

1121-089-GSM-gau (USMARC)
City of Savannah Municipal Archives, Savannah, Georgia [GSG (OCLC/LYRASIS)]

Record Series #: 1121-089

Name: DeSoto Hotel collection

Dates: 1890-1966

Extent/Size: 2 document cases, 1 oversized box, 3 oversized folders (3.25 cubic feet)

Language: English

Organizational History

The DeSoto Hotel in Savannah, Georgia opened to the public on January 1, 1890. The hotel was located on Liberty Street between Drayton and Bull Streets and was developed by the Savannah Hotel Corporation. The original building was designed by architect William Gibbons Preston in a blend of Richardsonian and Queen Anne architectural styles. It featured 300 guest rooms, a swimming pool, solarium, barbershop, soda shop, and miniature golf course. The DeSoto's iconic appearance and busy social calendar made it one of Savannah's most notable landmarks and the center of community life for many decades. The hotel's high-profile guest list included: U.S. presidents William McKinley, William Howard Taft, Herbert Hoover and Woodrow Wilson, and celebrities such as Katherine Hepburn, Gregory Peck, Elvis Presley, and B.B. King. The hotel's popularity declined in the mid-20th century and it closed on December 31, 1965. The building was demolished, though some elements of the original structure were preserved, such as terracotta and wrought iron decorative elements, chandeliers, and a lion fountain with water flowing out of its mouth. The hotel was rebuilt, designed by architect Richard Aeck, and opened in 1968 as the "Hilton Savannah DeSoto." The hotel was renovated in 2008 and again in 2017, and as of 2024 operates under the name "The DeSoto."

Scope & Content:

The DeSoto Hotel collection includes menus, event invitations, banquet programs, correspondence, one piece of sheet music, postcards, tourism brochures, reproduction photographs, and news clippings spanning from the hotel's opening in 1890 to its closure in 1965. Highlights of the collection include the opening menu for the DeSoto Hotel, dated January 1, 1890; an invitation to the banquet held in honor of President McKinley's visit in 1898; the program for the banquet held in honor of President Taft's visit, as well as a City of Savannah medal presented to the hotel's management for the occasion in 1909; and the program for the DeSoto Hotel "Diamond Jubilee Ball" closing event on December 31, 1965.

System of Arrangement & Ordering:

The DeSoto Hotel collection is arranged by record type, and then chronologically. See the attached inventory.

Condition Note:

When the collection was received, most of the DeSoto Hotel collection materials were framed and firmly adhered to matte board or foamcore backing. The materials were removed from their frames but could not be removed from their backing. It is unknown if information is present on the reverse of sheets that are glued down.

Conditions Governing Access:

None

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Digital Access:

The DeSoto Hotel collection is fully digitized and the digital files can be accessed through the [Online Digital Image Catalog](#).

Preferred Citation:

Record Series 1121-089, DeSoto Hotel collection. City of Savannah Municipal Archives, Savannah, Georgia.

Processed by:

K. Zacovic, January 2024.

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Inventory:

Item #	Description	Date	Box #
0001	Hotel DeSoto Opening Menu	January 1, 1890	1121-089-0001
0002	Hotel DeSoto Menu	April 28, 1891	1121-089-0001
0003	Banquet Invitation for President McKinley's Visit	December 17, 1898	1121-089-0001
0004	Banquet Program for President Taft's Visit	November 4, 1909	1121-089-0001
0005	Photograph of President Taft (reproduction) and medal with City of Savannah seal presented to Hotel management by Cornelius Moses	circa 1909	1121-089-0001
0006	Letter from Ed Groetzieger presenting McKinley's Banquet Program to the Management	April 28, 1909	1121-089-0001
0007	Letter from D. Wilkie Rabey presenting Taft's Banquet Program to the Management	March 29, 1928	1121-089-0001
0008	Hibernian Society 100th Anniversary Dinner	May 1, 1912	1121-089-0001
0009	Hibernian Society 126th Anniversary Dinner	March 17, 1938	1121-089-0002
0010	The DeSoto Finale Banquet Program	December 31, 1965	1121-089-0002
0011	Tourism Brochure - "Savannah, Where Tourists Go"	1924	1121-089-0002
0012	Promotional brochure for Hotel DeSoto	circa 1925	1121-089-0002
0013	Crowning of Judy Teets, "Miss Savannah High" shown with members of her court: Margaret McLamb, John Howard, Joyce Howard, and Becky Christy (reproduction photograph)	Spring 1958	1121-089-0003
0014	Hotel DeSoto promotional pamphlet with letter to Mrs. J. C. Collier about a visit	November 23, 1935	1121-089-0002

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Item #	Description	Date	Box #
0015	Sheet music for "We're Going to-day to Tybee"	1911	Oversized Folder 1
0016	Hotel DeSoto envelope	no date	1121-089-0002
0017	2 postcards showing the outside of Hotel DeSoto	circa 1925	1121-089-0002
0018	Postcard showing the new Sapphire Room at Hotel DeSoto, unposted	circa 1950	1121-089-0002
0019	Postcard showing the palms and oleanders on the highway to Savannah Beach, unposted	no date	1121-089-0002
0020	Interior of Hotel DeSoto	circa 1950	1121-089-0002
0021	"Turn Backwards, Turn Backwards, O Time..." Mrs. George W. Ray (left) vice president, and Mrs. Roy Courington, president of the Symphony Society's Women's Guide, will greet the guests in period costumes (reproduction photograph)	no date	1121-089-0002
0022	Unidentified scene with people socializing at a bar with a jungle background (reproduction photograph)	no date	1121-089-0003
0023	Unidentified group of people (reproduction photograph)	no date	1121-089-0003
0024	News story of formal opening of Hotel DeSoto	January 1, 1890	1121-089-0003
0025	<i>Savannah Morning News</i> Magazine with featured articles about Hotel DeSoto	May 23, 1965	1121-089-0002
0026	"The Dowager Empress" - news article about Hotel DeSoto's elegant past	May 23, 1965	Oversized Folder 2
0027	News article about Hotel DeSoto's distinguished guests, <i>Savannah Morning News</i> magazine	May 23, 1965	1121-089-0003

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Item #	Description	Date	Box #
0028	"The Grand Finale" - news article about Hotel DeSoto's closing	1965	1121-089-0003
0029	"Goodby Old DeSoto" - magazine article about Hotel DeSoto's Closing Banquet from <i>Atlanta Journal and Constitution</i>	February 6, 1966	Oversized Folder 3