



The Roots of Reno

Al W. Moe

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Reno was truly Hell on Wheels in the 1920's. The rest of the nation considered the town Sodom and Gomorra, but that's only half the truth. Reno offered everything in the way of adult entertainment, from speakeasy's and houses of ill-repute, to open gaming – legal or not. And it took plenty of sins by the founding fathers to make Reno "The biggest little city in the world." When the gold-veins of Tonopah and Goldfield ran out, the casino owners moved to Reno, where even greater riches awaited. Together, a group of four men (Nick Abelman, Bill Graham, Jim McKay, George Wingfield) took over Reno's casinos and held sway over the town for the next three decades. Together they administered policy, collected juice, ran politicians, and owned the red-light district and most of the town's casinos. When that wasn't enough they took over the banks and laundered money for crooks like "Pretty Boy" Floyd, Alvin Karpis, and Ma Barker's boys, and offered safety to "Baby Face" Nelson. It was a good gig. The Reno Four dictated policy all over Northern Nevada, taking special care of Reno and Lake Tahoe casinos up until the late 1950's. Their influence made Reno before Bill Harrah or "Pappy" Smith ever arrived, needing an introduction and permission to build their own casinos, Harold's Club and Harrah's. This is an expansion, an unabridged version of "Mob City - Reno" with much to tell about Nevada's gold mining towns.

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