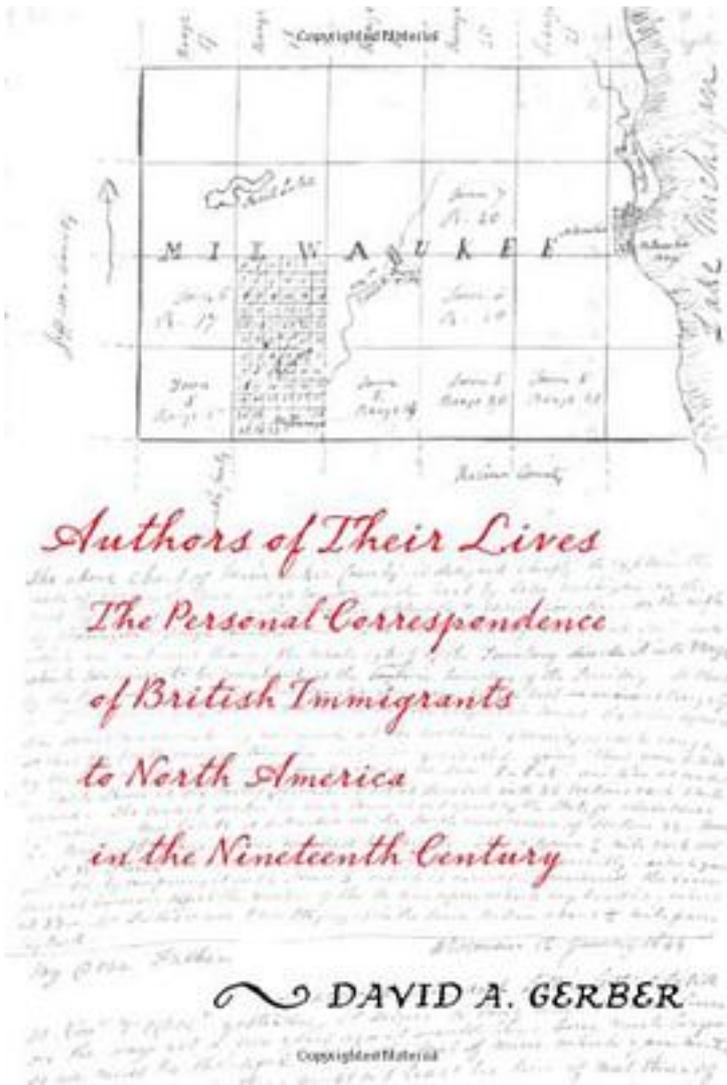


# Authors of Their Lives



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In the era before airplanes and e-mail, how did immigrants keep in touch with loved ones in their homelands, as well as preserve links with pasts that were rooted in places from which they voluntarily left? Regardless of literacy level, they wrote letters, explains David A Gerber in this path-breaking study of British immigrants to the US and Canada who wrote and received letters during the nineteenth century. "Authors of Their Lives" analyzes the cycle of correspondence between immigrants and their homelands, paying particular attention to the role played by letters in reformulating relationships made vulnerable by separation. Letters provided sources of continuity in lives disrupted by movement across vast spaces that disrupted personal identities, which depend on continuity between past and present. Gerber reveals how ordinary artisans, farmers, factory workers, and housewives engaged in correspondence that lasted for years and addressed subjects of the most profound emotional and practical significance.

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