History of Halloween

Halloween is a holiday celebrated on the night of October 31. The word Halloween is a shortening of All Hallows' Evening also known as Hallowe'en or All Hallow's Eve.

Traditional activities include trick-or-treating, bonfires, costume parties, visiting "haunted houses" and carving jack-o-lanterns. Irish and Scottish immigrants carried versions of the tradition to North America in the nineteenth century. Other western countries embraced the holiday in the late twentieth century including Ireland, the United States, Canada, Puerto Rico and the United Kingdom as well as of Australia and New Zealand.

Halloween has its origins in the ancient Celtic festival known as Samhain (pronounced "sah-win"). The festival of Samhain is a celebration of the end of the harvest season in Gaelic culture. Samhain was a time used by the ancient pagans to take stock of supplies and prepare for winter. The ancient Gaels believed that on October 31, the boundaries between the worlds of the living and the dead overlapped and the deceased would come back to life and cause havoc such as sickness or damaged crops.

The festival would frequently involve bonfires. It is believed that the fires attracted insects to the area which attracted bats to the area. These are additional attributes of the history of Halloween.

Masks and costumes were worn in an attempt to mimic the evil spirits or appease them.

Trick-or-treating, is an activity for children on or around Halloween in which they proceed from house to house in costumes, asking for treats such as confectionery with the question, "Trick or treat?" The "trick" part of "trick or treat" is a threat to play a trick on the homeowner or his property if no treat is given. Trick-or-treating is one of the main traditions of Halloween. It has become socially expected that if one lives in a neighborhood with children one should purchase treats in preparation for trick-or-treaters.

The history of Halloween has evolved. The activity is popular in the United States, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Canada, and due to increased American cultural influence in recent years, imported through exposure to US television

Thus, although a quarter million Scots-Irish immigrated to America between 1717 and 1770, the Irish Potato Famine brought almost a million immigrants in 1845-1849, and British and Irish immigration to America peaked in the 1880s, ritualized begging on Halloween was virtually unknown in America until generations later.

Trick-or-treating spread from the western United States eastward, stalled by sugar rationing that began in April 1942 during World War II and did not end until June 1947.

Early national attention to trick-or-treating was given in October 1947 issues of the children's magazine Jack and Jill and Children's Activities, and by Halloween episodes of the network radio programs The Baby Snooks Show in 1946 and The Jack Benny Show and The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet in 1948. The custom had become firmly established in popular culture by 1952, when Walt Disney portrayed it in the cartoon Trick or Treat, Ozzie and Harriet were besieged by trick-or-treaters on an episode of their television show, and UNICEF first conducted a national campaign for children to raise funds for the charity while trick-or-treating.

Trick-or-treating on the prairie. Although some popular histories of Halloween have characterized trick-or-treating as an adult invention to re-channel Halloween activities away from vandalism, nothing in the historical record supports this theory. To the contrary, adults, as reported in newspapers from the mid-1930s to the mid-1950s, typically saw it as a form of extortion, with reactions ranging from bemused indulgence to anger. Likewise, as portrayed on radio shows, children would have to explain what trick-or-treating was to puzzled adults, and not the other way around. Sometimes even
and other media, trick-or-treating has started to occur among children in many parts of Europe, and in the Saudi Aramco camps of Dharan, Al-Khafji compounds and Ras Tanura in Saudi Arabia. The most significant growth and resistance is in the United Kingdom, where the police have threatened to prosecute parents who allow their children to carry out the “trick” element. In continental Europe, where the commerce-driven importation of Halloween is seen with more skepticism, numerous destructive or illegal “tricks” and police warnings have further raised suspicion about this game and Halloween in general.

In Ohio, Iowa, and Massachusetts, the night designated for Trick-or-treating is often referred to as Beggars Night.

Part of the history of Halloween is Halloween costumes. The practice of dressing up in costumes and begging door to door for treats on holidays goes back to the Middle Ages, and includes Christmas Wassailing. Trick-or-treating resembles the late medieval practice of “souling,” when poor folk would go door to door on Hallowmas (November 1), receiving food in return for prayers for the dead on All Souls Day (November 2). It originated in Ireland and Britain, although similar practices for the souls of the dead were found as far south as Italy. Shakespeare mentions the practice in his comedy The Two Gentlemen of Verona (1593), when Speed accuses his master of “pulling [whimpering, whining], like a beggar at Hallowmas.”

Yet there is no evidence that souling was ever practiced in America, and trick-or-treating may have developed in America independent of any Irish or British antecedent. There is little primary Halloween history documentation of masking or costuming on Halloween in Ireland, the UK, or America before 1900. The earliest known reference to ritual begging on Halloween in English speaking North America occurs in 1911, when a newspaper in Kingston, Ontario, near the border of upstate New York, reported that it was normal for the smaller children to go street guising (see below) on Halloween between 6 and 7 p.m., visiting shops and neighbors to be rewarded with nuts and candies for their rhymes and songs. Another isolated reference appears, place unknown, in 1915, with a third reference in Chicago in 1920. The thousands of Halloween postcards produced between the turn of the 20th century and the 1920s commonly show children but do not depict trick-or-treating. Ruth Edna Kelley, in her 1919 history of the holiday, The Book of Hallowe’en, makes no mention of such a custom in the chapter “Hallowe’en in America.” It does not seem to have become a widespread practice until the 1930s, with the earliest known uses in print of the term “trick or treat” appearing in 1934, and the first use in a national publication occurring in 1939.

The History Of Halloween Plus 5 Things You Didn't Know About The Holiday!

Americans love Halloween. We as a country spend over $5 billion a year celebrating it. But where did the holiday come from? And how did traditions like asking strangers for food and dressing up as ghosts develop?

Halloween has its roots in Samhain (pronounced sow-in), an ancient harvest festival held at the end of the Celtic year. The festival marked the end of summer and the beginning of the dark wintertime. It was believed the spirits of the dead returned on this eve to damage crops and play tricks on the living. It was also believed that the Celtic priests, or Druids, were able to make predictions about the future, which they did during large bonfire celebrations where they wore animal skins and sacrificed crops and animals to the spirits.

In early A.D., Romans came to the Celtic territories of modern day England, Scotland, and Northern France, and were the first people to influence the celebration of Samhain. They brought their own holidays: Feralia, the Roman day to honor the dead in late October, as well as another holiday to honor Pomona, the Roman goddess of fruit and trees. It is possible that this Roman influence is the reason apples are given out and bobbed for on Halloween.

By 900 A.D., Christianity spread to the Celtic Territories and brought with it another holiday, "All Saints Day." Pope Boniface IV, the designateor of All Saints Day, was likely trying to replace Samhain with a similar but holier holiday meant to honor saints and martyrs. Later on, All Saints Day was renamed "All Hallowes" and thus the day of Samhain (Oct. 31st) began to be called "All Hallowe Eve," and eventually shortened to "Halloween."

All of the holidays that were melded together to create our modern version of Halloween involved dressing up in one way or another. The celebrators of Samhain wore animal skins at their bonfire celebrations and those that observed "All Saints Day" often dressed as saints or angels. Later on in Scotland would impersonate the dead on the day, explaining the ghoulish tradition we still observe.

During the mid 1800's, Irish and English immigrants flooded the United States and brought Halloween with them. From these immigrants we received the Halloween traditions we recognize today, however skewed they are now. For instance, the first trick-or-treaters were far from today's smiling children with commercialized costumes. They lived in Medieval England, and practiced "souling," in which poor people would beg for sweet breads, in return for praying for the families' souls. Later, the immigrants who brought Halloween to America would develop their own version of trick-or-treating, but it didn't become popular here until the 1930s.
1) Halloween Is The Second Highest Grossing Commercial Holiday After Christmas
What used to be just a singular holiday with minimal things to purchase has turned into an entire "Halloween Season." Between decorative lights and lawn ornaments, elaborate costumes and loads of candy, the average American spends a pretty penny on this fall holiday. However popular Halloween has become, the recession has affected spending for this year's spooky night. Spending is down, according to the National Retail Federation. Shoppers will spend an average of $66.31 on the holiday compared to $66.54 in 2008. Some ways people are cutting down include making homemade costumes, using last year's decorations and buying less expensive candies. For the children's sake, let's hope everyone doesn't resort to giving out apples and pennies. Didn't you just hate that as a kid?

2) Harry Houdini Died On October 31, 1926
The famous magician was killed (accidentally) by a McGill University student named J. Gordon Whitehead who was hitting him in the stomach repeatedly as part of a stunt. A week later he died of peritonitis from a ruptured appendix. Despite acute appendicitis, Houdini refused to seek medical treatment.

3) There's A Phobia For That
Omphalophobia is an intense and persistent fear of Halloween that can cause panic attacks in sufferers. Other relevant phobias for this time of year: wiccaphobia (fear of witches), phasmophobia (fear of ghosts), and cockroacophobia (fear of cemeteries).

4) The First Jack-O-Lanterns Weren't Made Out Of Pumpkins
They were originally hollowed-out turnips. The modern practice mutated from the Irish tradition of carving faces of the the dead onto the gourds and putting candles inside to make them glow. Today your Jack-O-Lantern is most made out of a pumpkin, which most likely came from Illinois—a state that grew 452 million pounds of pumpkin in 2007.

5) One Quarter Of All The Candy Sold Annually Is For Halloween Night
Yes, no matter how much we eat for Christmas and Thanksgiving, Halloween has corned the market on candy. As a country we consume 20 million pounds of candy corn a year. Handling out Halloween treats is the perfect excuse to eat some too, as four-in-ten (41%) adults admit that they sneak sweets from their own candy bowl. And if you're a kid, hang on to your basket, because home is where the candy thief is as 99% of parents admit to sneaking goodies from their kids' Halloween trick-or-treat bags. But whether your stealing some, handing out some or having yours stolen, chances are you'll get your hands (or miss getting your hands) on a Snickers bar, it has been the number 1 Halloween candy for years.

The sinister side of Halloween is being exploited, says one leading church figure, when it could celebrate the triumph of good over evil. Can Halloween go cuddly?

Halloween, Fright Night, All Hallow's Eve. Call it what you will, but it's supposed to be scary... right?

Not according to one cleric, who wants people to come away from Halloween's darker side.

The Rt Rev David Gillett, the Bishop of Bolton, says the "more horrific" of masks prove too scary for many children. With the Mothers' Union - a Christian parenting group - Bishop Gillett is backing a campaign called Halloween Choice to promote the lighter side of the festival.

"The emphasis has become so evil and scary, I've spoken to children and adults who find it too scary," he says.

Bishop Gillett wants a shift away from horror character masks, like Hannibal Lecter, towards the Christian celebration of good over evil. And, he wants an end to the trick or treating-style harassment that brings out extra police patrols and can be a nuisance to some.

Costumes could have a brighter side, he says, and home-made outfits would let people set their own fear factor. Shops could stock up on hair braids, bright balloons, face paints and glow tubes, instead of fake blood and evil eyes.

"Why not lighter costumes? Brighter colours," he asks. "Face masks that people could paint themselves in a way that sets their own level of spookiness?"

"It's not to do with the occult, or asking supermarkets to stop what they are doing. It's saying that when children are in a supermarket and asking 'Get me something for a Halloween outfit,' they can buy something other than the horrific choices."
Creepy cash

Party-wise, churches have begun to organise alternative events for children around Halloween - parties with songs, games, quizzes and stories. But Halloween's creepy roots stretch way back, to the Celtic feast of Samhain as well as All Hallow's Eve, and in the last few years, selling scariness has been highly lucrative for supermarkets.

UK spending on Halloween will top £120m this year, says Bryan Roberts from industry analysts Planet Retail. This compares with £12m five years ago. The pumpkin market alone is worth £25m. It is the third most profitable seasonal pull in supermarkets after Christmas and Easter, with whole aisles turned over to pumpkin costumes, witches hats and the like.

The make-you-jump thrill is, surely, part of the attraction. Would children trade all this dressing up and trick or treating for a "nice" Halloween?

At outlets like Angels Fancy Dress, in London, it is standing room only at peak shopping time as workers take their lunch not with a knife and fork but complete with a devil's trident.

But Halloween is not all about "hell and horror", says owner Emma Angel. The choice, to which Bishop Gillett refers, exists already.

Alongside its vampire teeth, scream-style masks and sinister clown outfits, Angels has sold Ghostbusters gear, banana costumes, "mad" doctor's scrubs, and, for children, a pink candy witch. Hardly spine-chilling.

We are already in touch with Halloween's brighter side, she says.

"It's just a great fun time of year for people to dress up, adults and children. Ghostbusters outfits are fun, not evil.

"People don't come in and say, 'I want to be Satan in disguise' or 'I really want to scare people'. They just want to put a pair of vampire's teeth in a funny way."

Halloween is over commercialised, and trick-or-treaters are annoying. It's predominately an American secular celebration of commercial greed, the third largest such event in the western world today.

For me, today is the far older celebration of Samhain (pronounced sow-ain), which was celebrated by the Celts as new-year, and is also observed as such by many Pagans today. It's not a light celebration, it's about the start of the dark season from now until Beltaine in the spring, sixth months from now. The death of summer and the coming of winter.

The reverend seems to miss this point, he also seems not to understand that light and dark are a natural balance and have nothing to do with evil and good.

Faye, Leeds, UK

Halloween is supposed to be scary. Some of my best memories as a child are of when I was scared. They can have their fluffy bunnies at Easter, and their cutey reindeers at Christmas. But let's keep Halloween as it's meant to be and scare the bejeezus out of them. It's fun.

Julian Burrett, Gloucester

Halloween has been banned in our house. Trick or treaters scare the wits out of my daughter. I don't see the fun side of witches. My hometown in Zimbabwe has had bad experiences with witches/witchcraft. I don't see the fun side. We all have our limits, and some things are just not fun, no matter how they are dressed up.

A. Booyse, Stevenage

Halloween's supposed to be scary. The pagans (and many others) believe it's the night of the year when the veil between the world of the living and the world of the dead is at its thinnest, and the souls of the dead walk the earth. It was never supposed to be fluffy, warm and cuddly!

Michelle, London

Halloween is now just another event in the retailers' calendar. Shops are making a fortune from the consumers and somehow persuading them that they really do need to spend £20 per family member on a mass-produced costume? Why do we need 'Happy Halloween' cards? Dressing up as a ghost can be traced back to the origins of Halloween, but sending a card? Rampant commercialism.

Alan, Glasgow
I don't answer my door on Halloween, I don't agree with trick or treating - it's tantamount to begging and I will not have that on my doorstep.

Emma, Newbury

I am a British person now living in the USA, and here Halloween is a fun night where the kids dress up and go trick-or-treating around the neighborhood. Every house will give a small piece of candy, so just treats, no tricks. Yes, it has become commercialised here, but I would not miss the looks on my kids' faces and seeing the fun costumes from all the other kids. Lighten up. Happy Halloween!

Justine, Boston, USA

Here in Mexico there is a similar tradition called Dia de Muertos (The Day of the Dead), which is a mixture between Christian traditions and ancestral Aztec traditions. It is celebrated the 1st and 2nd of November. The problem is that each year is more mixed with the Halloween celebration, but I suppose it's just a natural evolution.

The original belief is that the dead return to visit friends and family so you have to build an altar with their favourite food and drinks. It's also an opportunity to remember them and eat traditional food with family and friends.

Carlos, Mexico

Halloween may be celebrated, but trick or treat should be banned. It is tantamount to a yelled threat and should not be tolerated.

Gillian McNally, London

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Dia de los Muertos (Day of the Dead)

El Dia de los Muertos (the Day of the Dead), a Mexican celebration, is a day to celebrate, remember and prepare special foods in honor of those who have departed. On this day in Mexico, the streets near the cemeteries are filled with decorations of papel picado, flowers, candy calaveras (skeletons and skulls), and parades.

It is believed that the spirit of the dead visit their families on October 31 and leave on November 2.

In order to celebrate, the families make altars and place ofrendas (offerings) of food such as pan de muertos baked in shapes of skulls and figures, candles, incense, yellow marigolds known as cempazuchitl (also spelled zempasuchil) and most importantly a photo of the departed soul is placed on the altar.

It might sound somewhat morbid, but the Mexicans react to death with mourning along with happiness and joy. They look at death with the same fear as any other culture, but there is a difference. They reflect their fear by mocking and living alongside death.

Living alongside death means that Mexicans have to learn to accept it within their lives. Death is apparent in everyday life. It is in art and even in children's toys. It is not respected as it is in other cultures. Children play "funeral" with toys that are made to represent coffins and undertakers.

Death is laughed at in its face. Muury euphemisms are used for death, La calaca (the skeleton), la pelona ("baldy"), la flaca ("skinny"), and la huesada ("bony"). There are refranes, sayings, and poems that are popular with day of the dead. These sayings are cliches and lose meaning when translated. For example "La muerte es flaca y no puede conmigo" means "Death is skinny/weak and she can't carry me." Calaveras (skulls) are decorated with bright colors with the name of the departed inscribed on the head. Children carrying yellow marigolds enjoy the processions to the cemetery.

At the cemetery, music is played and dances are made to honor the spirits.

Death is a celebration in Mexico. Death is among them.
Dia de los Muertos Fiesta brings Mexico's traditions to Dunedin

The city is noted for its Scottish heritage, however, on Saturday, Dunedin's Celtic roots will take a backseat to the community's growing Latin community. For the sixth year in a row, downtown restaurateurs Javier and Tina Avila are holding their Dia de los Muertos Fiesta in Pioneer Park. *Dia de los Muertos* is Spanish for Day of the Dead. Although the event is planned close to Halloween, don't think the celebration, which will cost the Avilas $10,000, is about goblins, black cats and zombies. *Dia de los Muertos* is a Mexican tradition dating back to pre-Columbian times honoring the deceased.

"This is about our hearts and the feelings that come up remembering our loved ones," said Javier, who along with Tina owns two restaurants on Main Street, Casa Tina and Pan Y Vino. They also own the Orange Crate Cafe, which sits adjacent to the Pinellas Trail.

The event starts at 1 p.m. and includes Mexican folk music and dance as well as arts and crafts. And although there will be no alcoholic beverages sold in the park, plenty of tamales and sopa tarasca, a pinto bean soup, will be sold by Casa Tina's staff. The schedule also includes the Dunedin Dia de los Muertos Wearable Art Fashion Show at 6:15 p.m. Models will strut the stage in fashions created with recycled materials. And at 10 p.m., the Casa Tina Day of the Dead Candlelight Procession will take place. Last year about 600 people took part in the procession, many carrying papier-mache puppets.

"We hand out candles to those who join us. It's all colorful and beautiful," Tina Avila said.

In Mexico, during Dia de los Muertos, family members go to cemeteries and crete altars at their loved ones' graves. They bring photos, memorabilia and oftentimes the departed's favorite food and beverage. The intent is to encourage visits by the souls, so they can hear and experience the attention directed to them.

Although the Dunedin celebration does not include a cemetery, as part of the festivities more than 12 downtown merchants are participating in the Downtown Dunedin Tour of Ofrendas by displaying colorful ofrendas, or altars. The altars will stay in place through Nov. 2.

The Avilas, who have two adult children, Amanda and Christian, have celebrated Dia de los Muertos ever since Casa Tina opened 22 years ago.

"But it really grew for us after Tina and I went with our daughter to Patzcuaro, Mexico, to see the celebration there," said Javier, who grew up in Guadalajara but did not celebrate the Day of the Dead as a child in a Christian family.

"To see it in Patzcuaro, which is known for having a really big Dia de los Muertos, was so emotional. People paid such attention to the details of the person who died. It was incredible. It made me think of my father. I cried, and Amanda cried, seeing me cry," he said. "It is about evoking deep memories."

"We have loved introducing this to Dunedin," he said. "We see this as a little present to thank the community and our customers, and we get to show them the customs of Mexico."

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