

THE HISTORY OF HALLOWEEN

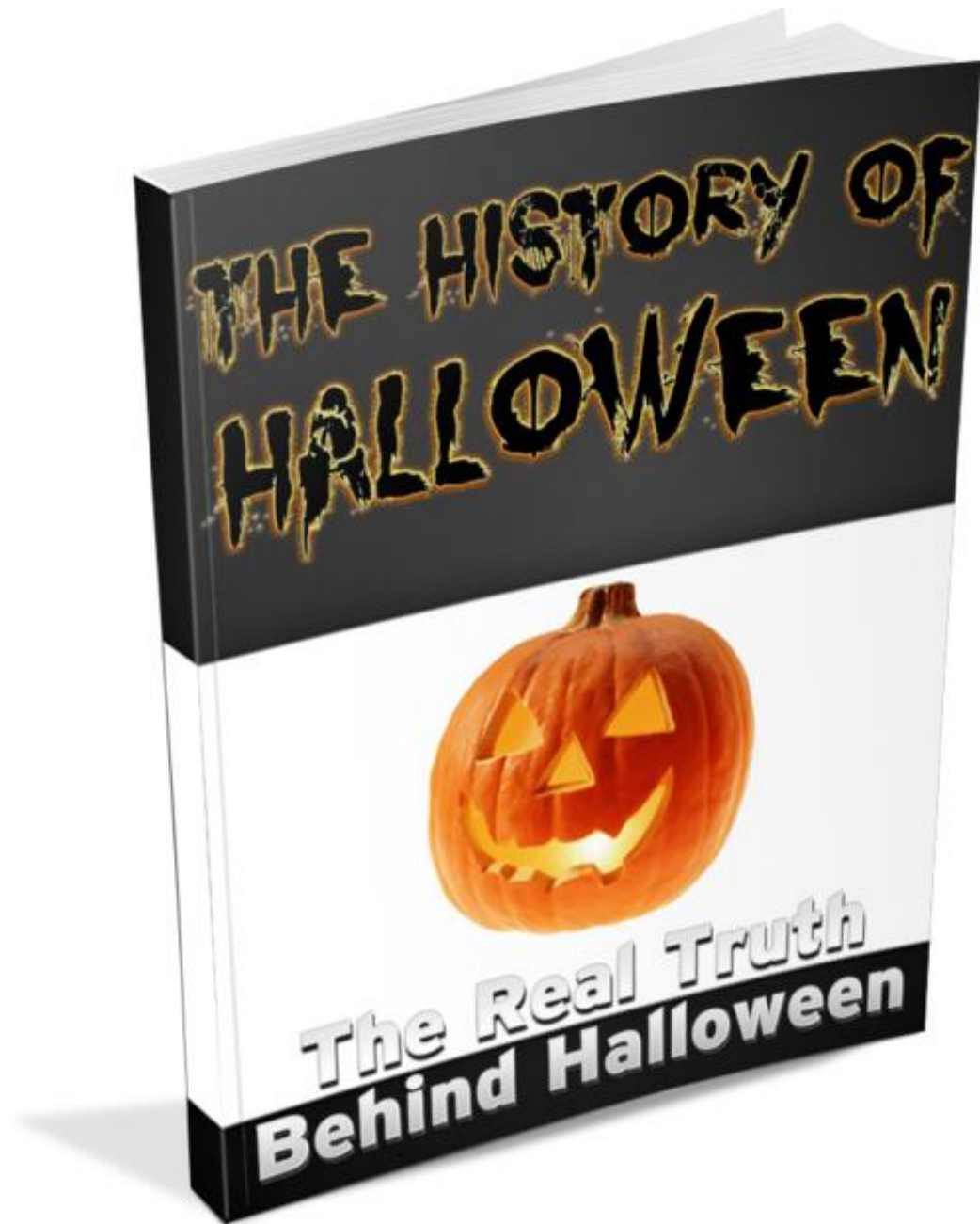


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Brief Introduction

When you think of Halloween, what springs to mind? For most of us in America, Halloween night is a time of fun and frolic for both young and old alike.

People of all ages come out and dress up in unique costumes as whoever, or, whatever they desire one night of the year. A chance to step outside of ourselves. A moment to forget about the everyday grind stresses that await the morning after. It is a time for smiles, treats, and often time tricks or pranks all in the spirit of good natured fun.

For others amongst us, Halloween may be considered an evil, outlandish ritual that should never be participated in being avoided at all costs. Or a terrifying night when spirits of the dead come back to haunt us. A dark time for horrifying deeds that lead to no good.

But what do we truly know about the ancient traditions that sparked our modern Halloween celebrations?

Are they spawned from tainted, sinister places in the past?

Or could they have been created and intended for something else entirely?

That's what these passages will reveal to you. The True history of Halloween. If you never knew and were curious, then this will enlighten you on all that is Halloween based on the facts throughout history.

I hope you enjoy this ebook and find it educational. As that is the main intention. Not to offend, but to try and educate. Please, try to go in with an open mind. You just may learn something you never knew before about this ancient tradition engrained in our modern day society.

The Ancient Roots of Halloween

Around 2,000 years ago in the North Eastern region of Europe centralized around the areas of Ireland, the UK, and Northern France, a group of people known as the Celts held sacred religious rituals on the night of October 31st to celebrate the upcoming new year on November 1st. This celebration was known as Samhain, which is pronounced like "sow in", and is a word that means "Summer's End".

The purpose of celebrating on October 31st was because the Celts believed that this night, the night before the beginning of the new year, was the one night the spirits of the dead came back to their earthly realm and could potentially cause havoc.

On this night, they believed that their priests, also known as the Druids, would be able to communicate with these spirits to predict the outcome of the new year more accurately.

For the Celts, October 31st signified the end of summer, which was also the end of their harvest time, and the start of harsh winter months that many would not survive. This was precisely why the Celts looked to their priests to help them gain insight on what to expect in the coming winter months ahead. To them, it was a matter of life or death.

At the beginning of the Samhain celebration, a sacred bonfire would be lit by the Druids in which participants would then burn crops and animals considered sacrifices to their gods in attempts to appease them with a prosperous new year. The animals used in these ceremonies were selected carefully and believed they were unable to survive on their own throughout the harsh winter months ahead.

Throughout the festivities, Celts would wear lavish costumes constructed mainly of animal skins and heads.

After all the celebrations had ended, each participant would take a bit of the bon fire back to their homes and relight their fireplaces that were extinguished earlier in the evening prior to the ceremonies. They did this as a form of protection to keep themselves safe and their farms prosperous during the dark, cold winter months.

While these traditions were practiced for many years, they were about to change when the Romans conquered the Celts around 43 A.D. This would last for the next four hundred years.

The Romans combined the Celtic celebration of Samhain with two of their own that occurred around the same time. The first was called Feralia. This Roman traditional celebration was for remembrance of the dead. It lasted for one day towards the end of October. The second celebration was a day of honor for the Roman goddess Pomona.

An interesting fact about the goddess Pomona is that she was associated with fruit and trees. Her main identifying symbol was the apple, and could give some explanation in to why at some modern day Halloween gatherings people bob for apples.

With the changing and combining of the three traditions, it gained a new name that we are familiar with today. This new celebration, conducted on November 1st, was deemed All Saint's Day. It was a day in which all people were granted permission to freely worship their deity of choice.

However, many people decided to also keep the older traditions and celebrate on October 31st in the ancient ways of their ancestors. This day was given the name All Hallows Eve. Now what we commonly refer to as Halloween, or Hallowe'en.

Bringing Halloween To America

When the first settlers came to America, they left many old traditions and celebrations from the old world behind, including that of Halloween. Many puritans believed it was a paganistic holiday and had no place in the development of their new life.

So, Halloween was all but forgotten. Until the mid nineteenth century when millions of immigrants came across the ocean to America. With them, they brought along their long practiced cultural traditions.

Not long after their arrival, America was changing into a veritable melting pot of cultures. And so, adaptations began changing the custom of Halloween into what we now recognize it as today.

Instead of having huge bon fires as part of traditional Halloween celebrations, people would use pumpkins carving out portions and lighting candles inside as lanterns. Ancient costumes worn went from animal skins to more modern attire such as dressing up as ghosts, ghouls, and witches.

And as for the trick-or-treat candy collecting, well, this is believed to have originated from another old tradition that was termed "Souling". Souling was the practice of people going door to door praying for the souls of the departed at their neighbors homes. In exchange for the prayers, the home owners would offer food to their visitors.

Others also believe that trick-or-treating could have stemmed from people leaving food

offerings out on their porches during All Hallows Eve to appease the spirits in letting their home and family be at peace.

The true origins of trick-or-treating are still not known for sure. But what we do know is that it sure is loads of fun!

Even with these changes, some regions of America still frowned upon the celebration of Halloween. In places like New England, strict Protestants did not participate in Halloween. Nor did they allow others to take part in such pagan rituals in their communities.

However, in the earlier years, places like Maryland and many southern colonies celebrated Halloween regularly. And today, thanks to the Irish immigrants coming over during the mid nineteenth century, Halloween has become a national celebrated holiday all across America.

Early Halloween Celebration Customs

When colonial Americans first began participating in Halloween celebrations they would conduct something known as "play parties". These parties were held as public events in celebration of harvesting crops. During the play parties, neighbors would get together and tell tales very similar to ghost stories we tell today. They would also experiment in fortune telling, plus throw in some dancing and singing. Sometimes, there would also be some type of pranks being played. Or "tricks" if you prefer.

Not everyone across America would participate in these play party gatherings however. Even though annual autumn festivals were commonplace, these were not classified as Halloween parties until a bit later.

Around the mid nineteenth century, after the Irish immigrants had arrived in America somewhere along 1846, Halloween became more popular throughout the country. Combining Irish and English traditions of old, people began the more modern day custom of dressing up in costumes and going trick-or-treating. During the early days, treats consisted of food items or money, unlike the candy that is traditionally passed out to trick-or-treaters of today.

By the end of the nineteenth century, Halloween was mainly celebrated with home hosted parties. These would be thrown for both children and adults. During these upgraded get togethers, party goers would play festive games, eat seasonal foods, and wear stylish costumes that were popular to the period. Most hosts would steer clear of things considered too frightening such as ghost stories so everyone could have a fantastic night

of fun.

When the 1920's and 30's rolled around, Halloween festivities received yet another update. Many of the celebrations were centered around community activities such as parades and city-wide parties.

In the 1950's Halloween was becoming a celebration geared towards the youth of America thanks to the baby boom. During these years, community based parties were drummed down into classroom festivities and home based parties. And it is also during this time that trick-or-treating came back in to fashion.

Bringing back the tradition of trick-or-treating provided communities with a way to enjoy and share the holiday together without the need for huge "town hall" type gatherings. This was considered a great American tradition of being able to celebrate the holiday as a community while keeping costs and vandalism down.

Today's Halloween Customs

Many of the customs we practice to celebrate Halloween today have deep seeded roots in the traditions of ancient times.

Trick-or-treating for example, most probably originated from All Soul's Day parades that were held in England many years ago. Reason being is that during these parades, destitute peoples would plead for something to eat as they could not afford to buy this sustenance Other families in turn would present them with special pastries deemed "soul cakes" as a promise to pray for those in the family that had passed on to the afterlife.

Not to be forgotten, many families would also leave food and drink outside during All Hallows Eve and All Saint's Day to keep wandering spirits at bay. Some would say that this tradition could be where children dressing up as ghouls and goblins represent the wandering spirits and the candy/food given would coincide with that custom.

Which brings us to why we dress up in costumes today for both parties and the act of trick-or-treating. Long ago, during Celtic times, special ceremonies were held to signify the ending of Summer and the beginning of winter. This was called Samhain.

During these ancient festivities, Celts would wear costumes made from animal skins. The Celts believed that on this night, October 31st, the dead could cross over from their world back in to ours. To keep the spirits from recognizing them, they would dress in costumes to hide their true identities from the wandering spirits.

They believed that by wearing masks, that this would conceal them and make the roaming spirits think they were other kindred spirits simply wandering about and leave them at peace.

By incorporating the disguises and leaving food offerings outside their homes, people of the past believed it would keep restless wandering spirits distracted protecting themselves and their homes from becoming infested with unwanted spirit guests.

Obviously today, there are many other types of costumes we don on Halloween. Not just the traditional witches, goblins, and ghosts of the past.

All of this explains why in current times we wear costumes, throw parties, and go out trick-or-treating on Halloween. To date, Americans spend an estimated \$6.9 billion every year celebrating Halloween. That's a whole lot of candy and costumes!

Conclusion

Halloween has come a long way from where it began many years ago. Whether you love it or despise it, Halloween is the second largest commercial holiday celebrated across America today. And it looks like this ancient tradition isn't going anywhere anytime soon.

After reading where our version of Halloween stemmed from, you should have a much clearer understanding of what it's all about. And that, while some people still consider this to be an evil and fearsome holiday, it really all comes down to having a little bit of fun.

People love stepping away from reality and hum drum life to become someone else. Halloween gives us the opportunity to do this. Even if it is only once a year.

Have A Happy Halloween!