Valentine's Day traditions stretch back centuries

Valentine's Day is traditionally a day in which people express their love to one another by presenting gifts, such as cards, candy, flowers and other symbols of love or affection. Opinions differ as to who was the original Valentine, but the most popular theory is that he was a clergyman who was executed for secretly marrying couples in ancient Rome.

In A.D. 496, Pope Gelasius I declared Feb. 14 as Valentine Day. Through the centuries, the Christian holiday became a time to exchange love messages, and St. Valentine became the patron saint of lovers.

Esther Howland, a native of Massachusetts, is given credit for selling the first mass-produced valentine cards in the 1840s.

The spirit of love continues today with even young children exchanging valentine's cards with their fellow classmates.

In 2008, there were 26,683 jewelry stores in the United States. In February 2010, these stores sold $2.4 billion in merchandise, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

About 5,800 marriages took place each day in 2009 or 2.1 million that year, according to the National Center for Health Statistics. Of those, 108,150 ceremonies were in Nevada. The Silver State is ranked fifth nationally in marriages, even though its total population that year among states was 35th.

Romantic-sounding places to spend Valentine's Day:

Rose City, Texas; Rose City, Mich.; South Heart, N.D.; Loveland, Colo.; Darling, Minn.; Loveland, Ohio; Romeo, Colo.; Sacred Heart, Minn.; Loveland Park, Ohio; Lovejoy, Ga.; Heart Butte, Mont.; Love County, Okla.; Loves Park, Ill.; Valentine,

Neb.; Loveland, Okla.; Lovington, Ill.; Lovelock, Nev.; Lovelady, Texas; Romeoville, Ill.; Loving, N.M.; Loving County, Texas; Rosemont, Ill.; Lovington, N.M.; Valentine, Texas; Romeo, Mich.; Love Valley, N.C.; Rose Hill Acres, Texas.