

V-day

Valentine's day activities, symbols have ancient beginnings

By CATHERINE CAMPBELL
Reporter

St. Valentine's Day long has been symbolized by cupids, red roses, pictures of hand-holding couples, lipstick-smudged kisses inside romantic lacy cards and those curvey little red hearts.

The way some of these symbols came to represent the day for courting lovers often is surprising.

Today's use of the heart symbol, calling Feb. 14 St. Valentine's day and choosing to believe that a fat, scantily-clad, little archer named Cupid can help us fall in love — have little to do with the historical meanings behind these symbols.

The heart-shaped symbol — recognized by lovers and other assorted romantics as the symbol for Valentine's Day, romance and bonding affection — has a history that can be traced as far back as the caveman.

Cavemen were the first to fashion a form of an arrow-pierced heart for fertility purposes. According to art historians' theories, in the caveman's drawings, the heart minus the upper curves were used to symbolize the female genitals, the arrow piercing the vee was a phallic representation for the male genitals. This drawing was used to promote fertility as well as to decorate those hum drum cave walls.

Since then, the little heart-shaped symbol of love and romance has caught on in many ways, incorporating itself into our language, art and even in our candy — particularly during February.

Speaking from the heart, it seems St. Valentine's Day is that rosy time of the year when

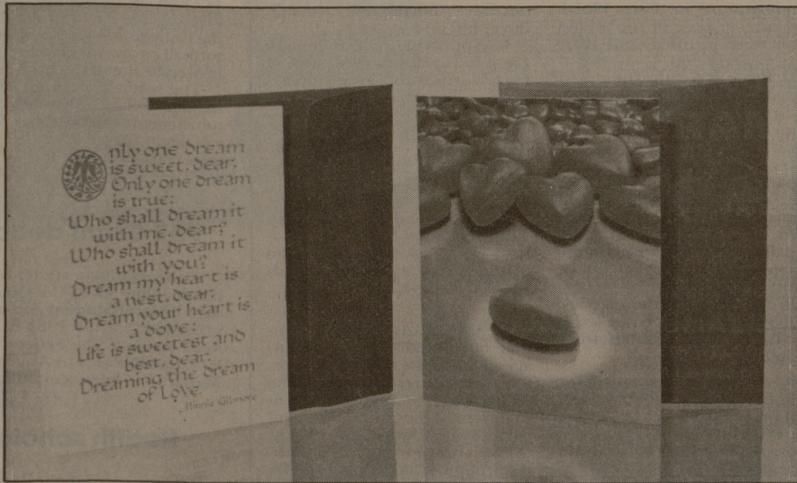


Photo by BILL HUGHES

Everything on Valentine's Day is shaped like hearts — including traditional and modern greeting cards.

Valentine's Day also is marked by love poems to sweethearts such as the one shown on this card.

sweethearts may have heart-to-heart talks, set their hearts at rest, wear their hearts on their sleeve, eat their hearts out, have changes of heart, break each other's heart, steal each other's heart, lose their hearts, have their hearts in their mouths, have their hearts in the right place, love each other heart-and-soul, or even promise to love one another with all their heart.

In addition to invading our language, the heart also has overtaken modern card art. You're going to have to shop your heart out if you want to

find that rare card that's designed "heart-fully" for your special someone.

Another favorite display of the heart shape is candy. A popular type of Valentine candy is conversation hearts — the chalky, pastel-colored, little candy hearts with unforgettably straightforward messages such as "Be Mine," "Hubba Hubba!," "Oh You Kid!" and "I Wuv You."

There also are heart-shaped red hots, heart-shaped lollipops as big as your hand and made-to-order half-pound fudge hearts, in addition to the traditional heart-shaped boxes filled with assorted chocolates and creams.

As with many holidays, the history of its event seems to be neglected amidst all the present shuffling and card mailing — and St. Valentine's Day is no exception.

Different authorities believe Valentine's Day began in various ways. It's been traced to an ancient Roman festival called Lupercalia, celebrated on Feb. 15. In this celebration, young men struck women with strips of animal hides because it was thought to purify the women and make them more fertile.

History also mentions that two early Christian saints named Valentine could be responsible for the holiday's namesake.

According to one story, the Roman Emperor Claudius II in the A.D. 200's forbade young men to marry because he believed single men made better soldiers. A priest named Valentine disobeyed the emperor's orders by secretly marrying young couples and when the emperor found out, Valentine was caught and beheaded.

Another story says Valentine

was an early Christian who made friends with many children. When he was imprisoned by the Romans for refusing to worship their gods, the children began to miss him and tossed loving notes between the bars of his cell window.

And according to still another story, Valentine restored the sight of his jailer's blind daughter. Legend says that before he was to be executed, the saint sent his jailer's daughter a farewell note, which he signed "from your Valentine."

Valentine's namesake also may have come from an old French word, gallant which sounds like Valentine and means gallant one or lover. This resemblance of sound may have caused people to think of St. Valentine as the special saint of lovers.

Still other authorities link Valentine's Day to an old English belief, according to a slightly different calendar, that birds chose their mates on Feb. 14.

Another popular symbol of Valentine's Day is the Roman god of love, Cupid. Roman mythology described Cupid as a happy, handsome boy who united lovers whenever he could.

The earliest pictures of Cupid show him as a good-looking, athletic young man. But by the mid 300's B.C., he was portrayed as a chubby, naked infant with wings who wielded a bow and arrow. The legend says that whoever is shot with one of Cupid's arrows will fall in love with the first person he sees.

Although Cupid seemed like a pretty nice cherub, his disposition wasn't always so sunny. In fact, he was down right nasty to his own love, the princess Psyche.

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Lacy to modern: Cards are big hit during Valentine's

By PAM BARNES
Reporter

Since the 1400s people have been sending romantic messages on cards to their loved ones. The cards have changed since then from the traditional cards to the scratch and sniff and musical cards.

The manager of Coach House Cards and Gifts says the modern cards are selling the best this year.

"We've sold a lot more contemporary cards," Betsy Campbell, Coach's House manager, says. "The humorous cards have been real popular. Valentine's Day is our biggest card-selling season."

She also says the relative cards, those for brothers, sisters, mom and dad, also have been popular.

Dorothy Thomas, a sales clerk for East 29th Street Warehouse, says this year's cards are more suggestive than last years.

"They're just more daring than any I've seen before," Thomas says. She says the humorous, more contemporary cards also are selling well.

Becky Rosencranz, manager

of the Starship Hallmark store in Culpeper Plaza says their card sales have been great.

"We've been selling Valentine cards non-stop since the beginning of last week," Rosencranz says. "Our card sales have tripled this week."

She says the cards for mothers and fathers have been popular but there isn't any one card that was selling better than another.

"We've also sold out of the musical cards," Rosencranz said. Stephanie Earthman, assistant manager for the Starship Hallmark Shop in Manor East Mall says the contemporary cards have gone the fastest.

"We only have three musical cards left," Earthman says. "The scratch and sniff cards have really gone over well with the younger kids. They also liked the stickers and chocolate valentines."

Earthman also noticed that girls were usually the ones who bought their Valentine's Day cards early and the guys who were rushing in to buy them at the last minute.



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