

## **“I Want My Darling, and I Want a Home”: Companionate Relationships and the Conceptualization of Home Among Midwestern Couples, 1855 to 1870**

*Abstract:* The mid-nineteenth century marked a period in the throes of western expansion and an industrial revolution. People were moving from East to West, from rural to urban, from poverty to middle class and vice versa. Therefore, these peoples' perception of home was often unstable and transitory. Through the analysis of four couples' courtship letters, this paper explores the rise in companionate relationships and the conceptualization of home among Midwestern couples in the mid-nineteenth century. In an effort to contextualize the varying conceptualizations of home, the term is placed into four categories: Home as Haven, Home as Religious Institution, Home as Person and Emotion, and Home in Transition. The paper acknowledges the spatial conceptions of home that were influenced by gender roles, but stresses that home was not always spatially perceived. Instead, a person's conception of home was often linked to a person or persons. As a result of the emergence of companionate relationships in the nineteenth century, couples collaboratively constructed this social representation of home long before the wedding day in an effort to create feelings of comfort and belonging linked not to a location, but to loved ones.