

Guide to the Antonio Morelli Papers

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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 Papers
ID:	MS-00558
Date [inclusive]:	approximately 1910 to 1989
Physical Description:	2.11 Cubic Feet (7 boxes)
Physical Description:	3.42 Linear Feet
Physical Description:	14 Digital Files (0.139 GB) MP3
Language of the Material:	English
Abstract:	The Antonio Morelli Papers (approximately 1910-1989) consist of photographic prints and slides, scrapbooks, concert programs, correspondence, and audio recordings that chronicle the professional and personal life of longtime Sands Hotel and Casino orchestra conductor Antonio Morelli and his wife Helen. The collection also documents Morelli's efforts to provide classical music concerts for the Las Vegas, Nevada community and his involvement with the Guardian Angel Church on the Las Vegas Strip. Included in the collection are reel-to-reel tapes and digital files of musical performances conducted by Morelli.

Preferred Citation

Antonio Morelli Papers, approximately 1910-1989. MS-00558. Special Collections and Archives, University Libraries, University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Las Vegas, Nevada. <http://n2t.net/ark:/62930/f12314>

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Biographical Note

Longtime orchestra conductor at the Sands Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas, Nevada, Antonio 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, and grew up in Erie, Pennsylvania as one of nine children. Beginning in 1914, Morelli was educated in Italy at Milan's San Celso Military Academy and then at the Royal Conservatories of Music in Milan and Parma.

Upon returning to the United States in 1925, Morelli worked as a pianist and wrote musical arrangements for theater productions. He also conducted various orchestras throughout the country in the 1930s and 1940s, including serving as the orchestra leader for the RKO Palace Theater in Albany, New York. While in Albany, Morelli met Helen Collins, who was working as an advertising agency secretary, and the two married in 1935.

Morelli first visited Las Vegas, Nevada in 1953. Sands Hotel and Casino president Jack Entratter, who had known Morelli from the Copacabana Club in New York City, offered him a position as the hotel's new musical director, which he started the following year. It was at this time that he became known as "Antonio." During his time as the Sands musical director, Morelli worked with many of the great entertainers of the day, including performing during the Rat Pack appearances at the Sands in 1960.

In addition to his work at the Sands, Morelli produced and conducted free Las Vegas Pops concerts called "Shirt Sleeve Symphonies," as well as special religious liturgical services for the public and holiday events. With an initial contribution of \$5,000, Morelli established 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 Guardian Angel Catholic Church on the Las Vegas Strip. Antonio Morelli died on June 17, 1974 in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Source:

Hess, Alan. "Antonio Morelli's Journey to Las Vegas." Online Nevada Encyclopedia. Accessed March 6, 2025. <https://www.onlinenevada.org/antonio-morellis-journey-las-vegas>

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Scope and Contents Note

The Antonio Morelli Papers (approximately 1910-1989) consist of photographic prints and slides, scrapbooks, concert programs, correspondence, and audio recordings that chronicle the professional and personal life of longtime Sands Hotel and Casino orchestra conductor Antonio Morelli and his wife Helen. The photographic prints and slides depict Morelli's early life in Pennsylvania, various musical performances, family and friends, travels, and the Morelli home in Las Vegas, Nevada. The collection also documents Morelli's efforts to provide classical music concerts for the Las Vegas community and his involvement with the Guardian Angel Church on the Las Vegas Strip. Included in the collection are reel-to-reel tapes and digital files of musical performances conducted by Morelli.

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Arrangement

Materials are arranged alphabetically.

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Administrative Information

Access Note

Collection is open for research. Arrangements must be made in advance to access digital files; please contact UNLV Special Collections and Archives for additional information.

Publication Rights

This material is made available to facilitate private study, scholarship, or research. The donor, Junior League of Las Vegas, Inc. Endowment Fund, transferred all right, title and interest they had in the Antonio Morelli Papers (MS-00558) to UNLV. However, some material may be protected by copyright, trademark, privacy, publicity rights, or other interests not owned by UNLV. Users are responsible for determining whether permissions are necessary from rights owners for any intended use and for obtaining all required permissions. Acknowledgement of the UNLV University Libraries is requested. For more information, please see the UNLV Special Collections policies on [reproductions and use](#) or contact us at special.collections@unlv.edu.

Acquisition Note

Materials were donated in 2009 by the Junior League of Las Vegas; accession number 2009-017.

Appraisal Note

Acquired by Su Kim Chung, curator, as part of UNLV Special Collections and Archives holdings in entertainment. 5 optical discs were securely disposed after files were fully transferred, processed, and preserved following UNLV Special Collections and Archives Digital Preservation guidelines.

Processing Note

Material was processed by Joyce Moore in 2011. In 2014, as part of the legacy finding aid conversion project, Hana Gutierrez revised and enhanced the collection to bring it into compliance with current professional standards. Subsequently Hana Gutierrez entered the data

into ArchivesSpace. In 2025, Landon Paljusaj processed additional material, made access copies of born-digital materials that were received on optical discs, and updated the finding aid.

Custodial History Note

The Morelli House, originally located on the Desert Inn Hotel golf course, was moved from that location in 2001 to Ninth Street and Bridger Avenue to save it from demolition, and has been preserved as a historic residence by the Junior League of Las Vegas. Just prior to moving from this house after her husband's death in the 1970s, Helen Morelli gave this material to a neighbor for safekeeping. After Helen's death, this neighbor presented it to the Junior League of Las Vegas, who took possession of the house and donated this material to UNLV Special Collections in 2009.

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Related Materials

Separated Materials

Some of the photographs in this acquisition were removed from the collection and placed in the Antonio Morelli Photograph Collection, 1932-1970. PH-00365. Special Collections and Archives, University Libraries, University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Las Vegas, Nevada. <http://n2t.net/ark:/62930/f1j083>

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Names and Subjects

- Entertainers
- Entertainment -- Nevada -- Las Vegas
- Morelli, Helen, 1905-1996
- Sands Hotel & Casino (Las Vegas, Nev)

Collection Inventory

Title/Description	Containers	
Catholic Church involvement, May 14, 1955-1989	box 01	folder 01
Christmas Concerts, December 11, 1960-1963		

	box 01	folder 02
Correspondence and Poster, 1944, 1971	box 01	folder 03
Easter Sunrise, 1963	box 01	folder 04
Good Friday Missal, April 8, 1966	box 01	folder 05
Las Vegas Community Chorus, 1958	box 01	folder 06
Mass cards, July 20, 1950-March 2, 1974	box 01	folder 07
Memorial service prayer book, cards, and photographic prints, 1974 June	box 06	
Murals in Rockefeller Center, New York City, undated	box 01	folder 08
"Nevada, a Musical Portrait" performance recording, 1963 (MS_00558_002, MS_00558_003) Physical Description: 9 Digital Files (0.0824 GB) MP3	digital file 00	
New York Philharmonic, 1960	box 01	folder 09
"Papa Morelli and Tony in Las Vegas" conversation and musical performance recording, approximately 1954 to 1962 (MS_00558_005) Physical Description: 2 Digital Files (0.0304 GB) MP3	digital file 00	
Photographs and Portraits: Antonio Morelli, 1960s	box 01	folder 10
Photographs		
Family, approximately 1910-1960s	box 01	folder 11
Family, 1940s-1950s	box 01	folder 12
Family, 1950s-1970s	box 01	folder 13
Family members, 1956-1974	box 02	folder 01
Helen Morelli, approximately 1940s-1950s	box 02	folder 02
Las Vegas home construction, 1959	box 02	folder 03
Las Vegas Home, exterior views, 1960s-1970s	box 02	folder 04
Las Vegas home, interior views, 1962-1969		

	box 02	folder 05
Miscellaneous, 1932-1974	box 02	folder 06
Pleasant Valley Cascade Mobile Home Park, 1970s	box 02	folder 07
Poems by Mildred Breedlove, 1963	box 02	folder 08
"Pope il Travatore '63" musical performance recording, approximately 1963 (MS_00558_004) Physical Description: 1 Digital Files (0.0165 GB) MP3	digital file 00	
Outstanding Citizen Award interview audio recording, 1963 November 16 (MS_00558_001) Physical Description: 2 Digital Files (0.009 GB) MP3	digital file 00	
Red Skelton Family, 1960s	box 02	folder 09
Reel to reel tapes of commercially recorded classical music and some religious music recordings. Physical Description: 0.70 Linear Feet (12 reel to reel tapes)	box 03	
RKO Palace theater: Albany, N.Y. , 1931	box 02	folder 10
Scrapbook, 1920s-1940s	box 02	folder 11
Scrapbook, 1920s-1940s	box 02	folder 12
Scrapbook, 1950s	box 02	folder 13
Scrapbook, 1930s- 1940s	box 05	
Slides taken in Asia and early snapshots of family, approximately 1910 to 1974	box 04	
UNLV Scholarship establishment, May 05, 1969	box 02	folder 14
Photocopies of event programs, church services, and music involving Morelli from the 1960s-1980s, undated Physical Description: 2 Files	box 07	