

Love is in the Air. But We're Not Sure Why

How did a day in the depth of winter become associated with love? Alas, the origin of Valentine's Day is the stuff of legends. Below are the most common, though variations abound:

- In the 5th century AD, a priest named Valentine was imprisoned for his teachings. The jailer's daughter tried to save him, and he wrote her a note of thanks, signing it, "From Your Valentine."
- Around the same time, an Italian bishop named Valentine was imprisoned because he broke the law by secretly marrying couples when the young men had not yet served in the army. The bishop was executed and became a martyr for love.
- The ancient Romans celebrated an annual holiday called Lupercalia that may have occurred in mid-February. One story links the celebration to the caves where Romulus and Remus were nursed by a wolf. The association with fertility and that young men chose girls to escort to the festival might be the link to Valentine's Day.

The day that became synonymous with romance has since been celebrated in many ways. Here's an interesting one: In the 1700s, on Valentine's Day, young men wrote the name of their favorite girl on their sleeve, which is most likely the origin of the expression, "wearing his heart on his sleeve."

The first Valentine's Day cards, which were handmade, were thought to have appeared in the 16th century. With advances in paper production and printing, pre-printed cards became available. Over the years, the exchange of cards broadened to gift-giving as a way of expressing love on Valentine's Day. In fact, today, Feb. 14 is a common day to present an engagement ring.

If this Valentine's Day brings you a significant gift, you might consider extra insurance. Kemper Personal Insurance has several coverages that can be inexpensively added to your homeowners policy to better protect that precious new present. Ask your agent for details.

Sources: Library of Congress, U.S. Department of State, University of Nevada

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