

# Suburban Life

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(F)10

BE  
MINE  
forever



*My love, I wish that, yes, of thine  
All could I win that, yes, of thine  
To what I wish most dearly  
Before the sun began to shine  
To-morrow morning clearly  
Thy name would be no longer thine  
But that of yours sincerely  
Valentine verse circa 1905*

By Richard Lech

**T**HE SENTIMENTS are of a bygone era. The artwork reflects the last giddy remnants of the Victorian Age.

Yes, these valentines still have the ability to charm and delight.

The cards on this page date back to the years 1905-10. They belong to Farmington Hills resident Marian Lynch, who also is the village coordinator for Greenmead, Livonia's historical site.

Lynch has had the valentines - family heirlooms - for about 30 years. Except for a brief time when they were displayed at the Livonia Public Library Noble Branch, the valentines have just sat in a little box, protected from wear and tear - and the derisive humor of a more cynical age.

The cards originally were sent to Norma Waters, a cousin of Lynch's mother, by her schoolmates. Waters later became a nurse and died as a young woman during the influenza outbreaks around the time of the First World War.

Today the cards carry a certain poignancy. The signatures on the backs look as though they might have been written just yesterday.

An unanswerable question is: Did the senders really mean half of what their cards said?

*Thou art a flower fair to me  
With richest fragrance laden  
While I, a dusty bumblebee  
The honey in my heart do find  
And seeing, strive to capture thee  
Sweet rosebud of a maiden*

Leroy Penton Recses

*A verse I'd dearly  
love to send  
To tell you I am more than  
a friend  
But that, I dare not, lady mine  
So sign myself your Valentine.*

Stuart

Valentines such as these probably sold for anywhere from 5 to 10 cents apiece, according to Ruth Webb Lee's "A History of Valentines." By that time, the turn of the century, the custom of sending valentines was nothing new.

As early as 1740 valentines were being distributed in colonial America. These were entirely handmade, and those that survive are museum pieces.

Eventually lithography made it possible for the average person to give valentines with delicate artwork and paper lace.

The valentines on this page show several examples of early-20th-century trends. The antique auto card is an example of the then-popular novelty cards, while wall hangings such as the three-part effort shown also had become common.

Sentimental valentines are, of course, still with us. But it is doubtful any card company employee would get away with verses such as this today:

*With love  
Your cheek  
Like the apple blossoms  
Your eyes like soft stars shine  
You were made for me I know  
By kind St. Valentine  
Then sweetheart,  
Give your love to me  
In fair return for mine*

