



# **You Haven't Asked About My Wedding or What I Wore: Poems of Courtship on the American Frontier**

*Jana Harris*

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“Nowhere / on these parchment leaves do I find / myself, my likeness, my name, / not a whisper—Cynthia—not one / breath of me.”

For thirty years poet Jana Harris researched the diaries and letters of North American pioneer women. While the names and experiences of the authors varied, Harris found one story often connected them: their most powerful memories were of courtships and weddings. They dreamed of having a fine wedding while they spent their lives hauling water, scrubbing floors, and hoping for admirers. Many married men they hardly knew.

Based on primary research of nineteenth-century frontier women, Harris uses her compelling poetry to resurrect a forgotten history. She captures the hope, anxiety, anger, and despair of these women through a variety of characters and poetic strategies, while archival photographs give faces to the names and details to the settings. Harris’s meticulous research and stirring words give these pioneer women a renewed voice that proves the timelessness of the hopes and fears of love and marriage.

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