

# Valentines Stuff

## Cards, Candy, and Kisses—Where did this come from?

By: Emily Pruitt

Every year St. Valentine's Day sneaks up on many people, forcing them to run out and purchase trinkets to carry the message of love and affection to that special someone they call "valentine." The only problem with this rush to express is that most people are not even sure why this day has been set aside for lovers as a chance to show their devotion. St. Valentine's Day originated as something very different, without chocolate, stuffed plush animals or red roses.

The origin of the naming of Saint Valentine's Day is uncertain. At least three different men, who attained sainthood and shared the name Valentine, existed at the same time. One, a priest of Rome, another a bishop, and the third an African citizen. All three men were martyrs, which is somewhat contradictory when one examines martyrdom and its suggestive violence, and the association with such men to a day celebrated in love and affection. The identity of the real Saint Valentine, the one for whom the holiday was named, will forever remain a mystery because each of these men are claimed in different parts of the world as being the true Saint Valentine.

The significance behind the date, February 14, as being Saint Valentine's Day is somewhat disputable. It is also a belief that February 14 was designated as Saint Valentine's Day because of a natural occurrence in England. February 14, in England, was believed to be the date when birds chose their mates. As this came to be more recognized, it is believed that the English designated February 14 as a day for love not only between birds, but people, too. While this account of Saint Valentine's Day's beginnings may be somewhat true, it is almost certain that Valentine's Day, like most other holidays, has its roots in ancient festivals.

In ancient Rome a fertility festival, known as Lupercalia, began on February 15, the Ides of February. A festival celebrating the founders of Rome, Lupercalia was also comprised of fertility rites, which are supposed to have been associated with the building and populating of Rome. As part of the celebration, which was often celebrated near to completely nude, young Roman men would draw the name of an eligible young lady from a basket. The two were paired together until the next Lupercalia, often in very intimate ways. Young men often wore their "valentine's" name on their sleeve and showered her with letters and gifts of affection.

Lupercalia was often characteristic of sexual promiscuity

and partnership, which is why Valentine's Day is believed to have evolved from the ancient festival. While the modern celebrations of Valentine's Day are not as "red hot" as early Roman celebrations, the partnership, love, lust, affection, and admiration all carry over to modern day customs.

Lupercalia, being the uncivilized mating festival that it was, was very much frowned upon by the Christian church of its day. It is said the Saint Valentine's Day, a celebration of a more pure and innocent love, was set on February 14 in an attempt to "Christianize" the heathen practices associated with Lupercalia. February 14 was officially chosen when Pope Gelasius declared February 14 Saint Valentine's Day in 498 CE. This declaration took place because Lupercalia and practices associated with the festival were outlawed because of the vulgarity.

Popular customs and practices associated with Saint Valentine's Day did not become popular until the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Great Britain. Close friends and lovers would exchange small tokens of affection or handwritten notes and poems. This practice, which spanned through every social class, then evolved toward the printed Valentine card and larger tokens of affection, such as candy, stuffed animals, jewelry, etc. The printed card was one of the major steps in the making of this holiday, with one billion cards purchased and sent on this day (85% by women).

In addition to advances in gift giving, Saint Valentine's Day has stretched out of its Roman and English homes to be celebrated in countries, such as the United States, Canada, Mexico, France, and Australia, with each country having unique customs. Valentine's Day, whether or not the meaning behind it or its origin matters to modern participants in the celebration, remains a day of love, affection, and togetherness no matter what its past.

## Creating an Original Valentine

By: Deidre Childress

With stories from Giftideas.com

If you're looking for a new, inventive, and romantic way to approach this valentine's Day and look forward to making it a day that your special someone will never forget, look no further than here! Or you could just buy the traditional: Roses, a card, and a box of chocolates. Not that there is anything completely wrong with that, but it's so overrated. Whether you're dating or married, guy, and girl alike can use these various stories to create a unique valentine original.