

AMERICAN LIFE IN POETRY

A FREE COLUMN FOR NEWSPAPERS BY TED KOOSER, POET LAUREATE OF THE UNITED STATES, 2004-2006
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American Life in Poetry: Column 288

BY TED KOOSER, U.S. POET LAUREATE, 2004-2006

I've spent my seventy years on The Great Plains and have lived all that time amidst vivid and touching stories about the settlement of our area, lots of them much like this one, about a long ago courtship and marriage, offered to us in a poem by James Doyle, who lives in Colorado.

Love Story

The kitchen door opens onto dirt
and the second half of the country
all the way to the Pacific. Rusted
prairie trains out of the tall weeds
elbow the last century aside, rumble
from every direction towards Chicago.

My great-grandfather, who would be
150 years old today, put on his one
tall hat and took the big trip
to Omaha for my great-grandma
with the family ring on his vest
and winter wheat lying wait in seed.

He gave her all the miles he had
and she gave him the future I walk
around in every day. The mountains
were too far west to count so they
doubled back over the land and century
and the real weather kept coming from them.

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