



Guide to the Robert Woodruff Photograph Collection

This finding aid was created by UNLV Special Collections and Archives staff. This copy was published on May 19, 2025. Please contact special.collections@unlv.edu for questions regarding this collection.

Persistent URL for this finding aid: <http://n2t.net/ark:/62930/f1165c>

© 2025 The Regents of the University of Nevada. All rights reserved.

University of Nevada, Las Vegas. University Libraries. Special Collections and Archives.

Box 457010

4505 S. Maryland Parkway

Las Vegas, Nevada 89154-7010

special.collections@unlv.edu

Table of Contents

Summary Information	3
Biographical Note	3
Scope and Contents Note	5
Arrangement	5
Administrative Information	5
Related Materials	6
Names and Subjects	6
Collection Inventory	6

Summary Information

Repository:	University of Nevada, Las Vegas. University Libraries. Special Collections and Archives.
Creator:	Woodruff, Robert, 1914-1992
Creator:	Bigglestone, Kay W. (Kay Woodruff), 1939-
Title:	Robert Woodruff Photograph Collection
ID:	PH-00340
Date [inclusive]:	1900s-1970s
Date [bulk]:	1934-1962
Physical Description:	0.23 Cubic Feet (4 hanging folders)
Physical Description:	0.23 Linear Feet
Language of the Material:	English
Abstract:	The Robert Woodruff Photograph Collection (1900s-1970s) consists of ninety-seven black-and-white photographs of locations and events in Clark County, Nevada. Locations include Las Vegas, Henderson, and Searchlight, Nevada, as well as the Hoover Dam. The majority of the images were taken between 1934 and 1962.

Preferred Citation

Robert Woodruff Photograph Collection, 1900s-1970s. PH-00340. Special Collections and Archives, University Libraries, University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Las Vegas, Nevada. <http://n2t.net/ark:/62930/f1165c>

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Biographical Note

Robert Woodruff (1914-1992) was born in Akron, Ohio to Althea Rowland and Clarence Merle Woodruff. He moved from Akron to Oberlin, Ohio with his family in 1923, and attended Oberlin College in the 1930s where he played football, ran track, and worked as the yearbook photographer. Woodruff first visited Nevada during his summer vacations, staying with his sister, Eleanor, and her husband, Robert Hiller, in Boulder City. During these summers, Woodruff

worked as Hiller's assistant in the X-ray lab of Babcock and Wilcox, the company in charge of manufacturing and installing the Hoover Dam's penstock system water pipes.

After graduating from Oberlin College in 1937, Woodruff moved to Las Vegas, Nevada where he worked for the City Recreation Department as the Assistant Recreation Director of Las Vegas. He spent his time managing the Municipal Plunge (later renamed the Mermaid Pool) where he met Mabel Koehler, whom he married on August 11, 1938 and had four children with: Kay Althea, Ann Elizabeth, Cynthia Merle, and Pete Worthing Woodruff. In 1938, Woodruff took a new job as a guide for Riddle Yellow Cab and Scenic Tours Company. The following year, Woodruff and Mabel started a free, weekly mimeograph newsletter, the *Town Crier*, that contained editorials, political analysis, and poetry. In the spring of 1944, the military drafted Woodruff into the Army Signal Corps and subsequently sent him to Fort Shafter, Hawaii where he worked as a cryptographer for the remainder of World War II.

In 1947, Woodruff started working for Sears, Roebuck and Company as the head of the photography department. By 1949, he purchased a small photography store in Henderson and renamed it Woodruff's Basic Photo after the Henderson Basic Magnesium plant. Basic Photo provided regular services such as selling photo supplies and developing film, and Woodruff established himself as a portrait, wedding, and industrial photographer. He also contributed photographs to community services such as the police and fire departments and news outlets including the *Henderson Home News*, *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, and the *Las Vegas Sun*. Between photographing community events such as Helldorado and Henderson Industrial Days, Woodruff also wrote a photography advice column called "Picture That" for the *Henderson Home News*.

While living in Henderson and Las Vegas, Woodruff participated in the community as an occasional preacher at the Henderson Community Church, volunteered at St. Rose de Lima Hospital, sponsored youth bowling leagues, worked for the Chamber of Commerce, became a member of the Lions and Rotary clubs, and served as the scout leader for Boy Scout troop 65.

In 1973, Woodruff sold Basic Photo to Robert Shiles and moved to Sedona, Arizona with Mabel in 1974. Woodruff worked part-time at Rollie's Camera Shop and continued his interest in community service by working with the Junior Chamber of Commerce, becoming an elected official, maintaining an active role in the Rotary Club, and being appointed to the Sedona Fire Board and Board of the Sedona Racquet Club.

Robert Woodruff died in Sedona, Arizona in December 1992.

Sources:

Bigglestone, Kay. *Mabel Koheler Woodruff and her Family*. Tucson, Arizona, 2001. Box 13. Robert Woodruff Papers, 1927-2001. MS-00455. Special Collections and Archives, University Libraries, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Las Vegas, Nevada.

"Photographer dies; founded lab at Sears." *Las Vegas Sun*, 2B, December 29, 1992. Box 01. Robert Woodruff Papers, 1927-2001. MS-00455. Special Collections and Archives, University Libraries, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Las Vegas, Nevada.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Scope and Contents Note

The Robert Woodruff Photograph Collection (1900s-1970s) consists of ninety-seven black-and-white photographs of locations and events in Clark County, Nevada. Locations include Las Vegas, Henderson, and Searchlight, Nevada, as well as the Hoover Dam. The majority of the images were taken between 1934 and 1962. Events captured in the photographs include the Henderson Industrial Days parades in 1956, 1961, and 1962, and a visit to Las Vegas from Postmaster General Jim Farley in his role as Franklin D. Roosevelt's campaign manager. Other images show construction views of the Hoover Dam, the Las Vegas Courthouse, and various early commercial buildings and casinos.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Arrangement

Materials are arranged by location and topic.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Administrative Information

Access Note

Collection is open for research.

Publication Rights

This material is made available to facilitate private study, scholarship, or research. The donor, Kay W. Bigglestone, retains all copyrights for materials in the Robert Woodruff Photographs (PH-00340) until her death and users must seek permission to publish from the donor. However, some material may be protected by copyright, trademark, privacy, publicity rights, or other interests not owned by Bigglestone. 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 2001 by Kay Woodruff Bigglestone; accession number 2002-025.

Processing Note

Materials were processed and inventoried by Special Collections staff in 2002. In 2019, as part of an archival backlog elimination project, Melise Leech wrote the finding aid and entered the data into ArchivesSpace.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Related Materials

Related Collections

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

Robert Woodruff Papers, 1927-2001. MS-00455. Special Collections and Archives, University Libraries, University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Las Vegas, Nevada. <http://n2t.net/ark:/62930/f1760b>

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Names and Subjects

- photographs
- Las Vegas (Nev.)
- Las Vegas (Nev.) -- Social life and customs
- Las Vegas (Nev.) -- 1950-1960
- City and town life -- Henderson (Nev.)
- Parades
- Hoover Dam (Ariz. and Nev.) -- Design and construction
- Searchlight (Nev.)
- Hoover Dam (Ariz. and Nev.)

Collection Inventory

Title/Description	Containers
Las Vegas and Henderson, Nevada buildings	

The Showboat Hotel and Casino, located in Las Vegas, Nevada, 1954-1973 (0340_0001)	folder 01
The Showboat Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas, Nevada, 1954-1973 (0340_0002)	folder 01
Fremont Street, photographed at night, 1930s-1940s (0340_0003)	folder 01
Fremont Street, photographed at night, 1930s-1940s (0340_0004)	folder 01
The Las Vegas Courthouse, with a view of the First National Bank in the background, 1960s (0340_0005)	folder 01
The Las Vegas Courthouse on the corner of Carson and Casino Center, with a view of the First National Bank in the background on the left hand side, 1960s (0340_0006)	folder 01
Binion's Horseshoe Hotel and casino during their expansion, 1970s (0340_0007)	folder 01
Binion's Horseshoe Hotel and casino during their expansion, 1970s (0340_0008)	folder 01
Ten photographs of the Las Vegas Courthouse, 1930s (0340_0009) Physical Description: 10 Photographic Prints	folder 01
Unidentified cowboy rides a horse in the Las Vegas rodeo, undated (0340_0010)	folder 01
Henderson Industrial Days parade	
Unidentified industrial plant in the desert of Henderson, Nevada, 1960s (0340_0011)	folder 01
Unidentified industrial plant in Henderson, Nevada, 1960s (0340_0012)	folder 01
Woman riding on horseback in the Henderson Industrial Days Parade, 1956 (0340_0013)	folder 01
Unidentified women ride on a float through the Henderson Industrial Days Parade, 1956 (0340_0014)	folder 01
Fifteen photographs from the Henderson Industrial Days Parade beauty pageant and the crowning of the queen, 1956 (0340_0015) Physical Description: 15 Photographic Prints	folder 01
Members from the Las Vegas Madison Elementary School Band march through the streets at the Henderson Industrial Days Parade, 1956 (0340_0016)	folder 01
Two firefighters and a child ride in a fire truck through the Henderson Industrial Days Parade, 1956 (0340_0017)	folder 01
Unidentified children dress up in costumes for the Henderson Industrial Days Parade in 1956, 1956 (0340_0018)	folder 01

Five photographs of various groups marching through the Henderson Industrial Days Parade, 1956 (0340_0019) Physical Description: 5 Photographic Prints	folder 01
Four photographs of different individuals riding horseback during the Henderson Industrial Days Parade, 1956 (0340_0020) Physical Description: 4 Photographic Prints	folder 01
Four photographs of various groups serving in the armed forces marching in the Henderson Industrial Days Parade, 1956 (0340_0021) Physical Description: 4 Photographic Prints	folder 02
Fourteen photos of various floats and vehicles driving through the Henderson Industrial Days Parade, 1956 (0340_0022) Physical Description: 14 Photographic Prints	folder 02
Six photographs of queen candidates during the Henderson Industrial Days Parade, 1961 (0340_0023) Physical Description: 6 Photographic Prints	folder 02
Thirteen photographs of organizations marching in the Henderson Industrial Days Parade, 1961 (0340_0024) Physical Description: 13 Photographic Prints	folder 02
Several individuals ride on horseback through the Henderson Industrial Days Parade, 1961 (0340_0025)	folder 02
Eight photographs of various floats participating in the Henderson Industrial Days parade, 1961 (0340_0026) Physical Description: 8 Photographic Prints	folder 02
The Anderson Dairy Float drives throughout the Henderson Industrial Days parade, 1961 (0340_0027)	folder 02
Seven photographs of various floats and decorated vehicles during the Henderson Industrial Days Parade, 1961 (0340_0028) Physical Description: 7 Photographic Prints	folder 02
The Lake Mead Yacht Club float with the "Queen of Lake Mead" riding on the float in the Henderson Industrial Days Parade, 1961 (0340_0029)	folder 02
Twelve photographs of the queen candidates during the Henderson Industrial Days Celebration, cut to form letters of the alphabet, 1962 (0340_0030) Physical Description: 12 Photographic Prints	folder 02
Individuals stand and sit on a glittery float in the Henderson Industrial Days Parade, 1962 (0340_0031)	folder 02
Three photographs of the various floats and people marching in the Henderson Industrial Days Parade in 1962, 1962 (0340_0032) Physical Description: 3 Photographic Prints	folder 02
Hoover Dam and Lake Mead	
A view of the Hoover Dam at night, undated (0340_0033)	

	folder 02
Boats coast on the waters of Lake Mead in the 1930s, 1930s (0340_0034)	folder 02
The Hoover Dam lit up at night, 1936 (0340_0035)	folder 02
The Hoover Dam during its construction some time in the 1930s. Above is a huge penstock pipe suspended from a cable, 1930s (0340_0036)	folder 02
The construction of the Hoover Dam. Concrete formed into slabs to build the dam's structure, visible below the downstream face of the dam, while intake towers rise behind the dam, 1934 (0340_0037)	folder 02
Robert Woodruff and his business, Basic Photo Shop	
A view of the exterior of Woodruff's Basic Photo Shop, 1950s-1960s (0340_0038)	folder 02
The front view of Woodruff's Basic Photo Shop, located at 44 Water Street, Henderson, Nevada, 1950s-1960s (0340_0039)	folder 02
Four photographs of the interior of Woodruff's Basic Photo Shop, 1950s-1960s (0340_0040) Physical Description: 4 Photographic Prints	folder 02
A group of men pose for a photograph at an unidentified event. Robert Woodruff, center front, wears a dark suit. Behind him, looking over his right shoulder, is Mike O'Callaghan. The other men are identified on the back of the photograph, 1950s-1960s (0340_0041)	folder 03
Portrait of Robert Woodruff, 1950s-1960s (0340_0042)	folder 03
Robert Woodruff (right) hands a piece of paper to an unidentified man in an office. A flag and maps are behind them, 1950s-1960s (0340_0043)	folder 03
Portrait of Robert Woodruff, 1957 (0340_0044)	folder 03
Robert Woodruff stands in his store, the Woodruff's Basic Photo Shop, in Henderson, Nevada. The other individuals are unidentified, 1950s-1960s (0340_0045)	folder 03
Searchlight, Nevada	
A post office in the early 1900s, located in Searchlight, Nevada, 1900-1909 (0340_0046)	folder 03
Unidentified individuals on a stagecoach ride through Nevada, 1900-1909 (0340_0047)	folder 03
A stage coach and a horse-drawn buggy in front of store fronts in Searchlight, Nevada, 1900-1909 (0340_0048)	folder 03
An overview of Searchlight, Nevada, undated (0340_0049)	

	folder 03
The Santa Fe Railroad Depot, located in Searchlight, Nevada, undated (0340_0050)	folder 03
Unidentified individuals ride in a car through a desert in Searchlight, Nevada, undated (0340_0051)	folder 03
Miners working in Searchlight, Nevada, undated (0340_0052)	folder 03
Fourth of July celebration on the main street of Searchlight, Nevada. In the background is the Brown Club and The Gem. Written on the photograph is Searchlight July 5, '09, 1909 July 15 (0340_0053)	folder 03
Railroad employees and passengers stand next to train, 1900-1909 (0340_0054)	folder 03
Various Las Vegas, Nevada locations	
Ninth Street Elementary School, Las Vegas, Nevada, 1946 (0340_0055)	folder 03
An angled view of the Las Vegas High School, 1938 (0340_0056)	folder 03
The Mermaid swimming pool, undated (0340_0057)	folder 03
Men stand at the Las Vegas Union Pacific station. Identified from left to right: Charles "Pop" Squires, Postmaster General Jim Farley, Lieutenant Governor Fred S. Alward, Mark Gordon, Sally Gordon, Senator Pat McCarran, Mr. Walter Bracken, Tommy Bellis, and Claude Mackey, 1937 October 22 (0340_0058)	folder 03
At the Las Vegas Union Pacific station, Postmaster General Jim Farley stands with Berkley Bunker, 1937 October 22 (0340_0059)	folder 03
Actors and actresses gather on stage for the Las Vegas Community Players Theater in November 1937. Written on the back of the photograph reads, "Performance of Mr. and Mrs. Mabel Osgood, Gray Gubler, Jim Gallagher, Bill Older, Betty Friedman, Pat Murphy, Tom Adams, Dick Fletcher, Paul Ralli, Gloria Older, Bob Hunsaker, Sarah Jane Flowers, Mrs. Pothoff, Mary Leffingwell, June Allen, Mrs. Paul Ralli, Grace Semenza, Ruth Loesch", 1937 November (0340_0060)	folder 03
An unidentified driver loads luggage into the back of the Las Vegas Tonopah Reno Stage Line vehicle, 1930s (0340_0061)	folder 04
The Frontier Museum & Saloon, in view behind wagon wheels, 1930s-1940s (0340_0062)	folder 04
The Frontier Club in Downtown Las Vegas. On the left-hand side is the sign of Riddle Scenic Tours, Rent A Car-O Drive. Some of the signs in the window of the Frontier Club include "Race Betting" and "Go Parlor", 1930s (0340_0063)	folder 04
An unidentified casino worker stands in front of the "Wheel of Fortune" in a downtown club in Las Vegas, Nevada, 1930s (0340_0064)	folder 04

The "Overland Stages" automobile, parked in front of a Western Union, the O.K. Plumbing Shop, and a law office in downtown Las Vegas, 1930s (0340_0065)	folder 04
The Bird Cage Theatre, Last Frontier Village, Last Frontier Hotel, and Fanny's Dress Shop, undated (0340_0066)	folder 04
Unidentified individuals sit on a bench outside of the Las Vegas Court House, 1930s (0340_0067)	folder 04
A bus parked outside of the Hotel Sal Sagev in downtown Las Vegas. Other buildings nearby include a cafe, the Louis Wiener Fine Tailor company, the bus depot on the left, and the railroad depot on the right, 1930s (0340_0068)	folder 04
Unidentified men peer through a window into the Bank Club in downtown Las Vegas, 1930s (0340_0069)	folder 04
Men shovel snow after a snow storm in Las Vegas, Nevada. In the back is Ronzone's Department Store & F.W. Woolworth Company, 1930s (0340_0070)	folder 04
A woman sweeps the streets of downtown Las Vegas, 1930s (0340_0071)	folder 04
Individuals walk through Fremont street after a snow fall in Las Vegas, Nevada, 1930s (0340_0072)	folder 04
Two images showing different views of Las Vegas High School, 1930s (0340_0073) Physical Description: 2 Photographic Prints	folder 04
Two images showing different views of Las Vegas High School, 1930s (0340_0074) Physical Description: 2 Photographic Prints	folder 04
Two transport buses take dam workers to Hoover Dam, 1930s (0340_0075)	folder 04
Outlet releasing water at Hoover Dam, 1930s (0340_0076)	folder 04
A view of Hoover Dam, 1930s (0340_0077)	folder 04
Tour buses parked overlooking the Hoover Dam, 1930s (0340_0078)	folder 04