

ALBANY INSTITUTE OF HISTORY & ART

A Guide to the Kenmore Hotel Records

Summary Information

Repository

Albany Institute of History & Art Library

Creator

unidentified

Title

Kenmore Hotel Records

Identifier

MG 220

Date

1890-1949

Physical Description

1 box

Physical Location

The materials are located onsite in the Museum.

Language of the Material

English

Abstract

This collection contains letters, envelopes, postcards, photographs, legal documents, and advertisements all relating to the operation of the Kenmore Hotel.

Preferred Citation

Preferred citation for this material is as follows:

Kenmore Hotel Records, 1890-1949, MG 220. Albany Institute of History & Art Library, Albany, New York.

Conditions Governing Access and Use

Restrictions on Access

None

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Immediate Source of Acquisition

Accession: # LIB.2009.145

Accession Source/Date: Gift of David Davis, 2009

Processing Information

Processed by R. Luedtke, April 2011; finding aid updated by H. Cox, July 2021.

Biographical/Historical

Adam Blake, Jr. (1830-1881) had a well-established career in the hotel industry prior to having the Kenmore Hotel built in 1878. His father, Adam Blake, Sr., had been enslaved by Stephen Van Rensselaer III. Freed in 1811. Blake Sr. continued his employment with the Van Rensselaer family as a free man, and later adopted his son, whose early education was alongside the Van Rensselaer children.

Blake, Jr. worked his way up in the hotel industry, beginning at the Delavan House, and later, opening his own restaurant at Beaver and Green Streets. He went on to open additional establishments, each more upscale than the last. In 1865, he leased the Congress Hall Hotel, which quickly became known as a training ground for other young Black men who went on to work in some of the finest hotels across America. When the hotel was scheduled to be demolished for the new Capitol building in 1878, Blake received an ample reimbursement, which he used to build the Kenmore Hotel. The Kenmore was built to Blake's specifications and no expense was spared. Blake did not live long to see the fruits of his labor - he died in 1881. After his death, the Kenmore was run by his widow, Catherine.

Catherine sold the Kenmore in the late 1880s, and it continued as a hotel with new proprietors. From approximately 1916 through the 1940's, the Kenmore Hotel was run by Robert P. Murphy, and he extensively renovated the building to restore and upgrade the hotel. In the 1940's the Rain-Bo Room was a famous nightclub in the hotel, and was named for the Rainbow Room in the GE Building of Rockefeller Center in New York City. Gangster Jack "Legs" Diamond frequented the hotel and had partied at the Rain-Bo Room the night of his death after his theft acquittal in the nearby city of Troy. The Kenmore Hotel is featured prominently in many of William Kennedy's books, including his novel *Legs* about the life of Jack Diamond.

The Kenmore fell into disuse by the 1950s, but was renovated in 1986 into an office building by Walter Uccellini Enterprises (now Historic Redevelopment Associates). The major tenant from 1986 until 1999 was the Healthcare Association of New York State, which occupied four of the six floors of the building.

Redburn Development purchased the property around 2019 and began extensive renovations, attempting to recapture much of the original elegance of the building, and today, the Kenmore is a luxury apartment building.

Scope and Contents

This collection contains letters, envelopes, postcards, photographs, legal documents, and advertisements all relating to the operation of the Kenmore Hotel.

Contents List

The following section contains a listing of the materials in the collection.

Description	Box	Folder
Winston Cigarettes small rubber mat	1	
Hotel receipt book, blank		

7 Photographs by Glen S. Cook for Hotel Pamphlet; Advertisements, and one unidentified photograph	1
Various Letters and Correspondence	2
Whiskey Stamps & Receipt, Japanese/Chinese stamps	3
Entertainment Materials	4
Correspondence and empty envelopes	5
Correspondence: Insurance and Legal	6
Postcards	7
Business Correspondence	8