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Stilwell Hotel Collection, 1889-1995

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Stilwell Hotel Collection, MS 129

Hotel Stilwell Collection

Overview of the Collection

Title	The Hotel Stilwell Collection
Dates	1889-1995
Quantity	18 linear feet
Collection Number	MS 129
Summary	The Hotel Stilwell Collection contains background and historical information on the Pittsburg, Kansas hotel; documentation on the restoration effort in the 1990s; events that took place at the hotel, and information on the Stilwell Historical Foundation and members. The collection also includes documentation on similar institutions including Camptown and Little Balkans Foundation.
Donor	The Hotel Stilwell Hotel Collection was donated to Pittsburg State University by Laura Carlson and the other board members of the Stilwell Foundation on 28 May 2008. Additional materials in this collection were compiled by curator Randy Roberts.
Repository	Pittsburg State University, Leonard H. Axe Library, Special Collections & University Archives 1701 S. Broadway Pittsburg, Kansas 66762 (620) 235-4883 speccoll@pittstate.edu
Access Restrictions	There are no restrictions and the collection is open for research. Researchers must use the collection in accordance with the policies of the Special Collections & University Archives, Leonard H. Axe Library, Pittsburg State University
Languages	English
Historical Note	In 1889, the city of Pittsburg, Kansas formed a board of trade of 160 members. These members began researching ways to build the economy and improve the city. At this time, there were 9,000 inhabitants of the city and the board believed that not only did the town need to be industrious, but also it needed to have a more metropolitan look. The board believed the best way to start this would be to build the best hotel west of Chicago. The board hired a local man named Fred Massman to begin excavation and to lay a

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stone foundation for an extravagant multi-story hotel, made with brick and marble. Two men, B. F. Hobart and Franklin Playter, were appointed to raise money and secure interests for the hotel. In 1889, they had piqued the interest of railroad builder Arthur E. Stilwell of Kansas City, and three other men from the eastern United States. The board members all pledged money, donating \$100,000 in seed money. Arthur Stilwell then stepped in and offered to sell all the bonds on the project, eventually selling \$75,000 worth of bonds. For this reason, the board decided to name the hotel in his honor. The Hotel Stilwell opened its doors for business on May 31, 1890, when the town of Pittsburg was fifteen years old. The hotel serviced the community for eighty-five years and has had the honor of housing some famous historical figures. In the early years, Susan B. Anthony and Teddy Roosevelt gave speeches at the hotel. In 1980 the Hotel Stilwell was placed on the National Register of Historic Sites and was called, "one of the finest pieces of historic architecture in Kansas."

Content Description

The Hotel Stilwell Hotel collection contains documents regarding the original establishment of the hotel, the history of the building, blueprints, architectural plans, proposals, financial records, legal matters, press releases, newspaper clippings, magazines and other publications, board and agenda notes from meetings of the Hotel Stilwell Board, historical registry papers, loans, grants, correspondence, and information from similar corporations including Camptown and the Little Balkans Foundation. This collection is divided into the following nine series: **Historical; Business; Financial; Legal; Correspondence; Board Notes; Publications; Related Corporations; and Miscellaneous.**

Series Description

The **Historical** series contains historical documents of the Hotel Stilwell.

The **Business** series contains blueprints from the original plan on the Hotel Stilwell, and updated blueprints and plans for the restoration effort,

The **Financial** series contains financial records and documents dating back to 1974.

The **Legal** series contains bi-laws, rules and regulations, amendments and the articles of incorporation for the Stilwell Heritage and Education Foundation. This series also contains court documents and legal papers from 1993-1994.

The **Correspondence** series contains personal correspondence to and from Gene DeGruson, who was vice president of the Stilwell Heritage and Education Foundation in the 1990s, and correspondence from members of the foundation. The personal correspondence dates from 1974-1995.

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There is correspondence to and from Laura Carlson, who was the president of the foundation, and Sandra Garton.

The **Board Notes** series contains board and agenda notes from the Stilwell Heritage and Education Foundation from 1992-1997. Also included are committee notes and minutes from the different committees of the Hotel Stilwell. The dates range from 1992-1993.

The **Publications** series contains brochures regarding the Hotel Stilwell, the restoration efforts, and the history of the hotel. Also included are hotel advertisements from 1910, 1920, 1930, and 1940. There are magazines regarding the city of Joplin, Missouri; a map of Pittsburg from the 1980s, and the *Spirit of the Stilwell*, a newsletter sent out through the mail from 1992-1996. This series also contains press releases from the Stilwell Foundation from 1993.

The **Related Corporations** series includes a Pittsburg city agenda from 1994, and information on the Camptown and the Little Balkans Foundations.

The **Miscellaneous** series contains undated handwritten notes.

Folder List

Historical

- f. 1 Historical information on the Stilwell; events and various arts & entertainments regarding the Hotel Stilwell. 1889-1993
- f. 2 Historical Registry Papers, grants and plans regarding the Hotel Stilwell. July 1969-January 1995.

Business

- f. 3 Blue prints, proposals, and architectural information regarding the Hotel Stilwell, and the restoration effort. 1897- 1994.

Financial

- f. 4 Financial records from the Stilwell Foundation, bills, estimates, loan documents, mortgages, and documentation of money raised for the restoration effort. 1974-1995
- f. 5 Donation requests, undated.
- f. 6 Tax Planning Issues, undated.

Legal

- f. 7 Amendments, bi-laws, rules and regulations, and articles regarding the Stilwell Historical and Education Foundation. Undated.
- f. 8 Court cases and documents on the lawsuit the Stilwell Foundation brought against a construction company regarding the restoration effort. 1993-1994

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Personal Correspondence

- f. 9 Personal correspondence to and from Gene DeGruson, Laura Carlson, Sandra Garton and others. 1974-1995

Board Notes

- f. 10 Board and Agenda notes from the Stilwell Education Foundation, 1992.
- f. 11 Board and Agenda notes from the Stilwell Education Foundation, 1993.
- f. 12 Board and Agenda notes from the Stilwell Education Foundation, 1994.
- f. 13 Board and Agenda notes from the Stilwell Education Foundation, 1995-1997.
- f. 14 Committee meeting notes from the decoration committee, grant committee and various sub- committees, 1992-1993
- f. 15 Business plan for the Stilwell program.

Publications

- f. 16 Photocopies of the Hotel Stilwell and of unidentified people.
- f. 17 Brochures, undated.
- f. 18 Directories on the Stilwell Hotel, 1910-1940.
- f. 19 Magazines, 1989-1992.
- f. 20 Map of Pittsburg, Kansas, c.1980
- f. 21 *Spirit of Stilwell* newsletters, 1992-1996.
- f. 22 Newspapers, 1891- 1994.
- f. 23 Press releases, undated.

Related Corporations

- f. 24 Pittsburg city agenda, 1994
- f. 25 Camptown information, April 29, 1988.
- f. 26 Little Balkans Foundation notes and information, 1994-1995.

Miscellaneous

- f. 27 Handwritten notes, undated.