

## “Welcome to Reno The Best Town in the Country”

by Patrick Crosby

What the hey? I thought Reno was “The Biggest Little City in the World.” And at the bottom of the RENO postmark on the address side of this 1912 postcard I see a partial “N” for “NEV.,” although the rest of the letters can’t be read. But then there’s the message on the card, “Big dance down at New Albin last night.”

There seems to be only one New Albin in the U.S. and it is at the extreme northeast corner of Iowa, but there is no Reno in Iowa. New Albin was established after a railroad was built through the area and was named for the son of a railroad official. In 1910 the population was 588, so it must have been a very big dance. Today New Albin has a bit over 500 residents, the town being surrounded by agriculture and a wildlife area. Railroad Street runs south to north through town and parallels railroad tracks.

Adjacent to New Albin to the north is the Minnesota state line, and seven miles up the same tracks is the dinky community of Reno. Turns out the “N” for “NEV.” in the postmark is an “M” for “MINN.”

Reno, Minnesota, is less than a dozen homes in a hilly, forested area near the Mississippi River. There was a post office from 1880 to 1935 (per Jim Forte Postal History).

Reno was named for Jesse L. Reno, a Union general during the Civil War. Reno, Nevada, was also named for this honored hero who was known to fight right alongside his men. In 1862 he was mistaken for rebel cavalry and shot and killed by a rookie Union soldier (per Wikipedia).

Pennants on postcards were quite popular and the pennant on the picture side of this card is printed. However, before March 2, 1907 pieces of felt were often attached to postcards as a pennant. But on this date attachments to cards that could injure employees or damage postal equipment were prohibited from the mails. Perhaps it was thought a felt pennant could detach and plug up the works. Two weeks earlier “glitter” had been prohibited on postcards for the same reasons. The word “Reno” was written on this card with a paint pen for a raised effect, this being done instead of the old glue and “glitter” 3D, sparkling effect. So the pennant type cards were adapted to meet the new restrictions and remained popular.

I recently purchased this card for \$1.50. It was a generic card and any druggist or other sellers of postcards could buy a batch and call their town “The Best Town in the Country.” I guess it’s all a matter of opinion.

