

## Historical treasures from our collections

# Autograph Books

"Well I was to the Christmas Tree last night," Florence Collins wrote to Frances Briggs on Christmas Day, 1892. "I got a very nice present its just awful nice. It was a Autograph Album. One side of it is plush and the other side is Celloyd with flowers on it. I tell you it knocks the socks all off of May's. I tell you, I wish you was here to write in it now."

Florence had reason to be excited about her Christmas gift. Autograph books were popular among young people and actually dated back centuries. These ex-

amples are only a sample of the many autograph books in the collections of the State Historical Society of Iowa. Most are from the 19th century.

The custom of signing autograph books often occurred at the end of a school year. Classmates added sentimental or humorous messages, though seldom original ones. A fellow named George wrote to a young lady named Effie: "May your good resolutions be like a crying Baby at church. Always carried out."

Teachers and students also ex-

changed autograph books. In her very best handwriting, one student wrote: "Dear Teacher: May your life be one Long season of love, Till the angels shall whisper Your home is above. Your Well Wisher, Arabella."

Lovelorn students might write flirtatious messages. And the artistic ones might add a sketch or calligraphic swirls and loops.

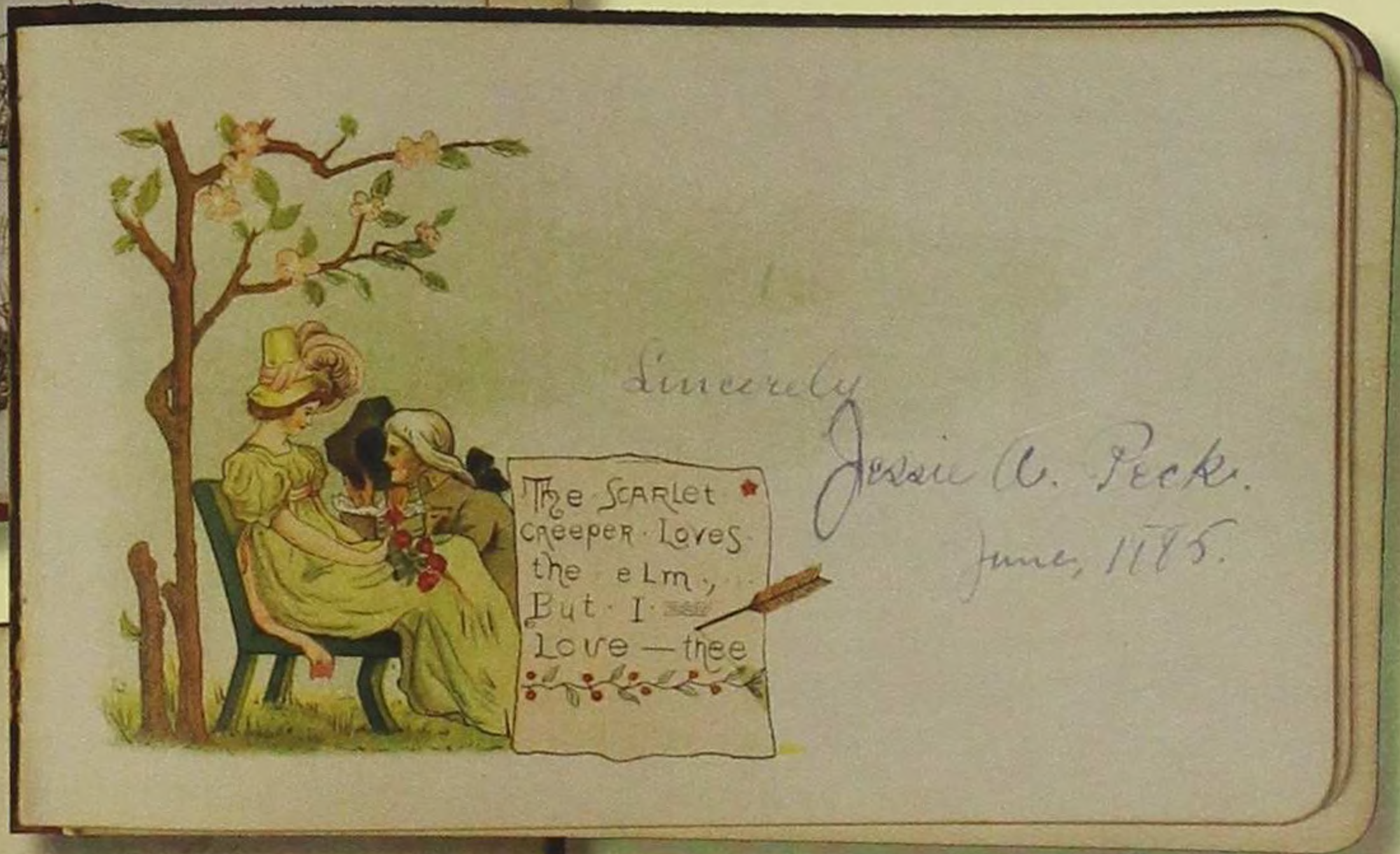
Autograph books lost popularity as schools began to publish yearbooks, which offered new territories for writing messages of friendship. —The Editor







Respectfully  
your friend  
Claud N. Neff



The SCARLET  
CREEPER LOVES  
the elm,  
But I  
Love — thee

Sincerely  
Jessie C. Peck.  
June, 1885.

BOTH PAGES: SHS. PHOTOS BY CHARLES SCOTT



your friend  
Zella Wagoner

The typical autograph book of this period was about 5x3 inches. Some covers were particularly decorative. The pages inside were usually blank, although some included colorful illustrations, like the one above and on the left. The nature sketch in brown ink was by Claud Neff, who signed the page "Respectfully your friend" and dated it "Jan. 28th, 1883."