History of Valentine's Day



Valentine’s Day has always been the day dedicated to lovers. There are many stories as to how Valentine’s day started. Here are a few of them.

Lupercalia

Valentine’s Day has its origins in the Roman festival of Lupercalia, observed on Feb. 15. Lupercalia celebrated the coming of Spring in the Roman calendar (February was observed later in the year than it is today). Lupercalia was associated with the Roman gods Lupercus and Faunus. Lupercus watched over shepherds and their flocks and the festival of Lupercalia became a celebration intended to ensure the fertility of flocks, fields and people.

The celebration of Lupercalia transformed and spread as the Roman Empire grew. When the Romans conquered France, it was then that the first Valentine-like cards may have been exchanged. Apparently, a container in which women had placed their names (possibly accompanied by love notes) was used in a lottery. Men drawing a women’s name would either seek or were guaranteed that woman’s favors.

Saint Valentine’s Day

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The legend of St. Valentine stems from real-life martyrs from the Roman Empire known as Valentines. It is unsure who was the St. Valentine, but there are two possible candidates. One of these Valentines is believed to have been a Roman priest and physician. He was killed in the third century, during the persecutions of the Emperor Claudius II. After his death this Valentine was buried in the Roman road Via Flaminia. Pope Julius I is said to have later built a basilica above his grave. A second Saint Valentine candidate, believed to be a bishop of Teni ( a province in central Italy), was executed in Rome.

These men’s status comes from legends of harboring Christians from persecution, curing the blindness of a cell keeper’s daughter, and conducting marriages while they were forbidden during times of war. It is this, along with the traditions of Lupercalia, that came together to honor St. Valentine as the patron saint of lovers.

Eros-Cupid-Amor

From its association with Lupercalia, and that day’s connection to fertility, comes St. Valentine’s association with love and romance. This led Valentine’s enthusiasts to appoint the Roman god Cupid as a patron of Valentine’s day. Cupid is also known as Amor or Eros in Greek mythology. Eros seems to have been responsible for impregnating a number of goddesses and mortals. The ancient Greeks believed Eros was the force "love," a force they believe was behind all creation.



There are several legends about St.Valentine’s Day. One of the legends says that Valentine was Christian priest who lived in the 3 century A.D. He was put into prison by roman authorities for his teachings and was beheaded on February 14. According to the legend he performed a miracle-he cured his jailer’s daughter of her blindness. Before the execution he wrote her a letter signed “From Your Valentine”. Another legend says that the same Valentine wrote to children and friends who loved him from the jail.

According to another legend, Valentine was an Italian bishop who lived at about the same time. He was thrown into prison because he secretly married couples, contrary to the laws of the Roman empire. The legend says that he was burnt at the stake.

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February 14 was also a Roman holiday. On this day young men randomly chose the name of the girl to escort to the festival. The custom of choosing a sweetheart on this day became very popular in the medieval Europe. Later this custom spread to American colonies.

Now, St.Valentine’s Day is the day of sweethearts. On this day, people show their friends relatives and ones that they care. People send candy or flowers to those whom they love. Most people send “valentines”, greeting cards named after St.Valentine’s letters written from jail. Valentines can be sentimental and romantic, or funny and friendly. Valentines can be anonymous. Valentines can be heart-shaped or can carry hearts on them. People buy valentines or make them themselves.