

Way We Were
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A Valentine's Day greeting
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Happy Valentine's Day! Pictured above is a Valentine card enclosed in a letter from the Bishop family, then living in Denver, to the Nancarrow family of Park City, sent around 1910-1915. On the back of the card, Annie Bishop wrote her cousin Elizabeth Nancarrow "a few lines":

" We are going to have a Valentine box," Annie said. "So I thought I would send you one...Write soon."

The custom of sending valentines to friends and family first became popular in England in the mid-nineteenth century. There are many legends, possibly true or possibly myths, about a Christian Saint Valentine, imprisoned and martyred in Rome in the third century. But the earliest evidence of associating the saint's feast day with a day celebrating love is not until the time of Chaucer, in fourteenth century England.

By the early 1800s, cards with romantic (or raunchy) verses, paper lace, real lace and ribbons were so popular with the British public that they were produced in factories. In 1835 about 60,000 Valentines were sent through the post in the United Kingdom. Just five years later, in part due to a reduction of postal costs, that number had risen to 400,000. In 1868, the British chocolate company Cadbury released a heart-shaped box of chocolates for the holiday, kickstarting the association of chocolate and other candies with Valentine's Day gifts.

British customs quickly spread across the Atlantic and similar traditions soon became commonplace in American society. In 1847, Esther Howland, whose father operated a stationary store in Massachusetts, was inspired by a Valentine she received from an English acquaintance. She began importing paper lace and other decorations from England to produce and sell Valentines in the United States. By 1850, the day had become a cultural phenomenon, referred to by the popular periodical *Graham's American Monthly* as a "national holyday [sic]." Today, there are about 190 million valentines given annually in the US, half of which are exchanged amongst family members, like the card that Annie Bishop sent to Elizabeth Nancarrow.

Annie and Elizabeth were related through their mothers. Bessie Cargeeg, Annie's mother, had moved with her family from Cornwall to Park City as a child. She married Parkite John Bishop, with whom she had seven children. Mary Cargeeg, Elizabeth's mother and Bessie's sister, had married George Nancarrow, also a Cornwall native living in Park City. Annie and Elizabeth were both born in 1898 and lived close to each other with their respective families on Rossie Hill.

However, tragedy struck the Bishop family in 1905. Just ten days after giving birth to a son, Bessie Bishop died of pneumonia. Within the next few years, John Bishop moved his family to Denver, Colorado. Annie and Elizabeth were around ten years old at the time. The families kept in touch through letters and cards. This Valentine is just one of several sent between the cousins.



Image ID: 2016.6, archival collection, not individually numbered

Credit: Park City Historical Society and Museum, Mary Martin Vincent Collection

Caption: The above Valentine was sent to Elizabeth Nancarrow from her cousin Annie Bishop, ca.1910. It was included in a "Valentine box" sent from the entire Bishop family, then living in Denver, to the Nancarrow family in Park City.

Sources:

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