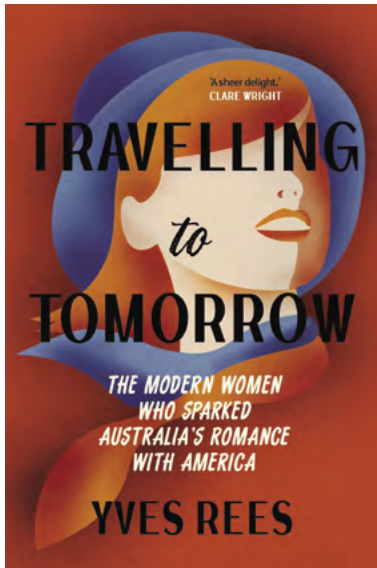


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## Travelling to Tomorrow: The Modern Women Who Sparked Australia's Romance with America

By Yves Rees

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In *Travelling to Tomorrow: The Modern Women Who Sparked Australia's Romance with America*, author Yves Rees challenges the traditional view of Australian-US relations. This view commonly characterises the relationship as being 'a male-dominated saga of diplomacy, war, and empire' that only began during World War II. Rees turns this narrative on its head through research on more than 700 Australian women. These women left Australia for adventure and a new life on American shores in the early twentieth century, long before the Australia-US alliance formed during World War II.

From the hundreds of stories researched, Rees chose to tell the story of ten remarkable Australian women from diverse backgrounds and of diverse talents to highlight the success of these early women travellers to parts unknown in transplanting themselves to new lives in America. These women are:

- May Lahey (lawyer, attorney and judge)
- Rose Cuming (interior decorator and socialite)
- Isabel Letham (surf pioneer and swim teacher)
- Dorothy Cottrell (novelist)
- Mary Cecil Allen (painter and art educator)
- Vera Braford (concert pianist and musician)
- Persia Campbell (academic and consumer activist)
- Alice Caporn (nudist and health entrepreneur)
- Dorothy Waugh (academic and feminist)
- Cynthia Reed (nursing student and novelist).

The stories of these Australian women are quite extraordinary, as are some of their accomplishments across a broad spectrum of human endeavour. For instance, May Lahey (1888–1984) was appointed a judge of the Los Angeles County Superior Court in 1928 thirty-seven years before Roma Mitchell became the first female judge in Australia in 1965.

While Isabel Letham (1899–1995) became an assistant coach at the University of California at Berkeley, she later became director of swimming for the entire city of San Francisco. She organised San Francisco's first women's swimming competition, which launched the careers of a number of successful women swimmers. Letham is also renowned for being 'the mother of Australian surfing'.

Then there is Persia Campbell (1898–1974), the academic, economist and consumer activist who would eventually become an advisor to President Lyndon B. Johnson on consumer interests.

The seven other women who are the focus of Rees' study are just as exceptional in their own fields as the three mentioned above.

Rees has obviously researched the lives of these women meticulously, and has clearly developed a fondness for them. Rees' writing is engaging and entertaining. While eschewing a straight narrative for each of the women, the reader is eager to read on to find out what the future held for each of these pioneer Australian women as they go adventuring to the United States of America.

The lives of these women are as inspirational and exciting as any 'boy's own' tale that you could hope to read.