

## MEARES, HARRY (ARISTIDES) - MARY REIPER

If you lived in the village of Perivoli near the Southern tip of the pork chop shaped island of Corfu in the late nineteenth century, your surname was either Meares or Koulouris. About half of the village carried either name. Aristides Meares came to America in the very early nineteen hundreds under unknown circumstances leaving a wife and daughter on the island. He became fond of good clothes and cut a fine figure. As early as 1911 he was a partner with a Chinese man in a café on South 13th Street in Omaha, Nebraska. He later was a partner in the Conant Café at the Conant Hotel and various South Omaha cafes. Clever but unschooled he used his smile and good humor to advantage. How and exactly when he arrived in Omaha is not a matter of record. What is recorded is that he severed ties with his Greek wife after meeting Mary Reiper, a woman of German extraction, in Omaha, Nebraska. As with many Greek men reared in small Greek villages, Harry was well acquainted with liturgics and is known to have assisted Rev. Tsaousis when the priest would be called to perform services out of town, including Lincoln, Nebraska. Harry returned to Perivoli twice during his lifetime but returned in each case with great appreciation for America.

Born in New Jersey on April 29, 1877, Mary moved west and was first known to have lived in Omaha beginning at age 29. Little is known about her formal education, however she was, or became, a nurse, car dealer, real estate agent, and landlady in Omaha. Whether acquired before or after she married Aristides (he became known as "Harry"), Mary supported herself and Harry by renting out the apartments in the houses she owned at 4408 and 4412 South 25th Street. She had a love for the written word and possessed a keen mind. Wearing tent dresses (she suffered an incarcerated umbilical hernia and diabetes mellitus) and high top tennis shoes in her later years, Mary had entertaining manners and speech. She is remembered holding out her left arm stiffly while standing and drinking cold water on a hot summer day. She could be seen with an erected pinkie while drinking tea and smiling while delivering witty remarks. Mary would have been at home with Dorothy Parker in the Algonquin Room. Yet, she doted on Harry until she died at St. Joseph's hospital on May 29, 1944.

What were to become known as "mixed marriages" resulted in most non-Greeks marrying Greeks being insulted or ostracized by some Greek men and women during the first half of the twentieth century in Omaha. Mary

was no exception to this practice. Her houses were located near the South West corner of 25th and I Streets. Jerry and Eva Kantas lived on the North West corner, the Sinos family lived near the North East corner and the Frank Kantas family lived on the South East corner. Further down 25th Street on the same block later lived the Kavas family. Frank and Jerry Kantas were brothers who also were born on the island of Corfu. They operated the Kantas Grocery on 26th and N Streets. Village-like, there was not a close social commerce between the families, but all (except Mary whose religious beliefs are not known) regularly attended St. John's Greek Orthodox Church during the first two decades of the twentieth century.

After the stock market crash in the fall of 1929 and for a decade thereafter, most Omaha Greeks suffered deprivations and St. John's could neither pay a priest nor maintain the building erected less than a quarter century earlier because of lagging attendance and congregants' inability to contribute. It is supposed that at that crossroads, Mary's properties were debt-free and that she held a real estate license. She engineered or participated in real estate schemes with the Syrian lawyer known to all Greeks at the time, Simon A. Simon, to keep the church afloat. Copies of such deeds and mortgages are appended. She helped other Greeks to maintain ownership of their properties by negotiating with lenders to accept interest only payments for the duration of the depression and by renting out and maintaining houses for Greeks who had to leave Omaha for work elsewhere.

One or more Sundays per month she would kill and skin a rabbit from the hutches attached to her garages for dinner. Often a chicken from her coop on the same property would have its neck wrung and Mary would pluck feathers, gut and prepare the chicken for cooking by Harry. A miserable Rhode Island Red rooster ruled her chicken coop and annoyed sleepers. Mary was never seen driving in her later years, however she kept a splendid 1920s Whippet in one garage which Harry, who did not drive, sold after her death.

Mary and Harry were childless but they leave a legacy of great stories and recollections to those who knew them.

DEED RECORD NO. 577

FROM Mary Hears & her. St. John's Helanic Orthodox Church

TO Harry Hears and Harry Hears, wife and husband,

Know All Men by These Presents: That we, Mary Hears and Harry Hears, wife and husband, in consideration of Twenty-nine hundred and no/100 (\$2900.00) DOLLARS in hand paid to herby grant, bargain, sell, convey and confirm unto St. John's Helanic Orthodox Church

the following described real estate, situate in the County of Douglas, and State of Nebraska, to-wit: The South Forty-four feet (S 44') of the West Ninety feet (W 90') of Lot Eleven (11), Block Eight (8), S. E. Rogers Addition to the City of Omaha, as surveyed, platted and recorded, Subject to the 1930 County taxes and subsequent taxes. Subject to a first mortgage to S. H. Lougou, Inc., for \$1000.00 which the grantee assumes and agree to pay. Subject to a second mortgage to Fritz Woosley for \$1500.00 which the grantee assume and agree to pay

together with all the tenements, hereditaments, and appurtenances to the same belonging, and all the estate, title, dower, right of homestead, claim or demand whatsoever of the said Mary Hears and Harry Hears

To Have and to hold the above described premises, with the appurtenances, unto the said Harry Hears and Harry Hears heirs and assigns forever; and the said Harry Hears heirs, executors and administrators, do covenant with the said Harry Hears and Harry Hears heirs and assigns, that we are lawfully seized of said premises, that they are free from incumbrance except as aforesaid.

that we have good right and lawful authority to sell the same and that we will and our heirs, executors, and administrators shall warrant and defend the same unto the said Harry Hears and Harry Hears heirs and assigns forever, against the lawful claims of all persons whomsoever, except as aforesaid.

In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and seals this 10th day of May A. D. 1930

In Presence of George Schroeder Harry Hears Harry Hears

On this 10th day of May A. D. 1930 before me, a Notary Public in and for said County, personally came the above named Harry Hears and Harry Hears, wife and husband,

whose names are affixed to the said instrument as grantors, and who have severally acknowledged said instrument to be their voluntary act and deed.

WITNESS my hand and Notarial Seal the date last aforesaid. Notary Public. George Schroeder A. D. 1930.

My commission expires on the 10th day of May A. D. 1930 at 9:05 o'clock, A. M. Entered in Numerical Index and recorded MAY 13th 1930 Harry Hears, Register of Deeds. Compared by E. R.



DEED RECORD NO. 577

FROM Fritz Woosley & wf. TO Mary Hears

Know All Men by These Presents: That we, Fritz Woosley and Alice Woosley, husband and wife,

In consideration of twenty-nine hundred and no/100 (\$2900.00) DOLLARS in hand paid to herby grant, bargain, sell, convey and confirm unto Harry Hears

the following described real estate, situate in the County of Douglas, and State of Nebraska, to-wit: The South Forty-four feet (S 44') of the West Ninety feet (W 90') of Lot Eleven (11), Block Eight (8), S. E. Rogers Addition to the City of Omaha, as surveyed, platted and recorded. Subject to the 1930 County taxes and subsequent taxes.

together with all the tenements, hereditaments, and appurtenances to the same belonging, and all the estate, title, dower, right of homestead, claim or demand whatsoever of the said Fritz Woosley and Alice Woosley

To Have and to hold the above described premises, with the appurtenances, unto the said Harry Hears and Alice Woosley heirs and assigns forever; and our heirs, executors and administrators, do covenant with the said Harry Hears and Alice Woosley heirs and assigns, that we are lawfully seized of said premises, that they are free from incumbrance except as aforesaid.

that we have good right and lawful authority to sell the same and that we will and our heirs, executors, and administrators shall warrant and defend the same unto the said Harry Hears and Alice Woosley heirs and assigns forever, against the lawful claims of all persons whomsoever, except as aforesaid.

In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and seals this 10th day of May A. D. 1930

In Presence of Fritz Woosley Alice Woosley O. H. Stanslow

On this 10th day of May A. D. 1930 before me, a Notary Public in and for said County, personally came the above named Fritz Woosley and Alice Woosley, husband and wife,

whose names are affixed to the said instrument as grantors, and who have severally acknowledged said instrument to be their voluntary act and deed.

WITNESS my hand and Notarial Seal the date last aforesaid. Notary Public. O. H. Stanslow A. D. 1930.

My commission expires on the 8 day of March A. D. 1930 at 9:00 o'clock, A. M. Entered in Numerical Index and recorded MAY 13th 1930 Harry Hears, Register of Deeds. Compared by E. R.



