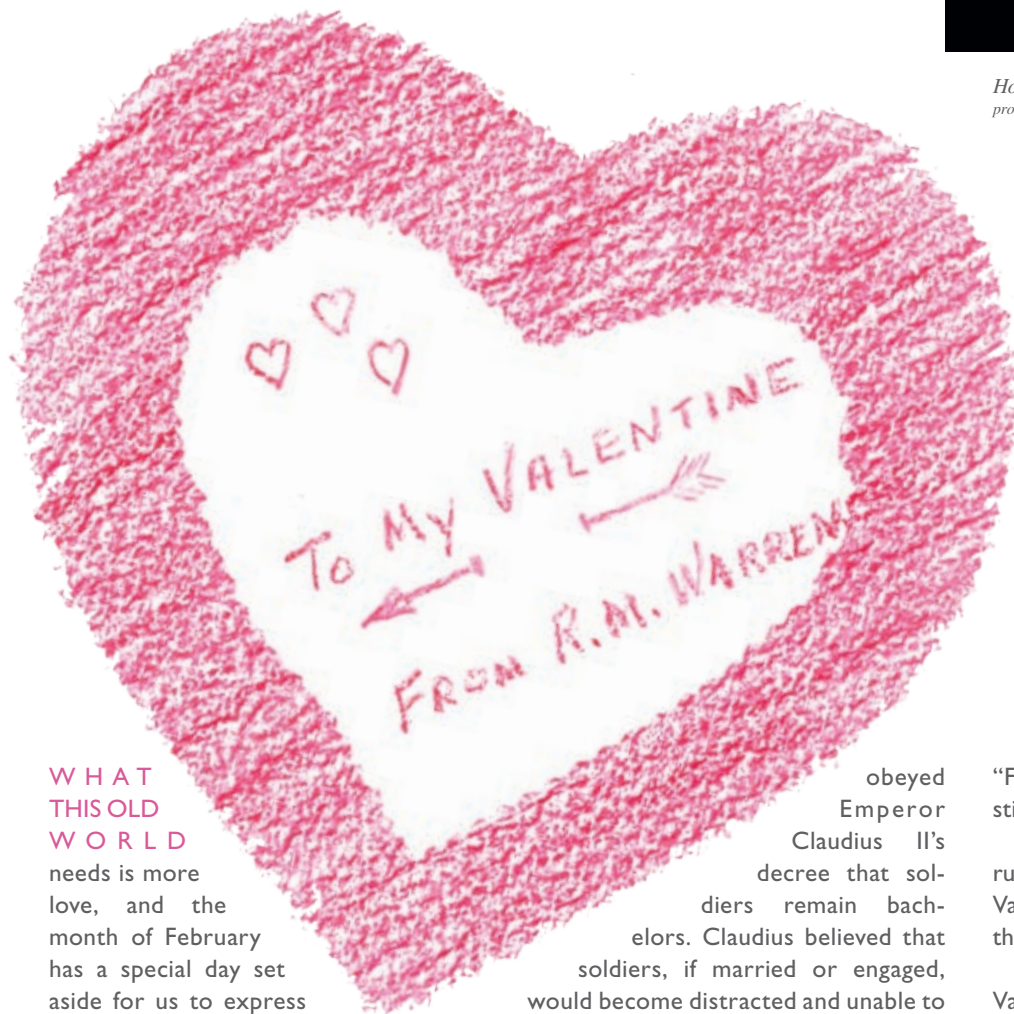


*Homemade valentine  
provided by Bob Warren*



## WHAT THIS OLD WORLD

needs is more love, and the month of February has a special day set aside for us to express that love for each other.

It's called Valentine's Day. Folklore has it that the first valentine greeting was sent from a Roman jail cell in the year 271 A.D. If true, the little month of February hosts one of the very oldest of holidays.

Today, in America and in Europe, February 14 is the day we send our expressions of love, in the form of cards, flowers and candy, to sweethearts, wives, teachers, classmates and friends.

Who started this holiday? Was it the candy companies who, every February, fill stores' shelves with their heart shaped boxes of delicious chocolates? Perhaps it was the florists who deliver untold numbers of red roses to wives and sweethearts on that special day. Or could it have been the greeting card companies who now sell one billion Valentine cards each year, second only to Christmas card sales?

No. It was none of the above. Legend has it that Valentine's Day is named for a third century Roman priest whose last name was Valentine. The story says that Valentine, a romantic at heart, dis-

obeyed Emperor Claudius II's decree that soldiers remain bachelors. Claudius believed that soldiers, if married or engaged, would become distracted and unable to concentrate on fighting. Valentine defied the emperor and secretly performed marriage ceremonies. As a result of his defiance, Valentine was sent to prison, and was eventually put to death on February 14, 271 A.D.

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According to one legend, Valentine actually sent the first "valentine" greeting while in prison. It is believed he fell in love with a young girl – perhaps his jailer's daughter – who visited him during his confinement. Before his death, it is alleged that he wrote her a letter signed

## Have a Heart: It's Valentine's Day

By Bob Warren

"From your Valentine," an expression still widely used today.

In 496 A.D., Pope Gelasius named February 14 Valentine's Day in honor of Saint Valentine, the patron saint of lovers, and that date has stuck through the ages.

Many traditions are associated with Valentine's Day. Often seen on valentine cards is a little fellow called Cupid, a winged cherub with his bow and arrow. According to Roman mythology, Cupid was the son of Venus, the goddess of love and beauty. Cupid was known to cause people to fall in love by shooting them with his magical arrows. That is why an arrow is shown piercing many of our valentines today.

Then, there is the traditional heart of our valentine cards and candy boxes. Why the heart? Valentines are expressions of love, which, along with emotion, has long been thought to come from the heart. The expression "wearing your heart on your sleeve" comes from a Valentine's Day party tradition. Young women would write their names on slips of paper to be drawn by young men. A man would then pin the woman's name on his sleeve to claim her for his valentine.

Let us look at how drastically this celebration has changed from the simplistic early days of hand-made valentines to the high dollar holiday we now celebrate. To help make the comparison of "now and then," I asked several people to tell me

their early-day valentine memories. That brought some interesting replies which I will share with you.

First, I asked my wife what she remembered about Valentine's Day in her early school years in Little Elm. She immediately thought of the little red candy hearts inscribed with messages such as "I love you." These candies came several to a package, costing only about five cents per pack, and she recalled giving one each to her fifth grade classmates, being careful not to leave anyone out. Those were times when spending as much as ten cents was a stretch.

Frisco resident, Glenda Trammell, who grew up in Alabama, told of a valentine she gave to her fourth grade boyfriend. On it she wrote the words "Don't step on my blue suede shoes!" Evidently she was influenced by Elvis Presley's hit song of that time. Glenda also remembered a thrilling valentine experience later in life when her boy friend George, now her husband, gave her a big box of chocolates and an orchid before taking her to their church's sweetheart banquet. Those banquets called for a frilly dress for the girl and perhaps a white sport coat for the boy.

Frisco native Katy Almon still laughs about a valentine she received from a boy named Leon in the seventh grade. She was elated until she saw that it had originally been sent to Leon, and he had tried to erase his name before addressing it to her.

Betty Jo King grew up in Colorado, and she recalls everyone in her class decorating valentine boxes to put on their desks. That provided a place for classmates to deposit their valentines. Everyone vied to see who could have the fanciest box and who could collect the most valentines.

Frisco's former first lady Sandy Simpson, spent her school years in Cincinnati, Ohio where box decorating was also a big valentine event. She told how she once made a fancy valentine using red construction paper cut in the shape of a heart, gluing a frilly lace-like fringe around the edge, writing a "mushy love message" on it and sticking some of those red candy hearts on it. Her most thrilling valentine was the first "store bought" one she ever received. It was from a boy who "liked her" in the sixth grade. She said she kept it for years.

Now for my own story: The week before Valentine's Day my first grade teacher asked us to bring valentines to school to distribute to our classmates. My thoughts turned immediately to the one I "claimed" for a girlfriend. My fascination for her had begun early in the school year. That fascination came to a boiling point one day in reading class, when, in a fit of passion, I rose from my desk, walked over to "my girl" and planted a kiss on her cheek. The teacher, Miss Alice Cantrell, stopped and summoned me to bring my book and bend over her lap. It took only a few licks with my reader to teach me that kissing a girl in class was not the thing to do.

Well, I wasn't about to let that happen again, but I did want to give my girl friend a valentine. Times were hard, and I was penniless, so I decided to make my own valentine. Using only a sheet of white paper, some kindergarten scissors, paste and crayons, I made a heart shaped valentine, colored it red and wrote a simple message on it. It looked something like the one at the beginning of this article.

The next day as we exchanged valentines, my day was made complete when my girl at least pretended to be pleased with my effort. But, just so you will know, nothing ever came of our romance. She was too old for me anyway. She was seven, and I was six.

So, as you prepare for this Valentine's Day, remember that it's not how much you pay for your card or box of candy; it's the love message that's important! Just give your loved one a hand made valentine and see what that gets you, 'cause that's the way we did it in the early days.

Bob Warren is a Frisco native, former mayor and frequent contributor to Frisco STYLE Magazine. Mr. Warren's book *Now & Then* is available from the Heritage Association of Frisco at [www.friscoheritage.org](http://www.friscoheritage.org)



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