



Carlton Cards Presents the History of Valentine's Day



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Valentine's Day is the one day a year dedicated to all things love—and expressing this love to romantic partners, friends, family and children. While this love could be expressed on any day of the year, it seems that everyday obligations and time demands oftentimes get in the way of letting people know just how much we care. As hearts and cupids begin to appear everywhere and remind us that Valentine's Day is approaching, we're also reminded why it's so important to take the time to and express our love openly and honestly.

The origins of the holiday remain slightly unclear, but most people agree that the modern holiday arose from the religious observance of the Feast of St. Valentine. While nowadays February 14th is celebrated around the world as a day of love, here are some facts about the evolution of the holiday.

Connections to The Feast of St. Valentine:

- The mid-February date may have ties to the pagan festival Luperchalia, during which there was a ceremony to bestow fertility on the women in the community. To counteract this pagan association, Pope Gelasius declared February 14th as the feast of St. Valentine in 498 A.D.
- While there were several Saint Valentines, the one who has stood out most prominently for giving roots to the modern holiday is St. Valentine of Rome. The story goes that he was a priest during the reign of Claudius II, who banned marriages in an effort to increase the strength and numbers of his army. St. Valentine is credited with not only continuing to perform marriages in secret until he was caught and sentenced to death, but upon his execution, passed a note to love that was signed "from your Valentine."
- Early references to Valentine's Day having romantic connotations appear in both works by Geoffrey Chaucer and William Shakespeare.

Traditions and icons of Valentine's Day:

- Cupid, the winged matchmaker started out as the Greek god Eros, who then became the bow and arrow-clad Roman god of love.
- The tradition of exchanging Valentines began in the 1700s, but when the postal service became more affordable in the 1800s, mailing Valentines (sometimes anonymously) became a popular tradition.

International observances of Valentine's Day:

- Throughout most of South America Día del Amor y la Amistad, or the Day of Love and Friendship, is observed by not only showing love toward romantic companions, but by performing acts of kindness and appreciation for friends. A similar holiday is celebrated in Finland, called Ystävänpäivä, or Friend's Day.
- In Slovenia, Valentine's Day marks the date in which to begin working the fields and vineyards again as plants and flowers begin to grow.
- In Japan and Korea, it has become custom for women to give chocolates to men on February 14th and one month later on March 14th (referred to as White Day), men are expected to reciprocate by offering a gift.
- Valentinsdag is celebrated in Denmark and Norway by the simple acts of sharing a romantic dinner and sending a card or a red rose.

However (or with whomever) you choose to celebrate is up to you—but continuing this centuries old tradition reaffirms the importance of recognizing the love we share with friends and family. It might just be one day a year, but it is one that means so much to them to hear how you truly feel.

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Carlton Cards Ltd. 1820 Matheson Blvd., Mississauga, ON L4W 0B3

For more information contact: Eleanor Kobayashi / Communications Specialist Phone: 1-800-663-CARD Email: Pressroom@carltoncards.ca