

**What Others Are Saying About  
Loree Lough and *Currency of the Heart*...**

Loree Lough's books are filled with complex characters, heart-tugging stories, and unexpected curves in the road. This is what we, her readers, have come to expect from her, and *Currency of the Heart* does not disappoint. Readers will love Shaina and are certain to become invested in this story from page one as she strives to survive despite the death of her husband. They'll love Sloan, too, as he tenderly helps her rebuild her life.

—Sandra D. Bricker

Award-winning author of 20-plus novels, including the series  
Another Emma Rae Creation

One of my favorite go-to authors, Loree Lough has again captured my imagination with *Currency of the Heart*. I am amazed by her ability to engage my emotions and my thoughts as she spins her wonderful, heartwarming tales. Each of her more than 100 books has become an old friend, like a cozy quilt or a trusted confidante. And I suppose that's why I keep coming back to her again and again.

—L. G. Vernon

Author, *The Wilderness Road*

Once again, prolific author Loree Lough gifts her readers with a sensational romance. Set in the 1880s in booming Denver, Colorado, *Currency of the Heart* will transport readers from the plains of the Midwest to the splendor of the Rocky Mountains, from bustling city to peaceful ranch. I was swept away into the world of Shaina Sterling and Sloan Remington, and my curiosity was piqued by this stirring tale laced with secrets.

—Rita Gerlach

Author of the series *The Daughters of the Potomac*

I had read many contemporary romance novels by Loree Lough before discovering her amazing talent for historical stories. Loree draws her readers right back in time with her characters, making them experience the sights, smells, sounds, and emotions of the period. Her heroes and heroines are

believable and likeable, all of them having backgrounds and secrets, trials and tragedies, that keep us wondering how in the world there could ever be a satisfying ending. *Currency of the Heart* does not disappoint!

—Robin Bayne

Award-winning author of 20-plus books, including  
*The Artist's Granddaughter*

Warning! Once you pick up a Loree Lough novel, you won't be able to put it down until you've come to the end. *Currency of the Heart* is warm and romantic, filled with characters you'll care about and remember long after you've put down the book. You'll feel as though you're right there with them, enduring joy and heartache, coping with the challenges of the past, and feeling the true spirit of people who aren't perfect but who learn that a Spirit-filled life is the only true life. There's a reason Loree has sold more than 100 books! This one's another can't-put-down book you'll treasure.

—Barbara Cameron

Award-winning author of the series *Amish Road* and  
*Quilts of Lancaster County*

*Currency of the Heart* is a regular page-turning event, a clash of circumstances involving money that will either join two people at the heart or create a great divide. Characters Shaina Sterling and Sloan Remington carry secrets neither is willing to divulge. When their strong wills butt heads and the truth unravels, it will be God's divine intervention that makes all the difference. Loree Lough hits this one right out of the ballpark!

—Sharlene MacLaren

Author of 14 award-winning novels and four series, including reader  
favorite *Tennessee Dreams*

Loree Lough always delivers a fabulous read, whether it's a heart-tugging romance or heart-pounding adventure. In this case, it's both! *Currency of the Heart* promises drama, romance, unexpected twists and turns, and, most of all, a satisfying ending that will leave you thinking about the story long after you've finished the book.

—Carolyn Greene

Author of 14-plus award-winning books, including *Unexpected Reunion*

CURRENCY OF THE  
HEART

A decorative illustration in a light gray tone, featuring swirling vines, leaves, and small five-petaled flowers. The design is positioned behind the title 'HEART' and extends across the width of the page.

LOREE LOUGH



WHITAKER  
HOUSE

*Publisher's Note:*

This novel is a work of fiction. References to real events, organizations, or places are used in a fictional context. Any resemblances to actual persons, living or dead, are entirely coincidental.

All Scripture quotations are taken from the King James Version of the Holy Bible.

**CURRENCY OF THE HEART**  
**Secrets on Sterling Street ~ Book One**

Loree Lough  
www.loreelough.com

ISBN: 978-1-62911-275-6  
eBook ISBN: 978-1-62911-276-3  
Printed in the United States of America  
© 2015 by Loree Lough

Whitaker House  
1030 Hunt Valley Circle  
New Kensington, PA 15068  
www.whitakerhouse.com

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Lough, Loree.

Currency of the heart / by Loree Lough.

p. cm. — (Secrets on Sterling Street ; Book One)

Summary: "In Denver in the 1880s, a young widow and a prosperous rancher must learn to open up about their pasts if they expect to have a future together"—Provided by publisher.

ISBN 978-1-62911-275-6 (alk. paper) — ISBN 978-1-62911-276-3 (eBook)

1. Widows—History—19th century—Fiction. 2. Ranchers—Denver—Colorado—History—19th century—Fiction. I. Title.

PS3562.O8147C87 2015

813'.54—dc23

2014030896

No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical—including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system—without permission in writing from the publisher.

Please direct your inquiries to [permissionseditor@whitakerhouse.com](mailto:permissionseditor@whitakerhouse.com).

## *Dedication*

*This book is dedicated to the almighty Father, who blessed me with an ability to type...and to string words together in ways that will draw people closer to Him.*

## *Acknowledgments*

**A** big, sincere thank-you to Sara and Barbara, the überhelpful ladies at the Denver Public Library, for their help with finding accurate 1880s-era maps of the city.

Special thanks to my dear friend Reverend Robert Crutchfield, from the Compassion Church of Katy, Texas, for allowing me to use portions of the eulogy he delivered when his beloved mother, Marilyn, passed. The words of the fictional Pastor Truett are so much more heartfelt as he presides over the funeral toward the close of the story because of Robert's Spirit-filled generosity. (By the way, Robert also wrote The First Responder's Prayer that was featured in all three novels of my First Responders series. I told you he was generous...and he's talented, too!)

I'm also grateful to my family for putting up with my goofy work schedule, with the messy table that holds research and interview notes, and with my tendency to talk nonstop about the characters who breathed life into *Currency of the Heart*.

*“For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every  
secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.”*

—Ecclesiastes 12:14



## Chapter One

November 7, 1882 • 6:20 p.m.

**W**ill you just look at that,” Elsie Wilson said, pointing. “Who does she think she is, Lady Godiva?”

Sloan looked up in time to see Jennie Rogers heading toward Sterling Street. There were so many things wrong with Elsie’s question, he could only shake his head. For one thing, Jennie was dressed in bright blue, from her festooned hat to her high-heeled boots. For another, her ink-black hair reminded him of the years he spent with the Lakota-Sioux.

Elsie snapped her fingers, putting an end to the still-raw memories. “Sloan Remington,” she scolded, “stop gawking at that woman!”

He didn’t like being told what to do. Didn’t like the way she said “that woman,” either. What had Jennie Rogers ever done to her—to anyone in Denver, for that matter—to justify their poor manners toward her? No one had quirked an eyebrow when she offered to pay the new schoolteacher’s salary or fund repairs to the courthouse roof, so it was mighty hypocritical of them to look down their noses at the way she earned enough money to do so.

If the truth about *his* past ever came out, would Elsie and others add his name to the list of citizens to avoid? *Of course they would*, he thought, frowning.

Elsie’s expression softened slightly. “Good thing you’re not a gambler.”

He didn’t have time for poker, and said so.

“Better practice a poker face, anyway.” She wagged a finger near his nose. “Because that handsome face of yours is easier to read than a *McGuffey Primer*.”

Sloan didn’t know what she was babbling about. Even if Jennie owned a hat shop, she wouldn’t have turned his head. As for how she

earned her living, well, Sloan figured that was between Jennie and her Maker.

Elsie peered at her through the lace curtains. "Where do you suppose she's headed?"

"Don't know, don't care." Truth was, he had a pretty good idea. Several evenings ago, he'd seen Jennie headed in the same direction... and so had Rafe Preston.

Elsie snipped the final stitch, then used a pair of pointy tweezers to pluck it from his cheek.

"I declare, the woman doesn't have the sense God gave a flea. What's she thinking, parading through town, alone, when it's nearly dark?"

Well, she had him there. And the *ifs* began to stack up: *If* Jennie hadn't gone out alone that night.... *If* the sinister look on Preston's face hadn't prompted Sloan to follow him.... *If* he'd been a tick quicker, he could have averted the attack without sustaining a three-inch gash to his face. It wasn't likely Jennie knew what sort of mayhem had erupted after she'd slipped into Sterling Hall, for if she had, she wouldn't have made the trip again tonight.

Elsie grabbed a tiny brown bottle from the shelf above the exam table. Sloan read the label—Tincture of Merthiolate—and groaned inwardly. Clenching his jaw as she poured some of the orange liquid onto a cotton ball, he waited for the sting.

"You're lucky that ruffian didn't put your eye out," Elsie said, dabbing the cut.

*Right again*, he thought, doing his best not to wince. "Hey, take it easy, will you?"

Elsie seemed not to have heard him. "So now you'll have a scar for the rest of your life. And for what? Defending a woman like that?"

While she bandaged the wound again, the *should haves* piled up: He *should have* waited until Elsie left the room to tell Elsie's brother, Doc Wilson, what had happened that night. *Should have* gone straight home five minutes ago, when she'd said her brother was out, delivering the Pattersons' third child. *Should have* found a way to shut down Elsie's anti-Jennie gossip the instant it had begun.

She opened her mouth to say more, but a thunderous rumble stopped her.

Medicine bottles clattered on metal shelves as the doctor's wheeled stool rolled across the floor. It slammed into the glass door of the apothecary cabinet as the big pendulum clock crashed to the floor, its shattered face stopping with both hands on the number 6. The floorboards creaked and groaned as the ground beneath them shifted, throwing Elsie off balance, right into his arms.

"Wh-what's going on?"

A second, larger tremor rolled through the clinic, followed by two more in quick succession.

"Too close and too fierce to be some fool miner trying to dynamite gold from the mountains." Sloan knew, because he'd heard it as a boy, when his pa had dragged the family from Kansas to Aurelia to find a lode. He'd pressed his wife and their boys into manning a cradle strainer, and when that hadn't worked, he'd built a crude sluice box. But all they got was cold and wet and sick, and when May drew to a close, his ma and his brother were both dead.

"My guess is, it's an earthquake."

"Here? In *Denver*?"

Townfolk had started reacting, as evidenced by the shouts and screams out on Broadway. Soon, some well-meaning citizen would barge into the clinic to check on Doc Wilson's unmarried sister. One look at Elsie, stuck to Sloan like a second skin, was all it would take to get the gossip mill churning. And since Sloan suspected that Abe Fletcher, one of his ranch hands, was sweet on her, he couldn't have that.

"The place is a mess," he said, holding her at arm's length, "but you're all right."

She looked around at broken vials and shattered jugs, then gave a helpless little shrug.

"Spunky as you are," he added, "you'll have this cleaned up before the Pattersons' young'un comes into the world."

He grabbed his hat from the hook beside the door. If the quake had caused this much damage here, how bad was it at Sterling Hall? More important, how had the women inside that big house fared? He pictured Jennie, taller than most men and strong enough to handle a four-horse rig. Unless a rafter had come loose and knocked her unconscious,

she was fine. The widow Sterling, on the other hand, was barely bigger than a minute.

He took a Morgan silver dollar from his pocket and put it on the exam table. "Thanks, Elsie," he said, touching a forefinger to the brim of his Stetson. "I'll check in later to see if you need anything."

Outside, Sloan worked his way through the milling crowd, skirting around overturned barrels and stepping over fallen shop signs. If anyone were to ask where he was going in such an all-fired hurry, he didn't know how he would answer.

But he knew this: He had a powerful need to make sure the widow was safe.