I-15 freeway and served as a welcoming beacon for the hotel.

The original owners of the hotel had no gaming experience, and as a result, despite its early promise, the Dunes went downhill quickly. Desperate to save their investment, the hotel's owners hired the Sands Hotel management team to help them run the Dunes in 1956. Yet despite the promotions (some involving one of the Sand's top entertainers – Frank Sinatra) and comps offered to visitors, nothing seemed to help the fledgling hotel. For a short time, the Dunes even operated as a motel. In late 1956 the hiring of Major Arteburn Riddle as General Manager brought some much-needed stability to the hotel. Riddle was responsible for introducing a number of significant innovations that proved instrumental in bringing the Dunes back to life.

Riddle was particularly successful in bringing high quality entertainment to the hotel. In 1957, he booked Minsky's Follies, the first topless show on the Strip, which ran for over four years. Riddle then hired producer Frederic Apcar to stage Vive Les Girls, a mini revue which provided all the spectacle and costumes of a large production show in the intimate atmosphere of the Persian Lounge Room.

Other innovations introduced by Riddle included the opening of the Sultan's Table in March 1961. As one of the first gourmet restaurants in Las Vegas, it was considered by many as the place to be and be seen. Riddle also set out to build Nevada's largest golf course with its 18 hole and 72 par layout on a large carpet of emerald green grass just behind the hotel. In July 1965 Riddle watched triumphantly as the Diamond of the Dunes, a 24-story high rise, opened, housing 250 additional guest rooms, a shopping arcade, and two additional gourmet restaurants, one of which, the Top-o-the-Strip featured the Russ Morgan Orchestra and the elegant Dome of the Sea. Towering over everything was the new Dunes sign designed by the Federal Sign Company; at 185 feet high, it was largest free standing sign in the world at the time.

On December 27, 1963 Apcar brought the Parisian production spectacular Casino de Paris to the Dunes showroom. The noted French singing star Line Renaud was one of many performers who graced its stage surrounded by dozens of dancers and showgirls clothed in the amazing creations of designer Jose Luis Vinas. Like the successful Lido de Paris at the Stardust, the show introduced many stage effects that Las Vegas had not seen before, including the imposing Octuramic stage that jutted out into the audience.

In the 1970s and 1980s the Dunes experienced several changes in ownership, and struggled with financial difficulties throughout the 1980s. The closing of the Casino de Paris production show in 1981 took away one of the hotel's prime attractions. In 1992, Steve Wynn, fresh off of the enormous success of the Mirage Hotel and Casino's opening in 1989, purchased the Dunes and announced plans to build a large and spectacular new resort on the site. In October 1993, much of the hotel and its towering neon sign was destroyed in a spectacular implosion that was viewed by thousands on the Strip. After several years of construction, Wynn's Bellagio Hotel and Casino opened in October 1998 on the site of the hotel that was once known as the "Miracle in the Desert."

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Scope and Contents Note

The Dunes Hotel Photograph Collection contains administrative, publicity, and entertainment images documenting the history of the Dunes Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas, Nevada from 1954 to 1993. In

addition to materials focusing on general, day-to-day activities at the hotel, the documentation provides insight into the hotel's construction, entertainment, and public relations activities related to advertising and promotion. Of particular interest are the images on the entertainers who performed at the Dunes such as Wally Cox, Dick Haymes, and the Malagon Sisters. The hotel's promotional activities involving golf tournaments are also documented in this collection. Although there are chronological gaps in the images, particularly that during early years of the Dunes (1950s-1960s), the collection provides a significant amount of historical documentation on the famed Strip hotel that was long known to tourists and residents alike as the "the Miracle in the Desert."

The items described include photographic prints and negatives; items listed are photographic prints unless otherwise specified.

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Arrangement Note

This collection is organized into two series:

Series I. Dunes Hotel, 1950-1993;

Series II. People, 1950-1962

Materials remain in original order. Many of the photographic prints have corresponding negatives. Negatives have been housed separately and can be found in box 18.

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Administrative Information

Access

The collection is open for research. Portions of this collection have been digitized and are [available online](#).

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 November 19, 1992 by Helen Gershen; accession number 92-22.

Processing Note

Materials were processed by Special Collections staff. In 2016, as part of a legacy finding aid conversion project, Maryse Lundering-Timpano wrote the collection description in compliance with current professional standards.

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Related Materials

Related Collections

Dunes Hotel Collection, 1955-1991. MS-00328. Special Collections, University Libraries, University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Las Vegas, Nevada.

Minsky's Burlesque Collection, 1922-1978. MS-00290. Special Collections, UNLV Libraries, University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

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Names and Subjects

- Casinos -- Las Vegas -- Nevada -- Marketing
- Hotels -- Nevada -- Las Vegas -- History
- Southern Nevada -- 20th Century
- Gaming -- Las Vegas (Nev.)
- Dunes Hotel -- Las Vegas -- Nevada

Collection Inventory

Dunes Hotel, 1950-1993

Title/Description	Containers
Artist's rendering of the Dunes Hotel, front entrance, approximately 1950-1959	folder 01
Artist's rendering of the Dunes Hotel complex, approximately 1950-1959	folder 01
Aerial view of the Dunes Hotel, showing construction in progress, 1955	folder 01
Construction of the Arabian Room, the theater in the Dunes Hotel, Las Vegas, Nevada, 1955 January 24	folder 01

Dunes Hotel construction, Las Vegas, Nevada, 1955 January	folder 01
Dunes Hotel construction, Las Vegas, Nevada, 1955 January	folder 01
Dunes Hotel construction, Las Vegas, Nevada, 1955 January	folder 01
Dunes Hotel, Las Vegas, Nevada, 1955	folder 01
Dunes Hotel, Las Vegas, Nevada, approximately 1955-1959	folder 01
Dunes Hotel, Las Vegas, Nevada, approximately 1955-1959	folder 01
Front entrance to the Dunes Hotel, Las Vegas, Nevada, approximately 1955-1959	folder 01
Dunes Hotel pool, Las Vegas, Nevada, approximately 1955-1959	folder 01
Neon sign at Dunes Hotel, Las Vegas, Nevada, 1955	folder 03
Crown Jewel Room, Las Vegas, Nevada, approximately 1950-1959	folder 03
Sapphire Room, Las Vegas, Nevada, approximately 1950-1959	folder 03
Crown Jewel Room, Las Vegas, Nevada, approximately 1950-1959	folder 03
Crown Jewel Room, Las Vegas, Nevada, approximately 1950-1959	folder 03
Jade Room, Las Vegas, Nevada, approximately 1950-1959	folder 03
Crown Jewel Room, Las Vegas, Nevada, approximately 1950-1959	folder 03
Convention facilities, Las Vegas, Nevada, approximately 1950-1959	folder 03
Convention facilities, Las Vegas, Nevada, approximately 1950-1959	folder 03
Alice in Wonderland Nursery, Las Vegas, Nevada, approximately 1950-1959	folder 03
Alice in Wonderland Nursery, Las Vegas, Nevada, approximately 1950-1959	folder 03
Sultan's Table Restaurant, Las Vegas, Nevada, approximately 1950-1959	folder 03
People dining at the Sultan's Table, Las Vegas, Nevada, approximately 1950-1959	folder 03
People dining at the Sultan's Table, Las Vegas, Nevada, approximately 1950-1959	folder 03
Sultan's Table Restaurant, Las Vegas, Nevada, approximately 1950-1959	folder 03
Sultan's Table Restaurant, Las Vegas, Nevada, approximately 1950-1959	folder 03
Health Club and Solaria, Las Vegas, Nevada, approximately 1950-1959	folder 03
Dunes Hotel, Las Vegas, Nevada, approximately 1950-1959	folder 03
People playing craps, Las Vegas, Nevada, approximately 1950-1959	folder 03
Monaco Room, Las Vegas, Nevada, approximately 1950-1959	folder 03
Dunes Hotel rooms, Las Vegas, Nevada, approximately 1950-1959	folder 04
Dunes Hotel rooms, Las Vegas, Nevada, approximately 1950-1959	folder 04
Dunes Hotel interior, Las Vegas, Nevada, approximately 1950-1959	folder 04
Dunes Hotel rooms, Las Vegas, Nevada, approximately 1950-1959	folder 04

Dunes Hotel rooms, Las Vegas, Nevada, approximately 1950-1959	folder 04
Dunes Hotel rooms, Las Vegas, Nevada, approximately 1950-1959	folder 04
Dunes Hotel rooms, Las Vegas, Nevada, approximately 1950-1959	folder 04
Dunes Hotel rooms, Las Vegas, Nevada, approximately 1950-1959	folder 04
Dunes Hotel rooms, Las Vegas, Nevada, approximately 1950-1959	folder 04
Douguet party at Dunes Hotel, Las Vegas, Nevada, 1966 May	folder 04
Douguet party at Dunes Hotel, Las Vegas, Nevada, 1966 May	folder 04
Dunes Hotel golf tournament, Las Vegas, Nevada, 1971 November	folder 04
Douguet party at Dunes Hotel, Las Vegas, Nevada, 1966 May	folder 04
Dunes Hotel rooms, Las Vegas, Nevada, 1971 November	folder 04
Dunes Hotel billboard, Las Vegas, Nevada, 1973	folder 04
Dunes Hotel golf tournament, Las Vegas, Nevada, 1971 November	folder 04
Dunes Hotel golf tournament, Las Vegas, Nevada, 1971 November	folder 04
Dunes Hotel golf tournament, Las Vegas, Nevada, 1971 November	folder 04
Las Vegas strip, approximately 1970-1971	folder 04
Dunes Hotel groundbreaking ceremony, Las Vegas, Nevada, 1962 October 20	folder 04
Dunes Hotel and Country Club, Las Vegas, Nevada, approximately 1962-1969	folder 04
Dunes Hotel after tower addition, approximately 1962-1969	folder 04
Aerial view of the Dunes Hotel and Country Club, approximately 1962-1969	folder 04
Dunes Hotel showgirls, Las Vegas, Nevada, 1955	folder 04
Aerial view of the Dunes Hotel and Country Club, approximately 1955-1959	flat file 01
Dunes Hotel implosion, Las Vegas, Nevada, 1993 October 27	folder 05
Dunes Hotel implosion, Las Vegas, Nevada, 1993 October 27	folder 05
Dunes Hotel implosion, Las Vegas, Nevada, 1993 October 27	folder 05

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People, 1950-1962

Title/Description	Containers
Esther Williams and Ben Gage rehearsing, approximately 1950-1959	folder 01
Esther Williams, approximately 1950-1959	folder 01
Mickey Rooney, 1955	folder 01

The Malagon Sisters, Las Vegas, Nevada, 1955	folder 01
The Malagon Sisters, Las Vegas, Nevada, 1955	folder 01
The Malagon Sisters, Las Vegas, Nevada, 1955	folder 01
The Malagon Sisters, Las Vegas, Nevada, approximately 1950-1959	folder 01
Joseph Cotten and Dick Haymes, approximately 1950-1959	folder 01
Dick Haymes, Las Vegas, Nevada, 1955	folder 01
Dick Haymes, Las Vegas, Nevada, 1955	folder 01
Dick Haymes, Las Vegas, Nevada, 1955	folder 01
Dick Haymes, Las Vegas, Nevada, 1955	folder 01
Dick Haymes, Las Vegas, Nevada, 1955	folder 01
Dick Haymes, Las Vegas, Nevada, 1955	folder 01
Dick Haymes and Jack Benny, approximately 1954-1956	folder 01
Dick Haymes and others, Las Vegas, Nevada, approximately 1954-1956	folder 01
Dick Haymes and others, Las Vegas, Nevada, 1955	folder 01
Wally Cox, Eileen Barton, and Marlon Brando, Las Vegas, Nevada, 1955	folder 01
Eileen Barton and Wally Cox, Las Vegas, Nevada, 1955	folder 02
Wally Cox, 1955	folder 02
Wally Cox, 1955	folder 02
Negative: Wally Cox, Las Vegas, Nevada, 1955	box SH-031
Robert Lamouret, 1955	folder 02
Newspaper clippings about Robert Lamouret, 1955	folder 02
Jack De Leon, 1955	folder 02
Jack De Leon, 1955	folder 02
Liberace and others, approximately 1950-1959	folder 02
Nadia Petrova and Reginald Gardiner, 1955	folder 02
Tab Hunter and Lori Nelson, Las Vegas, Nevada, 1955	folder 02
Debbie Reynolds and others, Las Vegas, Nevada, 1955	folder 02
Tab Hunter and Lori Nelson, Las Vegas, Nevada, 1955	folder 02
Robert Lamouret, 1955	folder 02
Robert Lamouret, 1955	folder 02
Celebrities at the Dunes Hotel, Las Vegas, Nevada, 1955	folder 02
Cesar Romero and a woman, Las Vegas, Nevada, 1955	

	folder 02
Marla English, Las Vegas, 1955	folder 02
Jeff Hunter and a woman, Las Vegas, Nevada, 1955	folder 02
Mickey Rooney and others, Las Vegas, Nevada, 1955	folder 02
Jeff Hunter and a woman, Las Vegas, Nevada, 1955	folder 02
Virginia Field and Willard Parker, Las Vegas, Nevada, 1955	folder 02
Marion Marlowe, Las Vegas, Nevada, 1955	folder 02
Marion Marlowe, 1955	folder 02
Eileen Barton, 1955	folder 02
Eileen Barton, 1955	folder 02
Noel Coward and others, 1955	folder 02
Guests at the Dunes Hotel, Las Vegas, Nevada, 1955	folder 02
Alfred Gottesman and a woman, Las Vegas, Nevada, 1955	folder 02
Alfred Gottesman and a man, Las Vegas, Nevada, 1955	folder 02
Cocktail waitresses, Las Vegas, Nevada, 1955	folder 03
Linda Lawson and others, Las Vegas, Nevada, 1955	folder 03
People studying construction plans for Dunes Hotel, Las Vegas, Nevada, 1954	folder 03
Men signing contract for Dunes Hotel, Las Vegas, Nevada, 1954	folder 03
Joseph Sullivan and others, Las Vegas, Nevada, 1954	folder 03
Morris Shenker and others, approximately 1950-1959	folder 04
Morris Shenker and man, Las Vegas, Nevada, approximately 1950-1959	folder 04
Negative: Wally Cox, Las Vegas, Nevada, 1955	box SH-031
Negative: Wally Cox, Las Vegas, Nevada, 1955	box SH-031
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Negative: Wally Cox, Las Vegas, Nevada, 1955	box SH-031
Negative: Wally Cox, Las Vegas, Nevada, 1955	box SH-031
Negative: Dunes Hotel construction, Las Vegas, Nevada, 1955 January	box SH-031
Negative: Douguet party at Dunes Hotel, Las Vegas, Nevada, 1966 May	box SH-031
Negative: Douguet party at Dunes Hotel, Las Vegas, Nevada, 1966 May	box SH-031
Negative: Dunes Hotel groundbreaking ceremony, Las Vegas, Nevada, 1962 October 20	box SH-031
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