



# Animated Valentines™

## The Story of The Original Valentine's Day

We know that because there is an apostrophe before the letter 's' that the day belongs to someone named Valentine. But who was this Valentine, and how did he get his own day?

Valentine is actually **Saint Valentine**.

Europe was mostly Christian in the Middle Ages when our calendar was being created, and so many of the Christian saints have their own special Holy Days. "Holy Day" is where we get the word "holiday"! Get it?

What is a "saint"?

The Pope of the Catholic Church may declare someone a saint who performed miracles, and who died for their faith.

The most popular story is that Valentine was originally a priest in Rome. The Roman Emperor Claudius II said it was a crime to be Christian. Valentine also secretly performed Christian marriage ceremonies for soldiers, because in Rome it was also a crime for soldiers to be married. This may be the original connection of Valentine and love.

Valentine was thrown in jail.

What miracle did he perform? They say his jailer had a daughter who was blind. Valentine cured her blindness, and she got her sight back. They say he sent a letter to the young lady from the jail signed "Your Valentine". It may have been the original Valentine's card!

The jailer converted to Christianity. Unfortunately, the Emperor did not, and he had Valentine stoned to death and beheaded.





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And so Saint Valentine's Day began to be celebrated in February, as winter ends and the birds come back.

In the middle ages, writing love notes on February 14th became a romantic tradition. Some say the author **Chaucer** invented this tradition himself, when he wrote:

*For this was sent on Seynt Valentyne's day  
Whan every foul cometh ther to choose his mate.*

which in modern English reads as:

*For this was sent on Saint Valentine's day  
When every fowl comes there to choose his mate.*

The popularity of pledging love on St. Valentine's Day became very popular in Europe. People would send cards and write notes to people they liked or loved. When America was colonized, people from England and France moved to the New World.

They brought over with them the custom of sending Valentines. People made the cards themselves out of card and cloth and lace.

The first place you could buy mass-produced printed Valentine's Day cards was in the United States.

In Chicago in 1847, a woman named **Esther Howland** made the cards. She was an artist who ran her father's paper store. She had a staff who produced and sold beautiful lace-trimmed cards.

Since then, sending Valentine's Day cards has only become more and more popular.





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In the more than 150 years since then, people have begun to give gifts on Valentine's Day as well as cards. Popular Valentine's Day gifts include roses. In modern times, men also sometimes give Valentine's Day gifts of teddy bears, chocolates, and jewelry.

In the year 1969, the Catholic Church revised its calendar of saints, and dropped Valentine's Day! Officially, February 14th is the day of Saint Cyril and Saint Methodius.

In another twist, over the years the most popular symbol of Valentine's Day has become **Cupid**, the winged Roman god of love!

But even though it is no longer an official "Holy day", more people than ever – of all faiths – enjoy Valentine's Day.

That's because everybody loves to be loved!

On February 14th, don't forget to say,  
**"Happy Valentine's Day!"**

