

The History Of Gift Giving On Valentine's Day

February 14th has long been celebrated as Saint Valentine's Day when lovers exchange cards and gifts as tokens of their love for each other. The origins of this holiday are disputed by many experts.

Some experts feel that the origins of Valentine's Day may be traced to the ancient Romans and their February celebration of Lupercalia, although this celebration had nothing to do with romance. This festival was held on February 15th and was closely associated with fertility. Roman men would run naked through the streets, striking out into the crowd with shaggy thongs. As it was believed that to be struck could help a woman become pregnant or aid a pregnant woman in childbirth, these females would purposely step into the path of these blows. The word Lupercalia comes from lupus (wolf) and is closely connected with the she-wolf that suckled Romulus and Remus, the legendary founders of Rome. This festival was only local to Rome and was abolished by Pope Gelasius I in the 490s.

There are several Christian martyrs who bear the name Valentine and whose saint day is February 14th. There was Valentine of Rome who suffered martyrdom in AD 269 and was buried on the Via Flaminia. His relics are located at the Church of Saint Praxed in Rome and at Whitefriar Street Carmelite Church in Dublin, Ireland. Due to the location of the latter relic, this Valentine may have been well known on the British Isles. Another Valentine was Valentine of Terni, who was martyred in AD 197 and is buried in a different section of Via Flaminia. Since his relics are present at the Basilica of Saint Valentine in Terni, he was probably not as well known in northern Europe. Neither of these Valentines had anything to do with love or romance. Other than their names and the date of their saint day, these saints have no connection to Valentine's Day.

The idea that this celebration is associated with lovers seems to have been introduced by Geoffrey Chaucer in 1382 in his work Parlement of Foules. This poem was written to honor King Richard II upon his marriage to Anne of Bohemia. As Chaucer refers to birds mating, it seems likely that he was not writing about February 14th as English winters were cold and the birds would probably not have been present. Another St. Valentine had his saint day on May 2nd, which would be a more reasonable time for birds to be mating.

The conception of Valentine's Day as a day for lovers began in the United States in the 1840s by Esther Howland whose father owned a large stationery store. She began to mass produce valentines that lovers could send to each other based on an English valentine that she had received. The purchase of these cards has led to Valentine's Day being the second largest holiday for card manufacturers, second only to Christmas.

Since the 1950s, lovers have been giving gifts as well as cards. These gifts include roses and candy. The diamond industry began to promote jewelry as the perfect Valentine's gift in the 1980s. Today, flowers and candy are still given, as well as jewelry and various gift baskets which can be filled with chocolate or wine and cheese.

While many people may think that Valentine's Day is an ancient celebration, the association that the holiday has with lovers turns out to have been developed as a commercial venture. Perhaps we should stick with the story about the ancient tradition. Sometimes fiction is much more romantic than the truth.

About the Author

We have baby gift baskets that are cute and practical. Perfect for the newborn and new moms. For more information, visit this article on [baby gift baskets](#).

Source: www.isnare.com

Source: <http://articles.exospy.com>