



# Love in an Envelope: A Courtship in the American West

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When Leroy Carpenter left his home near Tipton, Iowa, in April 1871 to pursue farming in the recently settled Union Colony of Greeley, Colorado, he left behind Martha Bennett, a young lady from De Witt, Iowa. The two had been introduced the previous fall and began writing letters to each other in December of 1870. Over the next sixteen months their correspondence would blend romantic elements with the practical challenges of frontier life as the two developed intimacy, fell in love, and eventually married.

This compilation of fifty-four letters exchanged between Carpenter and Bennett reveals the societal changes facing men and women in the late-nineteenth-century West and provides an alternative to studies of class and gender that tend to focus on the more urban and industrialized Eastern seaboard of the time. Their correspondence reflects their roots in agrarian culture, offering a glimpse into the private world of middle-class, rural America and the social, political, religious, and economic landscape that affected their lives.

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