



Guide to the Antonio Morelli Photograph Collection

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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 Photograph Collection
ID:	PH-00365
Date [inclusive]:	1932 to 1970
Date [bulk]:	1950 to 1970
Physical Description:	0.1 Linear Feet (16 items)
Language of the Material:	English
Abstract:	The Antonio Morelli Photograph Collection documents the professional and private life of the Sands Hotel Orchestra conductor, Antonio Morelli, from 1932 to approximately 1970. The majority of the photographs show events, Copa Room showgirls, and the orchestra at the Sands Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas, Nevada during the 1950s and 1960s. Subjects depicted in the photographs include a Copa girl with an atomic bomb crown, Joe W. Brown's Horseshoe million dollar display at Binion's Hotel and Casino, and Antonio Morelli performing with Jimmy Durante and Carl Cohen.

Preferred Citation

Antonio Morelli Photograph Collection, 1932-1970. PH-00365. Special Collections, 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, Anotnio 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 Note

The Antonio Morelli Photograph Collection documents the professional and private life of the Sands Hotel Orchestra conductor Antonio Morelli, from 1932 to approximately 1970. The majority of the photographs show events, Copa Room showgirls, and the orchestra at the Sands Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas, Nevada during the 1950s and 1960s. Subjects depicted in the photographs include a Copa girl with an atomic bomb crown, Joe W. Brown's Horseshoe million dollar display at Binion's Hotel and Casino, and Antonio Morelli performing with Jimmy Durante and Carl Cohen.

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Arrangement

Material is arranged by subject.

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Administrative Information

Access

Collection is open for research.

Publication Rights

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Processing Note

Material was processed by Joyce Moore in 2011. In 2014, as part of a legacy finding aid conversion project, Hannah Robinson revised and enhanced the collection description to bring it into compliance with current professional standards. Subsequently Hannah Robinson entered the data into ArchivesSpace. In 2020, James Howard revised the collection description to bring it into compliance with current professional standards.

Revision Description

The finding aid was revised by Hannah Robinson to bring it into compliance with DACS. August 2014

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Related Materials

Related Materials Note

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

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Names and Subjects

- Entertainment -- Nevada -- Las Vegas
- Entertainers
- Sands Hotel Orchestra -- Las Vegas (Nev.) -- 1950-1970
- photographs

Collection Inventory

Title/Description	Containers
Copa girl: "Mis-Cue," with an atomic bomb crown to illustrate another misfiring of the Operation Cue Bomb. She is surrounded by servicemen at the Sands Hotel and Casino, 1955 (0365_0001) (view online)	folder 01
Copa girl: "Mis-Cue," with an atomic bomb crown to illustrate another misfiring of the Operation Cue Bomb. She is surrounded by servicemen at the Sands Hotel and Casino, 1955 (0365_0002) (view online)	folder 01
Copa girl: "Mis-Cue," with an atomic bomb crown to illustrate another misfiring of the Operation Cue Bomb. She is surrounded by servicemen at the Sands Hotel and Casino, 1955 (0365_0003) (view online)	folder 01
The Copa girls with Antonio Morelli (center) at the Sands Hotel and Casino (From right to left: Gene, Joan, Linda, Charlotte, Lucille, Liz, and Mary), 1950s (0365_0004) (view online)	folder 01
Antonio Morelli in front of the Sands Hotel marquee advertising Nat King Cole and Antonio Morelli, 1954 (0365_0005) (view online)	folder 01
Aerial view of the Sands Hotel and Casino, 1954 December (0365_0006) (view online)	folder 01
Antonio Morelli with two men working on the house lights in the back stage of the Sands showroom, 1964 February 27 (0365_0007) (view online)	folder 01
Antonio Morelli (2nd from the front right) with the Sands orchestra, 1960s (0365_0008) (view online)	folder 01
Antonio Morelli (front center) with the Sands orchestra, 1960s (0365_0009) (view online)	folder 01
Antonio and Helen Morelli at Joe W. Brown's Horseshoe million dollar display at Binion's Horseshoe Hotel and Casino, 1958-1962 (0365_0010) (view online)	folder 01
Antonio Morelli with Jimmy Durant playing the piano at the Sands Hotel and Casino, 1960s (0365_0011) (view online)	folder 01

Antonio Morelli (center-back row) with Carl Cohen at the Sands Hotel and Casino, 1960s (0365_0012) (view online)	folder 01
Antonio Morelli portrait, 1932 (0365_0013) (view online)	folder 01
Antonio and Helen Morelli in their home in Las Vegas, Nevada, 1960s (0365_0014) (view online)	folder 01
Antonio Morelli at his piano with the musical score, Music for Christmas, 1960s (0365_0015) (view online)	folder 01
Antonio Morelli portrait, 1964 (0365_0016) (view online)	folder 01
