

# History of Valentine's Day

By Elizabeth Tankersley

Is February really the month of love? Well, it certainly is if you add up the millions American consumers spend on chocolates, cards, roses, and the special dinners all centered around one day, Valentine's Day, February 14. We owe our valentine traditions to Saint Valentine, a priest in Rome during the reign of Emperor Claudius II in the third century.

It seems that Claudius was frustrated in his efforts to expand the army of Rome because nobody wanted to volunteer. The men of the 260's had a philosophy of "make love, not war." None of the men of the time wanted to leave their wives and families to embark on military expeditions for Claudius, where they would be gone for months or years at a time. Some might never have made it back alive. Finally, Claudius ran out of patience and used his powers as emperor to ban engagements and marriages in Rome. He married it would be easier to lure them into the ser-

Young people were outraged and still insisted was one of the few priests who supported them. He they would exchange vows in hushed tones, always was found out and hauled before the Prefect of Rome execution, his admirers would come to the jail with supporters turned out to be the daughter of the prison try to keep his spirits up. The day he was to die, thanks for her friendship and loyalty and signed it,

Ironically, Claudius had executed Valentine on women and marriage. The festival of Lupercalia followed and paired up for the festivities. In 496 Pope Gelasius and it has been St. Valentine's Day ever since.

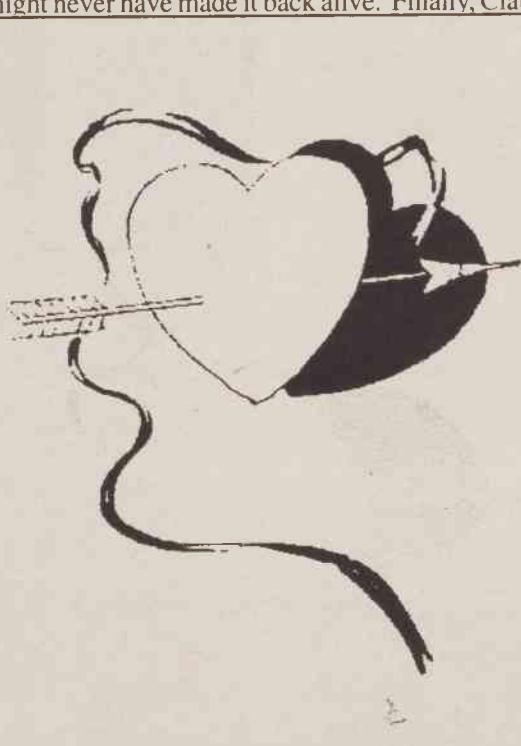
Other traditions developed over the centuries. names from a bowl to see who their valentines would a week. Now, to wear your heart on your sleeve

In the 1600's, a language of flowers developed Charles II introduced the Persian poetry to Europe, flower language from Turkey to England in 1716. It floral messages known as the Book *Le Langage des* each other selected flowers or bouquets. A full red rose meant beauty. Red and white mean unity. Crocus meant "abuse not" while a white rosebud warns that one is too young for love. Yellow roses were for jealousy, yellow iris for passion, filbert for reconciliation and ivy for marriage.

The message would grow in complexity with combinations. A full rose placed over two buds meant secrecy. Remove the thorns from a rosebud and you say, "I fear no longer." Remove the leaves also and your message becomes "There is nothing to hope or fear." If you want to say, "Your unconscious sweetness has fascinated me," then offer a Lilly of the Valley and Ferns.

Roses have endured as the traditional flower of Valentine's Day, and perhaps we also owe that to the Romans. In legend many suitors who finally became so impassioned they broke down the doors of her house pursued, a lady, named Rodanthe. This enraged the goddess Diana, who turned the woman into a flower and her suitors each into a thorn.

These St. Valentine's Day traditions have developed over centuries and have become a regular part of American culture today. Americans still exchange cards of love or praise with those they care about. Flowers are given as a sign of emotions and it has even been taken to an extra level in adding chocolate to our gamut of love representations, due to its power as a natural aphrodisiac which induces feelings very closely associated to love.



fiendishly reasoned that if the men couldn't get

upon being married in secret in secret. Valentine met with couples in private candlelit rooms where fearful of discovery. Finally, it happened. Valentine who condemned him to death. As he awaited flowers and notes of support. One of his most ardent guard, who would talk with Valentine for hours and February 14, 269 AD, Valentine wrote her a note of "Love from your Valentine."

the holiday that honored Juno, the Roman goddess of lowed, where boys drew the names of girls from a jar set aside February 14 to honor him as Saint Valentine

In the middle Ages, both men and women drew be. They would wear the names on their sleeves for means others can easily see your feelings.

in Constantinople and in the poetry of Persia. and Lady Mary Wortley Montague brought the spread to France and became a handbook of 800 *Fleurs*. Lovers exchanged messages as they gave

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