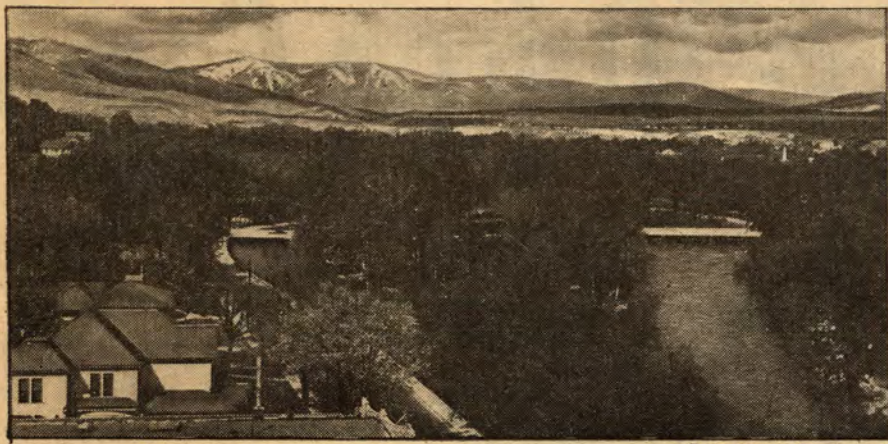


Out of This World—in Reno



Reno Offers Plenty of Scenic Beauty, Too, for Those Who Care to Enjoy It.

By INEZ ROBB
CHAPTER X

RENO, like Caesar's wife, is all things to all men. To Joseph S. Robinson, New York attorney who fought the Reno divorce instituted by his wife, now married to the widely-known comedian, Bert Lahr, Reno smells in spades.

In opposing the Reno decree before the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court of New York State, Robinson declared Reno to be "a city where perjury and more perjury is the order of the day, a city where every effort is exerted to make the marriage institution seem like a farce and where practically the entire populace feeds like vermin on profits from the divorce mill."

Yet the WPA, guide book to this state, called "Nevada, the Silver State," haughtily declares:

"There are many Renos, and the two acres of neon lights, night clubs, gambling houses and drinking places near the railroad station form only one of them—and though commercially important, not a particularly representative one at that, in spite of feature articles and newsreels.

"A second Reno, also not representative and to some extent overlapping the gambling-drinking Reno, is the divorce circle.

"A third Reno is composed of moneyed newcomers—another aloof Reno is composed of F. F. V.'s—their Virginia is the Comstock (Ed's note: WOW!)—The University is almost a town in itself."

Of course truth, as always, is in the middle. It lies some place between Robinson's searing denunciation of Reno and the WPA's enraptured encomiums.

For the simple truth is that thousands of Renoites like the game but not the fame. They like the money but not the music. Anyone who comes here as I did spends half of every 24 hours in being button-holed by earnest citizens who insist that Reno is conservative, really patterned on Boston.

They stoutly insist that Reno is chiefly a center of supplies for the cattle and mining industry in a state of approximately 130,000 souls. Such citizens boast they could abolish gambling and divorce and still Reno would prosper.

Well, perhaps The Biggest Little City in the World wouldn't become a ghost town. But it certainly would bear a striking resemblance to a ha'nt house! For gambling supports Reno's largest and most substantial payroll. And in 1943, it is conservatively estimated, the divorce trade poured \$4,000,000 in cash money into this town of 25,000.

Before the current war prosperity flushed the nation with money and started the present rush to Reno, Ed Walker, manager of the Reno Chamber of Commerce, estimated that the average divorcee spent \$650 during her residence here.

Multiply last year's record divorce crop of 5,884 decrees by \$650, allow for added war-spending, and divorce probably came nearer putting five than four millions in Reno's 1943 till.

The divorce trade not only brings a constant and ready flow of cash into Reno, but has brought millions of permanent investment dollars into town through the marriage of wealthy divorcees here.

Reno's lawyers, her doctors, her realtors and her business men have married a variety of rich divorcees who have now become Reno matrons.

Reno's No. 1 Go-Getter and Nevada's unrivalled Whiz-on-Wheels, youngish Norman Biltz, is the happy husband of the former Esther Auchincloss, one of the richest and most social Easterners ever to

RENO, Nev.



Wealthy Lord Cowley Celebrated His Divorce by Marrying a Reno Hat-Check Girl, and Settling Down on a Nevada Ranch.

take The Reno Cure. The state's chief booster, realtor and promoter extraordinary

met his present wife when she came here in 1929 to divorce Edmund W. Nash, New York broker.

One of Reno's most popular matrons, and certainly among the leaders of the WPA's beloved conservative set stemming directly from F. F. V.'s (Virginia City branch), is Katherine Mackay O'Brien Hawkins, wife of Robert Ziemer Hawkins, a prominent Reno attorney.

YET it was Mrs. Hawkins's ravishingly beautiful mother, the one-time Katherine Duer and first wife of Clarence Mackay, who shocked Reno at the turn of the century.

Young Mrs. Mackay, so lovely that people turned to stare at her, came to Reno in connection with one of her husband's substantial gifts to the Mackay School of Mines.

The grateful trustees, plus its president and other local dignitaries, felt the visit warranted a dinner in honor of the young woman whose husband had so handsomely endowed the mining school which was named in honor of his pioneer father, John Mackay.

To that dinner was invited a young man-about-Reno who is now one of the town's First Citizens.

"Mrs. Mackay was so beautiful that we all sat watching her, enthralled," he said the other day. "I'm certain every man at the table fell in love

with her and every man's wife suspected as much! "But just as the dinner ended, the sophisticated and patrician Mrs. Mackay reached for her evening bag. She drew from it a little jeweled box. But it was no powder puff the beauty took from the box. It was a cigarette! Which she calmly lighted and proceeded to smoke.

"You have no idea what a sensation it created," the one-time beau laughed. "When she pulled out that cigarette, the gasp that went up could have been heard clear down to the banks of the Truckee. It took the town 20 years to recover. Heaven knows what a woman could do publicly in Reno in 1944 to create a comparable sensation."

Now local history has swung full cycle with the presence in Reno of the conservative daughter of the woman who horrified local society so long ago—with the presence of the granddaughter of John Mackay, the sturdy young Irishman who stormed Virginia City without a nickel and made a fortune.

In the hands of the late Clarence Mackay, Mrs. Hawkins' father, that fortune dwindled. But not before the Mackay fortune had been spent everywhere but in Nevada, where it originated. Now at least a portion of it has come home with Mrs. Hawkins. She came here in 1937 to divorce Justice Kenneth O'Brien of the New York State Supreme Court and married Hawkins in 1938.

One of Reno's most prominent citizens in every sense of that phrase is George Hart, the town's swoon-crooner supreme. He is to The Biggest Little

City in the World what Sinatra is to adolescence and Crosby to a juke box.

In short, Hart is a genuine, 24-carat Reno Institution. He is a Legitimate Exhibit, whose playing and singing at the Riverside Bar keeps it jammed.

Hart, a highly paid entertainer on the West Coast for years before coming to Reno at even more expense, has made a large fortune of his own. But this middle-aged, unromantic looking man whose corporation is beginning to bulge and whose thinning hair is carefully parted to do the most good over a large area, married \$15,000,000.

In 1937, he married Marcia Farrell Keresey, granddaughter of Anthony J. Brady, the late traction magnate. She first came to Reno in 1931 to divorce John McPike Keresey.

Sometimes it works in reverse, a divorcee gets hitched to a local gal and his fortune comes here. Christian Arthur Wellesley, Fourth Earl Cowley, is one of Reno's prize exhibits. Lord Cowley, great-grandnephew of the First Duke of Wellington, came here to divorce his first wife, Mae Pickard.

While biding his time in Reno, he went to a local night spot and there checked his hat with a pretty Reno girl. You have already guessed the ending. Yup. His Lordship married the girl. Everyone likes Christian Arthur Wellesley. Visitors from the Old Country who made a formal call on Lord Cowley once found him shoveling manure.

The rich men and women seeking divorce who marry and stay here or just stay here form a large portion of the colony of "tax refugees" in Nevada,



The Average Divorcee Spends at Least \$650 During Her Short Stay in Reno. Many Wealthy Ones Remain There, and Nevada's Lenient Marriage and Tax Laws Lure a Steady Golden Shower That Literally Paves the Streets With Millions.

ing of the Doris Duke Cromwell divorce case, the presiding judge picked up a nice piece of change by marrying a couple in his chambers.

This gravy also spreads out through the town, with the justice of the peace and a number of ministers liberally padding their salaries with marriage fees. Hotels, florists and jewelers also share.

This is a charming but case-hardened community where reform is anathema and Anthony Comstock or a Watch and Ward Society would not survive 24 hours. It likes itself the way it is; it just doesn't relish its reputation.

Monae Lindley Groves Peterson Rice Cupit Peri, once of New York, is now firmly established as "Queen of the Merry Wives of Washoe Valley." To date she has been married five times with four divorces.

"Nothing could possibly surprise Reno. Even the Princess Stefanie Hohenlohe Schillinsfuerst, Hitler's confidante, failed to cause a stir just before the current war when she called Baden-Baden three times from the Riverside Hotel in an attempt to get a recipe for an Old Fashioned Cocktail.

LET other American communities stew in their own juices over post-war reconversion plans. Reno is ready with hers. The community knows it will be called upon to reconvert thousands of hasty wartime marriages into single blessedness. As soon as the war ends in Europe and Asia, Reno figures the real battle will begin on the home front.

But Reno is ready. She faces the future calm and confident. Peace—it's going to be wonderful.

THE END.

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