

*Directions to the Celebration*

*R.S.V.P.*

*Mrs. Jacqueline Gulp  
Mr. Louis Korman  
request the honor of your presence  
at the marriage of the*

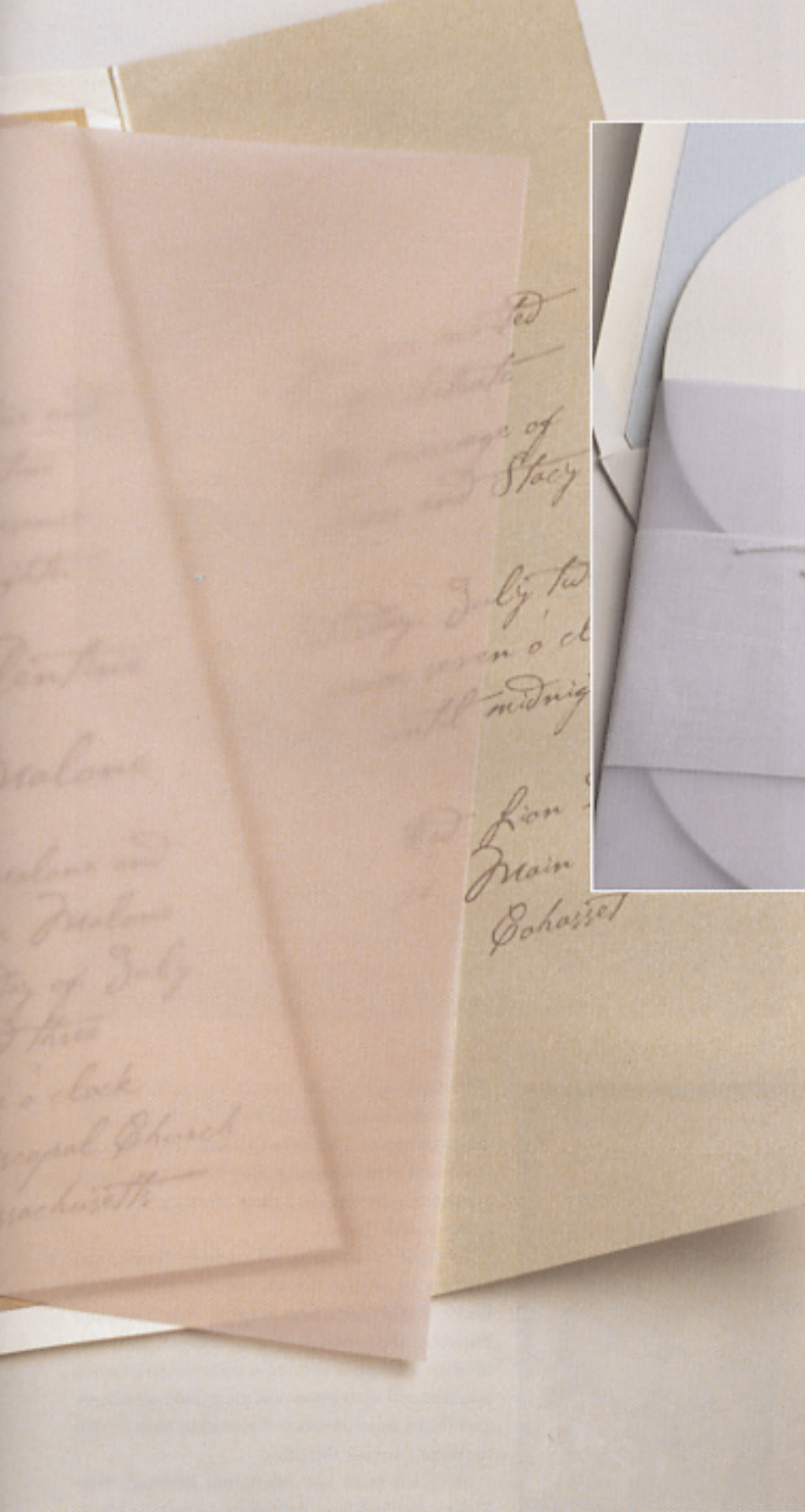
*Stacy Kathleen  
Patrick*

PRELUDE TO A  
KISS

*A wedding invitation can be ...*

*a chance for couples to express who they are.*





A wedding invitation can be a means of unique revelation—a chance for couples to express who they are, introduce their “significant other” to distant family and friends, and hint at the ceremony and celebration to come.

“Everyone wants to tell you it’s the bride’s day, but in my opinion it’s about the guests,” says bride-to-be Kara Cooney. “You want them to receive something that says, ‘Come, celebrate with us, and be excited about doing so.’”

For many brides, the invitation is about personalization, and the black ink on cream-colored paper that mom used for her nuptials doesn’t hit the right note. “When you’re getting married, there is a lot of pressure to stay traditional, but brides should be able to express their individuality,” says Allison Rumsey, another soon-to-be bride.

This means working with designers to create unique invitations that reflect the couple’s personality and interests in innovative ways. Creative fonts, bright colors, graphics, and even charms and ribbons can be used to create invitations that are at once elegant and nontraditional. Forget engraving; letterpress printing in unusual colors is in. Clients who want to update the traditional flat, layered card are using faux papers such as suede and wood grain, says Elyse Rotondo of The Scarlett Letter, a Rhode Island-based invitation designer.

LEFT Blushing Bride

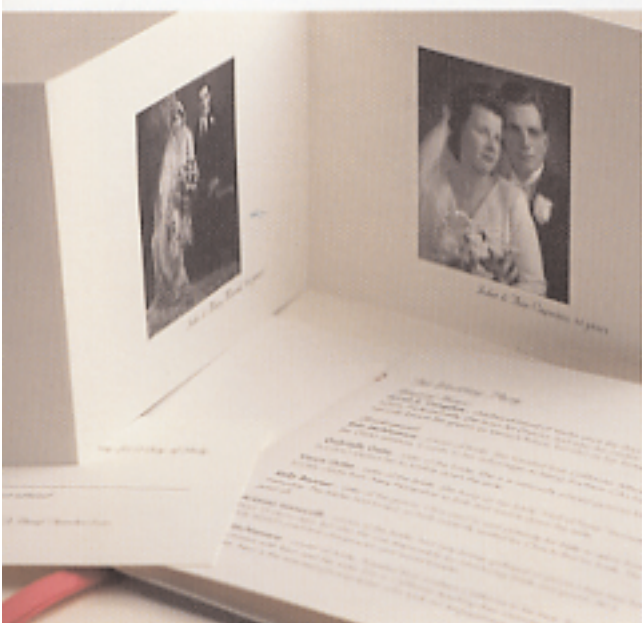
RIGHT Lacing the Corset

Grapevine, Boston, MA



RIGHT Tying the Knot  
Grapevine, Boston, MA

BELOW The Venita  
Frank & Bella, Newport, RI



ABOVE The Perfect Pair  
The Scarlett Letter, Providence, RI

Invitations are now part of the total package, with brides using a similar look for all their wedding stationery, from save-the-date cards through thank-you notes. Contemporary brides want design consistency throughout their wedding in color, patterns, and theme.

For their fall wedding, for example, Rumsey and her fiancé, Christian Jaquier, worked with Newport, Rhode Island design firm Frank & Bella to capture the feel of the season in their invitations. Each rectangular letterpress invitation featured dark brown ink, textured ecru paper and burgundy envelopes. Everything from dresses to flowers was then chosen to reflect a similar theme.

Stacy Valentine and her future husband, Sean Malone, wanted their invitations to include something that reflected Sean's Irish heritage. They met with Karen Bartolomei, owner of Grapevine, an exclusive invitation design company in Boston, who showed them an ancient Celtic love knot, a symbol of eternal love and friendship.

It was the perfect fit, made even more meaningful by trifold invitations that included separate pockets for a directions sheet and response card





that included an explanation of the Celtic symbol. The whole package was tied together with delicate thread and sealed with a custom-designed gold wax seal featuring an impression of the love knot.

The design of the invitation inspired the Malones to hold a formal evening wedding with optional black tie, and colors from the invitation reappeared in bridesmaid's dresses and table coverings.

While classic rectangular invitations remain popular, more brides are willing to break with tradition by selecting gate-folded cards, hand-stitched circular cards, and even invitations featuring natural elements. For Liesl and Peter Christie's wedding, held at the Tower Hill Botanic Garden in Boylston, Massachusetts, Grapevine found inspiration in the location and created booklet-type invitations, with a cover of Elephant Grass paper set on a bed of live moss. Strings of raffia twine with small paper flowers, held the invitation together and, breaking with tradition, the "envelope" was actually an oatmeal-colored box.

A great invitation builds excitement well before the wedding—with sometimes unexpected results. When Kara Cooney's family and friends received her invitations—printed in antique-gold on leather-like paper—some called to say how reluctant they were to break the seal and return the response card: the invitations were just too beautiful.

"Maybe we should not have sent such amazing invitations, because we have not received a decline to date," joked Cooney's father, Bill.

Written by Maureen Taylor Photography: Ron Manville



FAR LEFT The Dana  
BELOW The Dawn  
Frank & Bella, Newport, RI

LEFT How to Marry a Millionaire  
The Scarlett Letter, Providence, RI

