

From your Valentine...

WRITTEN BY **Chelley Kitzmiller**

The story of Valentine's Day begins in ancient Rome. Emperor Claudius the Second, who, by all accounts was said to be addled, was having a great deal of difficulty securing enough young men to fill his armies. At length, he determined the reason he couldn't get the young men to enlist was because they didn't want to leave their wives. Thinking to prevent any future avoidance of military duty, Claudius outlawed all marriages.

Enter our hero, Catholic Bishop or Priest (depending upon the historian) Valentine, who rebelled against the emperor's law and married young couples in secret. But when old

Claudius found out, he had Valentine arrested and ordered that he be beheaded.

The days stretched one into another while Valentine awaited his day of punishment. How odd that in those last days, he would find something he loved as much as he loved his Church—the jailer's daughter.

She admired Valentine's courage and paid him frequent visits, sharing her life with his. The day of the beheading arrived all too soon—February 14, 270 AD. Before leaving the confines of his cell, Valentine composed a missive declaring his love

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for the jailer's daughter and signed it, lovingly, "From Your Valentine"

Handmade Valentine's Day cards were in vogue during the 1700s. They were elaborately and lavishly decorated with ribbon, lace and other finery. In the 1840s they began to sport moving parts, i.e. heads, arms, legs, animal tails, etc.

It was right here, in the good old US of A, that 19-year-old Ester Howland and three friends presented the world with the first commercially manufactured Valentine's Day card. The year was 1870. The cards were an immediate success and Ester became a wealthy woman, earning more than \$10,000 a year—a veritable fortune for that time.

With the new century came a new kind of Valentine Day's card, called a "Penny Dreadful." These cards were nothing like their beautiful predecessors they were cheaply made, costing a total of one cent to produce. The artwork was often deplorable and some of the inscriptions were down right insulting.

The cards were all that their name implied—dreadful.

Today, we celebrate Valentine's Day with roses, hearts, Cupids, candy and yes, still, cards. Valentine's Day is right behind Christmas for card-sending, more than one billion a year.

Source: Noell Wolfgram Evans at http://txtx.essortment.com/stvalentinesda_rfmd.htm.

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