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CELEBRATE VALENTINE'S DAY

Cards have a history of love

By S. BiggsSpecial to The IFP

Whether you plan to shower your sweetheart with candy, chocolate or other gifts, you will likely give at least one Valentine's Day card. If you are a parent of young school age children, then chances are that you have already prepared for a mass exchange by classmates of heart festooned cards with simple messages of friendship and appreciation. Or perhaps you have already bought a card for a family member or friend and skip the gifts in favour of a postage stamp.

Originally celebrated by various Christian denominations on Feb. 14 to commemorate several Christian martyrs bearing the name Valentine, St. Valentine's Day was associated with Spring and renewal.

Over centuries in England, Valentine's Day became associated with romantic love. As Valentine's Day celebrations spread across the globe in the 19th and early 20th centuries, various countries added their own customs, including acts of kindness and appreciation toward friends and family.

By the mid-19th century, intricate paper valentines with poetic verses were mass-

produced in factories and sent by post in England. Likewise, the United States introduced Valentine's Day cards in 1849.

By the early 20th century, Valentine's Day and other occasions continued to support the growth of the greeting card industry in England, Europe and the United States. Silk-postcard production became a huge industry during the First World War. Parisian factories made silk-embroidered postcards that became a very popular item for English, Canadian, and American soldiers stationed on the Western Front to purchase and send home to their wives and girlfriends.

Beautiful and bright, these postcards, like the one shown on pg. 39 from soldier Charles Hurst in the British Expeditionary Force and sent to his wife, Elizabeth, in 1916, were often displayed in homes as a symbol of love and hope.

After the mid-20th century, Valentine's Day gifts moved from cards to all kinds of gifts, including candy, chocolate and jewellery. Today, social media offers even more ways to celebrate Valentine's Day. From paper cards to eCards, with or without gifts, plan to celebrate Valentine's Day by sharing a few kind words with those you love and cherish.

