



Guide to the Toni and Wilbur Clark Papers

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Summary Information

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| Repository: | University of Nevada, Las Vegas. University Libraries. Special Collections and Archives. |
| Creator: | Clark, Wilbur, 1908-1965 |
| Creator: | Clark, Toni, 1915-2006 |
| Title: | Toni and Wilbur Clark Papers |
| ID: | MS-00361 |
| Date [inclusive]: | approximately 1944 to 1995 |
| Physical Description: | 4.87 Cubic Feet (5 boxes and 4 oversized boxes) |
| Physical Description: | 7.58 Linear Feet |
| Language of the Material: | English |
| Abstract: | <p>The Toni and Wilbur Clark Papers (approximately 1944-1995) document the lives of Toni and Wilbur Clark and the development and promotion of the Desert Inn Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas, Nevada. The materials include photographs, scrapbooks, correspondence, newspaper clippings, and publications highlighting the Clarks' activities and lifestyle. The photographs depict Wilbur and Toni Clark attending and hosting events with celebrities, politicians, and other associates from throughout Las Vegas and the United States; as well as events and golf tournaments held at the Desert Inn Country Club. The collection includes correspondence highlighting Clark's promotion of the Desert Inn and his emphasis on hospitality and building relationships. Multiple scrapbooks contain photographs, newspaper clippings, correspondence, and other ephemera detailing different periods in Wilbur Clark's life. Audiovisual materials include home movies, news footage, and footage of Las Vegas and the Desert Inn.</p> |

Preferred Citation

Toni and Wilbur Clark Papers, approximately 1944-1995. MS-00361. Special Collections and Archives, University Libraries, University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Las Vegas, Nevada. <http://n2t.net/ark:/62930/f1364m>

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Biographical Note

Casino owner and developer Wilbur Clark was born in Keyesport, Illinois on December 27, 1908 to Shirley and Lulu Clark. He moved to San Diego, California as a teenager, working a series of jobs there before relocating to Reno, Nevada, where he entered the gaming industry.

Wilbur Clark married Toni Gaglianese in 1944. That same year, Clark invested in the Monte Carlo Club on Fremont Street in Las Vegas, Nevada, and purchased the El Rancho Vegas on the Las Vegas Strip. He sold his interest in the two properties in 1946 and used the proceeds to begin building a new resort on the Strip, the Desert Inn. Due to rising post-war construction costs the project ran low on funds, and Clark sold a majority interest in the Desert Inn to Moe Dalitz in order to finish construction. Wilbur Clark's Desert Inn opened on April 24, 1950, adding an eighteen-hole golf course and country club a year later. Clark was a partner in the Desert Inn until he sold his interest in 1964.

In addition to the Desert Inn, Wilbur Clark built the Paradise Gardens housing development in Las Vegas, naming the streets after his family and friends. He also served as mayor of the township of Paradise Valley, Nevada. Wilbur Clark died of a heart attack on August 27, 1965.

Sources:

Burbank, Jeff. "Desert Inn." Online Nevada Encyclopedia. May 19, 2011. <http://www.onlinenevada.org/articles/desert-inn>

Green, Michael. "Las Vegas Desert Inn: From Wilbur Clark's Vision to Wynn's Demolition." Nevada Public Radio. June 10, 2025. <https://knpr.org/show/nevada-yesterdays/2025-06-10/las-vegas-desert-inn-from-wilbur-clarks-vision-to-wynns-demolition>

Socialite and philanthropist Toni Clark was born Lena Gaglianese on April 4, 1915 in Seattle, Washington to Angeline and Salvatore Gaglianese. She moved to San Diego in 1941, where she met Wilbur Clark. The couple relocated to Las Vegas, Nevada in 1944 and got married in Reno, Nevada on August 2, 1944.

Toni Clark contributed to the social aspects of the Desert Inn by entertaining guests, planning parties, and hosting fashion shows at the resort. After Wilbur's death in 1965, Toni remained an active member of Las Vegas society. She later married longtime friend Larry Finuf, who ran a clothing shop inside the Desert Inn. Toni Clark lived in Las Vegas, Nevada until her death on October 4, 2006.

Sources:

"Toni Clark." Women in Nevada History. Accessed March 12, 2026. <https://womennvhistory.org/portfolio/toni-clark/>

Toni Clark oral history interview, 1996 July 02. OH-02781. Transcript. Oral History Research Center, Special Collections and Archives, University Libraries, University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Las Vegas, Nevada. <http://n2t.net/ark:/62930/f1w128>

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Scope and Contents Note

The Toni and Wilbur Clark Papers (approximately 1944-1995) document the lives of Toni and Wilbur Clark and the development and promotion of the Desert Inn Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas, Nevada. The materials include photographs, scrapbooks, correspondence, newspaper clippings, and publications highlighting the Clarks' activities and lifestyle. The photographs depict Wilbur and Toni Clark attending and hosting events with celebrities, politicians, and other associates from throughout Las Vegas and the United States; as well as events and golf tournaments held at the Desert Inn Country Club. The collection includes correspondence from Wilbur Clark to those he identified as VIPs, including elected officials and celebrities, which highlight Clark's promotion of the Desert Inn and his emphasis on hospitality and building relationships. Multiple scrapbooks contain photographs, newspaper clippings, correspondence, and other ephemera detailing different periods in Wilbur Clark's life. The collection also contains audiovisual materials, including Wilbur and Toni Clark's home movies, news footage, and footage of Las Vegas and the Desert Inn. This collection was previously known as the Wilbur and Toni Clark Papers.

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Arrangement Note

Materials remain as they were received.

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Administrative Information

Access Note

Collection is open for research. Where use copies do not exist, production of use copies is required before access will be granted; this may delay research requests. Please contact UNLV Special Collections and Archives for additional information.

Publication Rights

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Acquisition Note

Materials were donated in 1995 by Toni Clark; accession number 95-49. Additional materials were donated in 2025 by Larry Finuf; accession number 2025-106.

Appraisal Note

Acquired by Su Kim Chung, curator, as part of UNLV Special Collections and Archives holdings on the history of Las Vegas, Nevada. All material that formed the original gift has been retained.

Processing Note

Material was processed in 1999 by Gerry Evans. In 2016, Joyce Moore revised and enhanced the collection description to bring it into compliance with current professional standards. In 2018, as part of an archival backlog elimination project, Angela Moor revised the collection description to bring it into compliance with current professional standards. In 2019, Angela Moor added descriptions for the audiovisual material. In 2026, Landon Paljusaj processed the 2025 addition, updated the name of the collection, and updated the finding aid in ArchivesSpace.

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Related Materials

Separated Materials

Some of the photographs in the original acquisition were removed from this collection and placed in the Toni and Wilbur Clark Photographs, 1910-1975. PH-00302. Special Collections and Archives, University Libraries, University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Las Vegas, Nevada. <http://n2t.net/ark:/62930/f1pm28>

Related Collections

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

Toni Clark oral history interview, 1996 July 02. OH-02781. [Cite format consulted: Audio recording or Transcript.] Oral History Research Center, Special Collections and Archives, University Libraries, University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Las Vegas, Nevada. <http://n2t.net/ark:/62930/f1w128>

Toni and Wilbur Clark Photographs, 1910-1975. PH-00302. Special Collections and Archives, University Libraries, University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Las Vegas, Nevada. <http://n2t.net/ark:/62930/f1pm28>

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Names and Subjects

- Casinos -- Nevada -- Las Vegas
- Hotels -- Nevada -- Las Vegas
- Businesspeople -- Nevada -- Las Vegas
- Las Vegas (Nev.) -- History
- photographs
- Desert Inn Hotel and Casino

Collection Inventory

| Title/Description | Containers |
|--|------------|
| Apartment complex survey prepared by Horwath and Horwath, 1963-01-30 | box 01 |
| Biographical information about Wilbur Clark: articles and newspaper clippings, typewritten biographies, Wilbur Clark's 50th birthday party invitation, 1958, undated | box 01 |
| Wilbur Clark's Chateau de Ville Apartments proposal: architectural drawings, cost estimates, descriptions of other Las Vegas apartments, 1962 | box 01 |
| Correspondence from VIPs (government): incoming correspondence to Wilbur Clark from government officials including John F. Kennedy, Richard Nixon, Lyndon B. Johnson, and Harry S. Truman. Also contains letters from Nevada politicians including Alan Bible, Patrick McCarran, and Vail M. Pittman. Other correspondence came from state governors, army and navy officials, and various federal office holders. It contains copies of some outgoing correspondence from Wilbur Clark to John F. Kennedy, Harry S. Truman, Lyndon B. Johnson, and Richard Nixon, as well as other government officials, 1950 to 1963 | box 01 |
| Correspondence from VIPs (non-government): letters to Wilbur Clark from Jackie Kennedy, Billy Graham, Ed Sullivan, Jack Benny, Jimmy Durante, Debbie and Eddie Fisher, the Duchess of Windsor, Toots Shor, John Charles Daly, and Al Davis, 1955 to 1964 | box 01 |

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| Desert Inn's First Anniversary Party: sheet music to "I've Got a Date With Wilbur" by Ted Mossman, press releases, and a print of the Clark family crest, undated | box 01 |
| Mayor Wilbur Clark, City of Paradise Valley blank stationary, undated | box 01 |
| Architectural drawing of Wilbur Clark's office at the Desert Inn, undated | box 01 |
| Wilbur Clark and Toni Clark's home, interior and exterior views: photographic prints, approximately 1950 to 1965 | box 02 |
| Wilbur Clark and Toni Clark vacationing in Sun Valley, Idaho with friends: photographic prints, approximately 1950 to 1965 | box 02 |
| Wilbur Clark in his office at the Desert Inn: photographic prints and positives, approximately 1950 to 1965 | box 02 |
| Wilbur Clark and Toni Clark with Moe Dalitz at various events: photographic prints and newspaper clipping, approximately 1950 to 1976 | box 02 |
| "Betty Boyle pix": Wilbur Clark and Toni Clark attending events with friend Betty Boyle: photographic prints and newspaper clipping, approximately 1950 to 1971 | box 02 |
| Wilbur Clark and Toni Clark dressed in costumes: photographic prints, approximately 1950 to 1975 | box 02 |
| Family members of Wilbur Clark and Toni Clark, including Wilbur's mother Lulu Clark: photographic prints, approximately 1950 to 1965 | box 02 |
| Wilbur Clark and Toni Clark with Desert Inn-branded aircraft "Lulu C": photographic prints, 1956 | box 02 |
| Toni Clark performing in a fashion show: photographic prints, approximately 1955 to 1965 | box 02 |
| Souvenir hotel photographs, menus, and programs from travels and hotel events, including <i>Lido</i> in Paris, France, <i>Casino de Paris</i> in Las Vegas, Nevada, and Elvis Presley at the International Hotel, approximately 1950 to 1975 | box 05 |
| Photographic prints, correspondence, and newspaper clippings about Wilbur Clark's horse racing activities, approximately 1957 to 1965 Physical Description: 2 Files | box 02 oversized box 08 |
| Wilbur Clark and Toni Clark with Lady Bird Johnson: photographic prints and newspaper clipping, approximately 1960 to 1963 | box 02 |
| Wilbur Clark and Toni Clark with various friends and associates, including Moe Dalitz, Allard Roen, Hank Greenspun, Elvis Presley, Bob Hope, Tony Curtis, and Rocky Marciano: photographic prints and negatives, 1945 to 1975 Physical Description: 5 Files | box 05 oversized box 08 |
| Toni Clark and friends, including Betty Boyle, hosting a party at Desert Inn Country Club: photographic prints, 1950 to 1965 | box 02 |
| Toni Clark with friends, relatives, and other associates: photographic prints and negatives, approximately 1965 to 1995 | box 02 |

Physical Description: 3 Files

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| Birthday cards sent to Wilbur Clark, approximately 1945 to 1965 | box 01 |
| Birthday celebrations for Wilbur Clark and Toni Clark: photographic prints, approximately 1950 to 1965 | box 02 |
| Wilbur Clark with Del Webb, Don Larsen, Dizzy Dean, Joe Lawser, Sr., Gene Murphy, Pat Flanagan, Tom Harmon, and Louis Tewanama: photographic prints, approximately 1950 to 1965 | box 02 |
| Wilbur Clark "Never Admit Defeat" publicity photograph, approximately 1960 to 1965 | oversized box 08 |
| Toni Clark at the wedding of Allard and Evelyn Roen: photographic prints, approximately 1950 to 1951 | box 02 |
| Guests, including Toni Clark, Evelyn Roen, and Governor Grant Sawyer, at the Variety Club Installation Banquet: photographic prints and newspaper clipping, approximately 1959 to 1965 | box 02 |
| Wilbur Clark and Toni Clark attending the St. Paul (Minnesota) Winter Carnival as guests of Mr. and Mrs. Charles A. Ward: photographic prints, correspondence, and newspaper clippings, 1960 | box 02 |
| Desert Inn Country Club golf course and pro shop: Wilbur Clark, Toni Clark, Howard Capps, Milton Ross, and others: photographic prints, approximately 1950 to 1964 | box 02 |
| First Annual Tournament of Champions program, Desert Inn Country Club, 1953 April 23 to 1953 April 26 | box 01 |
| Hand-drawn cartoon promoting the Third Annual Tournament of Champions, 1956 | oversized box 08 |
| Assorted PGA Tournament of Champions golf tournaments at the Desert Inn Country Club: photographic prints, 1957 to 1965 | box 02 |
| Seventh Annual PGA Tournament of Champions at the Desert Inn Country Club: photographic prints, 1959 | box 02 |
| Eighth Annual PGA Tournament of Champions at the Desert Inn Country Club, including Wilbur Clark, Allard Roen, Asa Minor, and Jerry Barber: photographic prints, 1960 | box 02 |
| Ninth Annual PGA Tournament of Champions at the Desert Inn Country Club: photographic prints, 1961 | box 02 |
| Tenth Annual PGA Tournament of Champions at the Desert Inn Country Club: photographic prints, 1962 | box 02 |
| Correspondence and photographic prints sent to Toni Clark by photographer Bill Marks, approximately 1953 | box 02 |
| Photographs of an event at the Desert Inn sent to Toni Clark by Keith Morris of <i>Sports Illustrated</i> , 1963 | box 02 |
| Assorted photographs lent to Evelyn Roen by Toni Clark: photographic prints, 1950 to 1965 | box 02 |

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| Correspondence to Wilbur Clark from John Alessio, Chuck Johnston, and others, 1959 | box 01 |
| Assorted photographs lent to the Desert Inn Publicity Department by Toni Clark in 1985: photographic prints and correspondence, 1950 to 1985 | box 02 |
| Jack Gillespie Designs rendering of office building for William Radkovich, Inc., approximately 1955 to 1965 | box 01 |
| Reproduction of the Desert Inn's gala opening show program on April 24, 1950, 1970 | box 01 |
| Correspondence and photographic prints sent to Toni Clark by Borgie Arnold, approximately 1973 | box 02 |
| Correspondence and legal documents regarding the Wilbur Clark Estate and Riverside property holdings, 1986 to 1992 | box 05 |
| MGM Grand stock and shareholder documents, 1992 | box 05 |
| Newspaper clippings featuring Wilbur Clark, Toni Clark, and the Desert Inn, 1944 to 1991 | box 05 |
| Magazines featuring Wilbur Clark, Desert Inn, and the Clarks' country club home, 1945 to 1959 Physical Description: 2 Files | box 05 oversized box 08 |
| Religious and fraternal organization event programs and publications, 1960 to 1988 | box 05 |
| Scrapbook containing assorted photographs and newspaper clippings about Wilbur Clark, 1944 to 1957 | oversized box 06 |
| Scrapbook documenting the El Rancho Vegas, and Wilbur Clark and Toni Clark's wedding and honeymoon, 1944 to 1946 Physical Description: 2 Files (1 scrapbook and 1 envelope) | oversized box 07 |
| "Wilbur Clark's Desert Inn" scrapbook documenting the opening of the Desert Inn, approximately 1950 to 1951 | oversized box 06 |
| Awards and signed photographs received by Wilbur Clark and Toni Clark, 1958 to 1978 | oversized box 09 |
| <i>Nevada Men and Women of Achievement Volume One, Southern Nevada Edition</i> by John Cronan, 1966 | box 05 |
| Audiovisual material, 1948-1958 | |
| NBC, Las Vegas, approximately approximately 1953 Physical Description: 1 Reels 16 mm, black-and-white | box 03 |
| Las Vegas, America's Fun Capitol, undated Physical Description: 1 Reels 16 mm, black-and-white | box 03 |
| Wilbur Clark Kine CBS, undated Physical Description: 2 Reels 16 mm, black-and-white | box 03 |
| Wilbur Clark Kine, undated (MS_0361_001_2) | box 03 |

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| Physical Description: 1 Reels 16mm, black-and-white | |
| Wilbur Clark Cine, undated (MS_00361_001_1) Physical Description: 1 Reels 16 mm, black-and-white | box 03 |
| CBS Cronkite Insert News, undated Physical Description: 1 Reels 16 mm, black-and-white | box 03 |
| Tee Marvels, Columbia Pictures, undated Physical Description: 1 Reels 16 mm, black-and-white | box 04 |
| Long Monarchs of the Ring, 3rd ed., undated Physical Description: 1 Reels 16 mm, black-and-white | box 04 |
| Aquatic Carnival, Columbia Pictures, undated Physical Description: 1 Reels 16 mm, black-and-white | box 04 |
| Hotel Footage, Gambling Las Vegas, undated Physical Description: 1 Reels 16 mm, color | box 04 |
| Home movies, Palm Springs, undated Physical Description: 1 Reels 16 mm, color | box 04 |
| Home movies, Dairy Farm, Wilbur's brother's farm, undated Physical Description: 1 Reels 16 mm, color | box 04 |
| Home movies, Hawaiian Vacation, undated Physical Description: 1 Reels 16 mm, color | box 04 |
| Home movies, Vacations: Ponds Lodge; Jackson Hole, WY; Wilbur's birthday party, San Diego, CA; Trips to Mexico City, 1948 Physical Description: 1 Reels 16 mm, color | box 04 |
| Home movies, Vacations: New York and Chicago, undated Physical Description: 1 Reels 16 mm, color | box 04 |
| Hollywood Park, horse race, 1958 July 19 Physical Description: 1 Reels 16 mm, black-and-white | box 04 |
| Golden Gate Fields, horse race, Dumpty Humpty, 1957 November 02 Physical Description: 1 Reels 16 mm, black-and-white | box 04 |
| First Transcontinental Jet Passenger Flite, New York Spotlight News, American Airlines release print, undated Physical Description: 1 Reels 16 mm, black-and-white | box 04 |
| When Magoos Flew, Columbia Pictures, undated Physical Description: 1 Reels 8 mm, black-and-white | box 04 |
| Audio recording of radio interview sent from Al Blake to Wilbur Clark, 1963 May 04 Physical Description: 1 Reels 4 inch Scotch recording reel | box 04 |