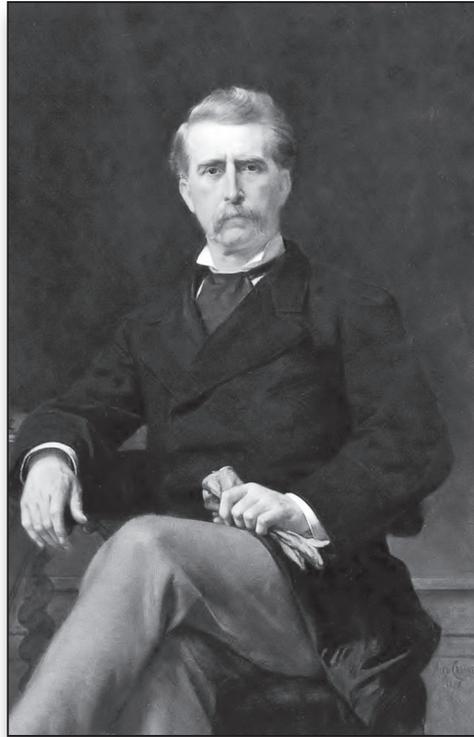


# John William Mackay: Mining A Life

BY MICHAEL BURKE



## **Illustration:**

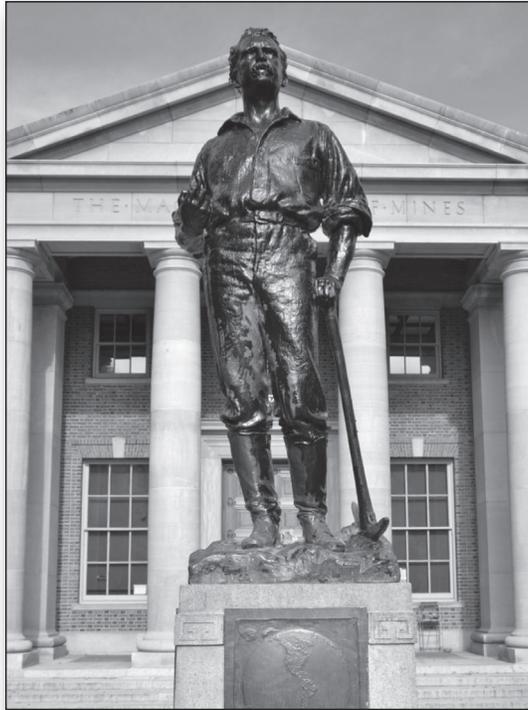
*This portrait of John William Mackay was painted by Alexandre Cabanel and shows him in his late forties in 1878. By that time, he was multi-millionaire. In 1840, at age nine he had immigrated to New York from Dublin with his parents and a sister. Courtesy of Mackay family.*

He was born on November 28, 1831, in a slum in Dublin, Ireland, a start in life which most would consider highly inauspicious. Thus began the incredibly full, complex and contradictory life of John William Mackay. However, long before he died during a business trip to London, England, on July 20, 1902, he would become the seventeenth richest person in the entire world. Even more amazing than his wealth is that so many people today, including most Irish Americans, know very little, if anything, of Mackay's life and accomplishments.<sup>1</sup> Those accomplishments were so spectacular they border on fictional, but in its basic contours, Mackay's life story remains a familiar Irish-American one: overcoming poverty and adversity by strength, resolution, hard work, with some luck added in (in Mackay's unique case, quite a bit of it).

John Mackay arrived in New York City with his parents and sister in 1840. Although their arrival preceded the massive influx of desperate Irish fleeing the potato crop failure and

subsequent Great Hunger, this impoverished Irish family was certainly not made welcome in New York. To make matters worse, the father died in 1842. At this time in New York, a widow with two children faced formidable odds, but somehow Mrs. Mackay succeeded in overcoming them. Throughout his life John spoke very little of his early years, except to recall fondly the courage and strength of his mother. John's sister grew up to become a nun, eventually a mother superior of her order. After the death of his father John left school to work selling newspapers and helping in whatever ways he could to support his family. As a young man he found work as an apprentice in a shipyard. He saved his money and after completing his training he answered the call of the gold rush and left for California, presumably working his way to pay his fare, possibly on a schooner he may have had a hand in building. Soon after his arrival Mackay found work in various mines, sending home whatever money he could to his mother.

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#### STARTING AT THE BOTTOM

John started at the bottom as a laborer in mines operated by others, but soon worked his way up to mine supervisor. He then went off on his own through California and Nevada and met with both success and failure. He would work on his own (these miners were known as “placers”) and alternately he would work for others (these miners were called “hard-rock” miners), sometimes doing both kinds of work simultaneously. When he had money he was constantly buying and trading other mines, sometimes making a profit, sometimes not, meanwhile forming and dissolving various partnerships. Finally, lacking sufficient capital of his own, he formed a partnership with one miner and two saloon owners, all of whom were Irish. There was another partner whom John had bought out, thereby becoming the largest shareholder, holding two-fifths of the company’s stock.

At this time most mines were corporations, issuing stocks and bonds and often owned by absentee bankers who hired others to provide workers and supervise the operations. The four Irishmen who owned the firm originally known as “Flood and O’Brien” were different. They went down into the mine themselves, along with their workers, every

day. As the science of mine engineering was in its infancy then, John taught himself—by observation and, often, trial and error. There was much competition in the mines, and owners had to be tough. Fortunately, Mackay was. After working all day in the mines he often boxed in the evening. To survive, miners also needed the intelligence to outwit the numerous competitors and swindlers trying to steal from them, cheat them, and drive them out of business (many of whom were the bankers). Mackay and his partners managed to hold their own through several years of a kind of roller-coaster ride of success and failure (at one point Mackay and his partners lived in a kind of dugout in the side of the mountain referred to as a “hole in the wall”, basically they set up housekeeping in a walled off cave).<sup>2</sup>

Eventually, their backbreaking work met with success in what would become known as the “Comstock Lode,” an extremely large vein of silver ore in Mount Davidson located over six-thousand feet above sea level and named after one of the first prospectors to discover it, Henry Comstock.<sup>3</sup> Parts of this vein were claimed by many different miners. Mackay’s firm met with their initial success by seizing control, through shrewd stock manipulation, of one of the most prosperous mines in the Comstock, the Hale & Norcross mine.<sup>4</sup> Their company was now referred to as “The Bonanza Firm.” Soon all four Irishmen, John W. Mackay, James C. Flood, William S. O’Brien, and James G. Fair became millionaires, with John, holder of two-fifths of the stock, the wealthiest of all. But this was not an overnight success, it came after working fifteen years in the mines.

Around this time the thirty-four year-old bachelor Mackay, now suddenly sought after by many young women, met the recently widowed Marie Louise Hungerford Bryant (known as Louise). Louise’s back story is also interesting, as was their initial meeting. Born in New York City to Daniel Hungerford, a father of English descent and a French-born mother, Eveline Visera, Louise was raised Catholic. She came to Nevada as a child with her parents, who were seeking a better life than they were able

*Photo:*  
Statue of John Mackay  
at the entrance to  
the Mackay School  
of Earth Sciences  
and Engineering  
at the University of  
Nevada in Reno. It  
was completed by  
Gutzon Borglum, the  
same sculptor who  
created the national  
monument at Mount  
Rushmore. Courtesy of  
Library of Congress.

to find in New York. Her mother was a skilled embroiderer and her father tried his hand at various business ventures, from shop-keeping to barbering, all with little success. Daniel Hungerford did, however, meet with some success in the military, serving as an officer in the Mexican War and later rising to the rank of Colonel in the Union Army during the Civil War. His military career, however, was as checkered as his business career. He fought in only one battle in the Mexican War and none in the Civil War. When sixteen-year-old Louise fell in love with a promising young medical doctor, Edmund Bryant, (a relative of William Cullen Bryant) she thought her future was secure. But soon after their marriage, Edmund succumbed to alcoholism and opium addiction, which killed him shortly after their daughter, Eva, was born.

Louise was again faced with a grim future of poverty. Soon after her husband's death, however, three men appeared on her doorstep. They were from the same Masonic lodge as Edmund Bryant and brought a substantial amount of money, collected from the members, to tide over the widow of one of their own. One of these Masons was the newly minted millionaire John Mackay who, although a Roman Catholic, was often referred to as a "freethinker." John was somewhat bowled over when Louise politely but firmly declined their kind offer, explaining that if she took charity now she might end up taking it for the rest of her life. She would work to support herself and her daughter (like her mother, she was a skilled embroiderer). John, who had apparently never had a serious relationship with any woman before, was fascinated with Louise and pursued her relentlessly. He was assisted in this by his partners and, especially, their wives, who delighted in what seemed to them a perfect matchmaking adventure. Although she was reluctant at first, John finally won her over and, on November 25, 1867, they were married by their mutual friend, Father (later Bishop) Patrick Manogue, in Virginia City, Nevada.<sup>5</sup>

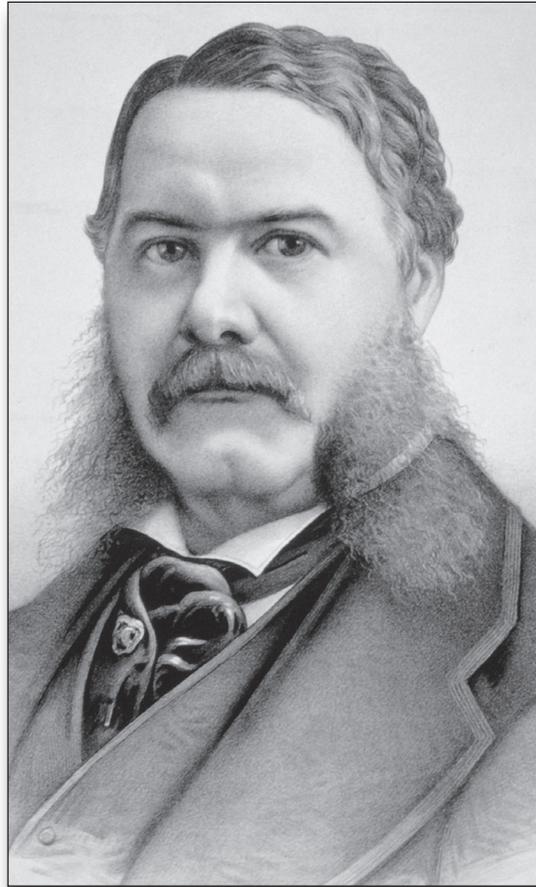
While John continued to work the mines with his partners, the group also founded



the Nevada Bank of San Francisco in 1875. Since John now had to commute between Virginia City and San Francisco, and Louise hated Nevada, he bought a large house in San Francisco and moved her, her daughter, her parents and her younger sister there. On August 12, 1870, Louise gave birth to their first son, John William Mackay, Jr., later to be known as Willy. At this time John legally adopted Louise's daughter, changing her name to Eva Bryant Mackay. Due to a mysterious accident while in the care of her biological father, Eva had been lame from infancy. Most likely, Bryant dropped her while under the influence of alcohol or opium. A determined Mackay vowed to do everything in his power to restore Eva's ability to walk without a limp. To this end he took the family to New York City, where the best doctors in the United States were in practice. When none proved able

**Photo:**  
*Louise Mackay was born in New York and as a child moved to Nevada with her parents. After her first husband died, and a sustained courtship, she married Mackay in 1867. Louise had aspirations about moving into high society in New York City. Courtesy of Society for the Preservation of Long Island Antiquities and W.W. Norton.*

**Illustration:**  
*Chester A. Arthur, the twenty-first president of the United States. A former New York attorney, he asked John and Louise Mackay to represent the United States at the coronation of Czar Nicholas III in Moscow in 1883. Arthur's father had emigrated from County Antrim early in the nineteenth century. Courtesy of Library of Congress.*



to help her, they travelled on to Paris, where one highly recommended surgeon agreed to operate but cautioned that while he might be able to improve matters somewhat he could not promise a complete cure. True to his word, he did help her, but Eva continued to walk with a slight limp.

#### THE BIG BONANZA

John brought the family back to San Francisco, but he himself returned to the mine. Soon after their second son, Clarence, was born in April 1874, an event occurred that would change their lives forever. Prior to Clarence's birth and while back working in the mine, John insisted that they go further down than they, or anyone else, had ever gone.<sup>6</sup> This led to the discovery in 1873 of what was to become the largest vein of silver ore in the world at the Consolidated Virginia mine, known eventually as the "Big Bonanza." It took a while before they realized how much silver they had found. The values

of this kind of find often varied with the journalists who reported it. Some said that before it was exhausted in six years the partners had mined over three hundred million dollars in silver and gold, mostly silver. Some said that at one point Mackay himself was earning almost \$500,000 a month. The most picturesque report described the amount as equal to the area of New York's City Hall Park (almost nine acres) and rising to about three-hundred feet.<sup>7</sup> At any rate it was wealth beyond any of the partners' dreams, catapulting them (in pre-income tax America) into what would be today the one percent billionaire class.

The family was still in San Francisco, but John refused to stop working in Nevada. Louise, however, had long dreamed of an entree into New York City Society. John agreed that she should go to New York and gave her carte blanche to do and spend whatever she liked and he would join her as soon as possible. He had by this time many friends

in the business world and had acquired the requisite letters of introduction for Louise. But things went terribly wrong for her when she found herself, despite her vast wealth, socially snubbed. She soon discovered why—not only was she a Catholic, but even worse, she was married to an *Irish* Catholic. Ellin Berlin, wife of Irving Berlin, in her biography of her grandmother, Louise MacKay, entitled *Silver Platter*, quoted one particularly vicious harpy talking about Louise at a reception (unaware that Louise was in earshot) “Mackay? Oh Irish, of course. They don’t even pronounce it properly.”<sup>8</sup> (The name Mackay is usually pronounced *mac-KAY* but John always pronounced it *MACK-ee*.) Ellin also mentions an exchange Louise had with a Mrs. Ellet, author of *The Queens of American Society*, the definitive chronicle of New York and American leading families, who offered to help Louise enter New York Society. Ellin quotes her as telling Louise “And in your case they have what they consider good grounds for snobbishness. For one thing you’re a Catholic. They’re prejudiced against Catholics. They say it’s because Catholicism is the servants’ religion.”<sup>9</sup>

Louise soon came to realize that she would never be accepted into New York society and John, furious, moved the whole family to Paris, where he immediately bought the largest mansion he could find, 9 Rue de Tilsitt, adjacent to the Arch de Triumph, a property encompassing what amounted to an entire city block and including a large building, four stories tall, and two gardens. The building, later to be the location of the Belgian Embassy, still stands and is now a luxury hotel, with some of Louise’s original improvements still intact.<sup>10</sup> Once again, John set no limits on Louise’s spending, and soon theirs was one of the most fashionable houses in Paris, entertaining royalty, the aristocracy, and anyone else whose company Louise desired. At one point John and Louise went so far as to commission the New York firm of Tiffany & Co. to design and produce a magnificent silver service made with the ore from John’s mine, which, typically, he physically hauled

out himself. This turned into a vast collection which took several years to complete and was said to total over 1,250 pieces. Some of the pieces were featured in the Paris Exhibition of 1878. Louise’s position in Paris society was assured when in 1877 the Mackays entertained the visiting former United States President, Ulysses S. Grant and his wife, Julia Grant. The Mackays hosted one of the most lavish receptions the city had ever seen. A further indication of the status John and Louise achieved occurred when President Chester A. Arthur called upon them to represent him at the coronation of Czar Alexander III in Moscow in 1883.

The Mackays dream life continued to unfold but, despite Louise’s entreaties, John still refused to retire. While continuing to supervise the mine and run the bank (by 1885 Mackay had bought out his partners and controlled the bank himself), he also involved himself in several other ventures, and sat on multiple corporate boards. Despite his lack of formal training the rough and tumble world of the mines prepared John for a successful career in business. He felt keenly his lack of education and constantly read in his spare time. His innate intelligence made him a natural born business leader. He was now basically commuting between Nevada, San Francisco, New York and Paris.

#### HIS NEXT DIVERSION

As the mine was becoming depleted, John, who could best be described by the present day term “workaholic,” looked for something else to sink his teeth into. Mackay’s one longtime diversion had been poker, which he gave up when he became wealthy. Oscar Lewis, in his book *Silver Kings, The Lives and Times of Mackay, Fair, Flood and O’Brien, Lords of the Nevada Comstock Lode*, quotes Mackay as saying “...when you can’t enjoy winning at poker, there’s no fun left in anything.”<sup>11</sup> However, Mackay found another diversion while on vacation in the south of France when he met James Gordon Bennett, Jr., publisher and son of the founder of the *New York Herald*, and an eccentric character in his own right. Both men relied heavily on the tele-

**Photo:**  
*At left, on the corner of Broadway and Murray Street in Manhattan, is the thirteen-story headquarters building built for the cable business launched by Mackay and James Gordon Bennett in 1884. City Hall Park can be seen opposite, on the east side of Broadway. Courtesy of Library of Congress.*



graph for their businesses and resented the high price charged for transatlantic telegrams by the notorious robber baron, Jay Gould, who held the cable monopoly. Mackay loved a good fight, so he and Bennett formed a partnership eventually named the Commercial Cable Company, and began construction on a transatlantic cable of their own. This career change evolved while Mackay was in his mid-forties. Eventually they built a corporate headquarters on the corner of Broadway and Murray Streets in New York City. Completed in 1894, the building still stands today, opposite City Hall Park. Like everything else in Mackay's life, the fight with Gould was not an easy one, but in the end he and Bennett won, reducing the price of a telegram by half and, in the process, making John another fortune. Gould was quoted as saying, "There is no beating John Mackay. If he needs another million or two he will go to his silver mine and dig it up."<sup>12</sup>

When they dispatched their sons to the Jesuit Beaumont College at Old Windsor, England, in 1890, John bought a large house on Carlton House Terrace, formerly owned by

the Duke of Leinster, where Louise entertained London society, including members of the royal family. She was eventually presented to Queen Victoria. Around this time rumors began to circulate in some English scandal sheets that the socialite Mrs. John Mackay was, actually, a former "washer-woman."<sup>13</sup> While there is nothing inherently wrong with this revelation, it was, in fact, untrue, an apparently malicious and spiteful attempt by her detractors to hurt Louise. Louise decided to sue the papers, going to some expense to disprove the falsehood and receiving several monetary settlements (which she immediately donated to charities) for her efforts. John's anger ran somewhat deeper, and he hired private detectives to track down the source, which turned out to be an unsuccessful mining agent and banker named C. W. Bonyng, who knew the Mackays in Nevada. By a rare coincidence the pair encountered one another in a San Francisco bank where John was a director and Bonyng was trying to secure a loan. John, in his late fifties at the time, strode into the bank lobby and punched Bonyng twice. He then challenged him to a fistfight which the hapless agent wisely declined. This, like most of

John's altercations, made the papers throughout the country.<sup>14</sup>

#### BAD YEARS

A more serious misadventure occurred in 1894 when a deranged, failed speculator named Wesley Rippey blamed John for his troubles and shot him in the back outside the San Francisco office of the Commercial Cable Company. John survived, but it was touch and go for a while and Louise, who was in Paris at the time, immediately sailed for New York and then leased a private train to take her quickly to San Francisco. Perhaps due to his lean and strong constitution, John soon recovered, but the experience weakened him somewhat.

An even more calamitous event occurred the next year when the Mackays' elder son, John William, Junior, whom John was planning to bring into the business, died in a horse racing accident in France. A devastated Louise took his body back to New York City. She booked a separate suite for him on the ship and equipped it as a funeral chapel. The Mackays built one of the most elaborate mausoleums in Brooklyn's Green-Wood Cemetery, designed to accommodate twenty-four crypts and the only one with heat and electricity, reportedly to make it more comfortable for the priests who would come to pray for them over the years. Indeed, Mass was offered

there daily until 1954, and to this day the electric bills continue to be paid by a fund set aside for that purpose.

John Mackay had no daughters of his own, but treated his wife's sister, Ada, twenty-five years his junior, as a daughter. Mackay provided for all her needs, including the best education and entry into all the right social circles, where the most eligible bachelors were to be found. And as mentioned, he adopted Louise's daughter Eva and treated her as his own (she always referred to him as "Father"). Both girls were beautiful and, considering their financial situation, naturally attracted many suitors, among them prominent members of the European aristocracy. As Catholics, they were encouraged to marry within their own religion. To that end, Ada married an Italian Count and Eva married an Italian Prince. Ada's marriage was very happy; Eva's, unfortunately, was not. The suitor who won Ada's hand was Count Joseph Telfener, scion of an old Austrian/Italian family. Telfener was highly regarded and very well connected, being a close friend of Italy's King Humbert, who attended the couple's wedding. The same could not be said for Eva's choice of a husband, Don Ferdinand Marcantonio Guiliano Colonna, Prince of Galato and heir to the title Prince Colonna di Stigliano. While certainly far from poor, he did not have the



**Photo:**  
The Mackay family mausoleum in Brooklyn's Green-Wood Cemetery. It was built by John Mackay following the death of his oldest son in an accident in 1895. Mackay himself was entombed there in 1902. Courtesy of Green-Wood Cemetery.



resources of Count Joseph and, as it turned out, married Eva not for love but for money. He also had two unfortunate vices, gambling and philandering. At one point Louse commented that it was too bad he did not have the vice of drink as that might at least be used as an excuse for the other two.

Mackay's son Clarence also married into a kind of aristocracy, the American kind. Following the success of the transatlantic Commercial Cable Company, Mackay turned to consolidating and expanding some domestic telegraph lines he already owned and began the even more ambitious plan of laying cables across the Pacific Ocean. Clarence joined the firm and moved to New York City. On one of his transatlantic passages he met the beautiful Katherine Duer, a member of one of the oldest and best-connected families in New York, boasting many illustrious relatives and ancestors. In fact, her pedigree went back centuries, even to Scottish royalty. However, despite the bloodline, the family did not have much money. Some would call it a match made in heaven, with the Mackays gaining access to the social clout of the Duers and the Duers

the financial resources of the Mackays. Their 1898 marriage took place in the home of the Duers, 17 West Twenty-first Street. They were Episcopalians, but the wedding was officiated by Michael A. Corrigan, Catholic Archbishop of New York. Needless to say, Clarence's mother, Louise Mackay, was now finally fully accepted into New York Society, and the Mackay family was listed in the *Social Register*.<sup>15</sup> As a wedding present John paid for a home on Long Island's North Shore, which evolved into Harbor Hill, a Sanford White designed fifty-room manor house with several outbuildings on over six-hundred acres. With its lavish, art-filled interiors it soon became the social center of Long Island, hosting numerous events including receptions for Charles Lindberg and the Prince of Wales (later Duke of Windsor). Harbor Hill is believed to be the model for the Egg Harbor home of Jay Gatsby in Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*.<sup>16</sup>

#### MACKAY THE MAN

After years of fruitless efforts to get her husband to retire Louise finally gained John's assurance that when the Pacific cable was done, he would do so. This sought-after promise,

**Photo:**  
Harbor Hill was a fifty-room manor house designed by Sanford White and built in Roslyn on Long Island. It was a wedding gift from his parents to Clarence Mackay and his bride, Katherine Duer, in 1898. Courtesy of Society for the Preservation of Long Island Antiquities and W.W. Norton.



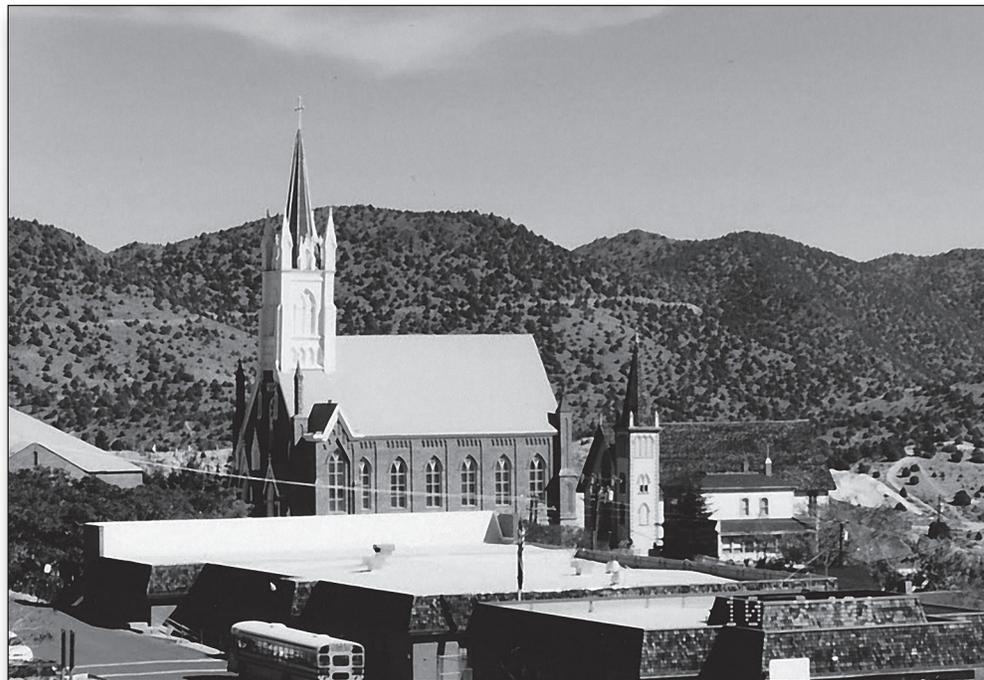
however, was not to be fulfilled. While in his company's London office, John became ill. He developed a fever and was taken to their Carlton House Terrace home where Louise, with his doctors, attended to him. Finally, Louise called for a priest. Although exceedingly generous to Catholic charities throughout his life John was not ostensibly very religious (he never went to church), and Louise thought he might be angry. This proved not to be the case and she left them alone, chatting amiably. When the priest left, John said to her, "Thanks, old

lady," and fell asleep.<sup>17</sup> These were his last words. He died at 6:30 p.m., July 20, 1902. The doctors said it was his heart, perhaps connected to the gunshot wound. While the funeral in London was quiet and dignified, his death made all the newspapers throughout the United States, Paris, and London. Clarence arranged for his father's body to be returned to New York to be entombed in the family mausoleum in Green-Wood Cemetery he had built at the time of his son John's death. Meanwhile, at her doctors' insistence Louise spent time at a German spa to regain her health. Eventually, she sold her London home and returned to New York City, taking up residence in the townhouse Clarence bought at 3 East 75th Street. When Clarence's wife left him, Louise moved into Harbor Hill, reclaiming her position as family matriarch until her death in 1928.

Clarence followed in his father's footsteps and completed the Pacific cable John had begun. Although Nevada was never her favorite place, Louise and Clarence established the John W. Mackay School of Mines at the University of Nevada as a tribute to the success John achieved through his own self-education. It is now known as the John W. Mackay School of Earth Sciences and Engineering. At the entrance stands a bronze

**Photo (left):** Clarence Mackay and his children in a photograph taken between 1910 and 1915. Clarence was born in 1874 and married Katherine Duer, member of a prominent New York family, twenty-four years later. Their daughter, Ellin Mackay, married songwriter Irving Berlin in 1926. Courtesy of Library of Congress.

**Photo (below):** Church of St. Mary's in the Mountains in Virginia City, Nevada. Mackay was not ostensibly Catholic, but when fire destroyed the building in 1875 he paid for its reconstruction. Courtesy of St. Mary's in the Mountains.





**Photo:**  
*The Mackay School of Earth Sciences and Engineering in the University of Nevada at Reno. The School was originally founded by Louise and Clarence Mackay following John Mackay's death in 1902, and currently offers ten programs. The bronze statue of Mackay stands at front. Courtesy of the University of Nevada.*

statue of John by Gutzon Borghum, of Mount Rushmore fame. Although depicted in his maturity, John is lean and muscular and, fittingly, dressed in miner's clothes. For many years the school's expenses, including staff salaries, were paid for by the Mackay family.

John Mackay's personality was a series of contradictions. An aggressive man, he was also shy and spoke with a slight stutter as a young man, which he eventually overcame. A fierce competitor, he always spoke highly of his rivals and paid them the respect he felt they were due. He behaved ethically, even to those who were unethical towards him. He did not engage in ostensible public philanthropy but gave away money throughout his life. During the early years of his success he established the Catholic Orphanage in Nevada and when Virginia City's Catholic Church, St Mary's, burnt to the ground, he built a new church entirely with his own funds. When his bank was on the verge of failure due to investment mistakes on the part of some employees, John and his partners bailed it out with their own funds to the tune of eleven million dollars, saving the bank from collapse and many from financial ruin. It was said

that John Mackay never forgot an old friend or co-worker and was always available with a personal loan, which often turned out to be a gift. John established pensions for his long-term Comstock miners, and anyone who was injured while working for him was compensated. Throughout his career as an employer he was held in high esteem by all who worked for him, rare in that age. Concerning generosity to old friends, Michael J. Makley in his comprehensive biography *John Mackay, Silver King In The Gilded Age* quotes Mackay as saying "What's money for if you can't use it for a friend?"<sup>18</sup> And on justifying Mackay's many gifts to people he didn't even know: "They are suffering, that is sufficient."<sup>19</sup>

His marriage was as unique as everything else in his life. Although he and his wife were devoted to each other, they spent a great deal of time apart. Their tastes and lifestyles were practically opposite. John's was simple, Louise's was extravagant. Louise courted favor with aristocrats, while John was outspoken in his dislike of them as a whole (especially British ones). He walked as much as possible and rarely used elevators, although Louise had them installed in both their Paris and London

homes. Although he owned a home in Paris, John refused to learn French and was vocal about his dislike of French food and wine, with the exception of champagne. His alcohol intake was minimal: a glass of bourbon before dinner and an occasional glass of champagne with dessert. He personally instructed his wife's chefs as to how to prepare his favorite meal—corned beef and cabbage.

On one of his commutes between Paris and New York Mackay diverted to Dublin to see where he was born and raised, and to see if there were any relatives or family friends there with the intention of helping them financially. It saddened him to learn there were none and no one from his old neighborhood remembered him or his family. They didn't even realize they had a famous millionaire walking their streets. This was John's only trip to Ireland.

John Mackay's story may be a unique, one-in-a-million, rags-to-riches tale, but his intelligence, perseverance, capacity for hard work, and determination to overcome obstacles were typical of his fellow Irish immigrants. He and his family did much for his adopted country. As Michael J. Makley puts it, "As an immigrant of nearly unrivaled success, Mackay felt an intense gratitude to the United States. He told essayist John Russell Young that he believed his wealth was merely a trust—that he owed his country its use in some special service."<sup>20</sup> This "special service" of personal philanthropy he continued until his death.

Mackay started his life in America in New York City. Although he travelled and worked throughout the West and then Paris and London, he ended up back in New York City, operating his last venture from his offices on Broadway. His story is one of which all Irish Americans, and especially Irish New Yorkers, can rightfully be proud.

## Endnotes

1 John Mackay and his accomplishments are better known among people in Nevada, largely because of his dramatic role in silver mining within the State. The

- School of Earth Sciences and Engineering at the state university in Reno is named for him.
- 2 Makley, Michael J. John Mackay, *Silver King in the Golden Age*, University of Nevada Press, 2009, p.18.
  - 3 Ibid. p.16.
  - 4 While they used shrewd and secret means, nothing involved in this takeover was illegal or even unethical on their part.
  - 5 There are several versions of their meeting and subsequent courtship and marriage. This version is taken from the biography by their granddaughter (Ellin Berlin) of Louise Mackay, *Silver Platter*, Doubleday & Co., 1957, p.133.
  - 6 There are different versions about who first suggested going further down in the mine. In one, James Fair claimed it was all his idea.
  - 7 Hall, Henry, ed. *America's Successful Men 1895*, New-York Tribune Company, 1895, p.421.
  - 8 *Silver Platter*, p.236.
  - 9 Ibid. p.232.
  - 10 F. Saint Simon, ed. *Le Place de l'Etoile*, Albatros (Paris), 1988.
  - 11 Lewis, Oscar. *Silver Kings, The Lives and Times of Mackay, Fair Flood and O'Brien: Lords of the Nevada Comstock Lode*, Alfred A. Knopf, 1947, p.53.
  - 12 John Mackay, *Silver King in the Gilded Age*, p.190.
  - 13 *Silver Platter*, p.363.
  - 14 There are several versions of this event. This one is from *Silver Platter* p.379.
  - 15 Social Register New York, Vol. XIV No. 1, Social Register Association, November, 1899.
  - 16 Wilson, Richard Guy. *Harbor Hill, Portrait of a House*, W.W. Norton Company, 2008, p.25.
  - 17 This was John's pet name for Louise, which she often complained about.
  - 18 John Mackay, *Silver King in the Gilded Age*, p.4.
  - 19 Ibid. p.4.
  - 20 Ibid. p.151.