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WHEN WE BECAME SPOOKY: MEDIA, LITERATURE, FOLKLORE, AND  
POPULAR CULTURE, AND THE CREATION OF THE MODERN HALLOWEEN,

1860 – 1945

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## ABSTRACT

At the onset of the Civil War, Americans did not celebrate Halloween in a unified and coherent way. That is not to say that Americans did nothing spooky in late October. Indeed, a person alive in 1860 would have witnessed different groups practicing strange rituals, sharing ghostly tales and customs, and enjoying dark festivals, much as their European ancestors had done. However, these disparate cultural forms were inconsistent, scattered, and unpredictable. Different people practiced Halloween in different ways, and many people did not observe the holiday at all. When we fast forward to the end of the Second World War, we remark that a dramatic change has taken place. By 1945, nearly all Americans have not only embraced Halloween, they celebrate the holiday in a uniform way. How did this transformation happen?

This thesis tells that story. It explains how an eclectic hodge-podge of European folklore, customs, rituals, games, and practices evolved over time into a single set of unified practices that I call “the modern Halloween.” Though several factors influenced this process, this thesis focuses on the role of women’s mass market magazines in the mid-nineteenth century through the early decades of the twentieth century. Indeed, a central argument of this thesis is that these magazines instructed thousands of American mothers and house wives how to celebrate the holiday. It was through the act of reading that mothers learned about costumes, party games, trick or treating, benign pranks, and fortune-telling. When those women then went on to construct the holiday in a way that their children and families would love, the modern Halloween was born.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

Halloween. Samhain (Summer's end). All Hallow's Eve. Regardless of the name one uses, the origins of this festival are suspected to begin in Celtic and Druidic pre-history with a celebration of the fall harvest. Harvest festivals played an important role in preparing people for the long, dark winter ahead. Crops were gathered, animals returned from the fields and meadows, and food was preserved and stored in preparation for the short days, long nights, and harsh winter weather to come. People of that time harbored a basic wish for themselves, and their families, to survive the coming darkness of light and spirit.

When we think about the Halloween's of our childhood, many of us remember the costumes we wore, and especially the television, movie, storybook and video game characters that inspired our costume choices each year. We recall the suspense of preparing for community and school parades, and waiting for the much-anticipated signal to head out into the night to trick or treat. We might recall a little brother or sister tagging along, being introduced by us to the Halloween celebrations for the first time, just as we had been initiated by an older brother, sister, parent or grandparent to these seasonal rites. We may remember Halloween parties with friends, playing spooky games, bobbing for apples, shivering at ghost stories and enjoying Halloween treats. We may remember a beautiful, glowing full moon, or a mysterious half-moon, on a dark, cloudy night that provided the backdrop for the noisy clatter of running feet and the chatter and laughter of children in pursuit of the same goal – obtaining the most candy possible in the two-hour time period. We may remember the crunch of newly-fallen leaves swirling through the air on a crisp fall night and having to ignore the discomfort of wearing warm clothing either under or over our costumes. We feel again the excitement of meeting friends, and the thrill of running up to doors, and for the minimal cost of uttering the classic phrase, “trick or treat,” receiving free

candy and other treats to take home and gloat over. These fall rites of passage, these cultural customs and family traditions connect us to community, family, and a fondly remembered past. But, what do we know about the roots of our holiday – about when we became spooky? This thesis explores the history of Halloween in America. The American Halloween underwent a massive transition between 1860 and 1945. At the time of the Civil War, Halloween remained an autumn event celebrated by adults and defined by an eclectic array of political, folk, supernatural, and religious traditions. By World War II, it had become something else entirely different: a fun holiday for children connected very much to consumer culture. How did this transformation take place? In this thesis, I argue for a gender-based interpretation of Halloween. I claim that mass-market magazines taught mothers across the country how to celebrate Halloween in a way their children and families would enjoy. In this way, a curious hodge-podge of European rituals, customs, folklore, and games coalesced into what I call the “modern Halloween.”

Halloween celebrations became increasingly popular in the United States in the last century and a half. Over this long period, the ethnic traditions, beliefs, and celebrations of several groups merged to form a single cohesive, yet ever-evolving, national holiday. After shedding its practices rooted in superstition, or in orthodox religion, Halloween became secularized. It has remained popular because of its elements of escapism, its appeal to children, and its commercial value to merchants and retailers. Much of our Halloween has origins in Celtic druidical ritual, Christian theology, and northern European folk belief.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Lesley Pratt Bannatyne, *Halloween: An American Holiday, an American History*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: Pelican, 2005), 63.

European practices that fed into the modern Halloween include guising or mumming; souling, involves the supplying of soul cakes; the practices of pranking, burning, or mischief; and the more spiritual practices of fortune-telling or mate selection. All of these traditions and activities would evolve over the decades and eventually coalesce into our modern American Halloween celebrations.

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century and into the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, other factors contributed to the evolution and popularization of Halloween. First, mass immigration would provide a variety of cultural and folkloric celebrations and customs. In particular, European migrants carried their Halloween customs with them as they crossed the Atlantic. Second, print media – most critically, books and magazines aimed at female readers – would shape the holiday. Third, the American middle-class's fascination with the upper classes and elites would be another important factor. Fourth, art – including paintings, woodcuts, and lithographs – would contribute to the nation's visualization of Halloween, helping the holiday acquire a distinctive aesthetic. Lastly, the taming of Halloween celebrations by Queen Victoria would provide respectability to quaint ethnic practices. All of these ingredients, when mixed into the cultural cauldron, helped to create the witch's brew we call Halloween.

Several important practices continued into the 20<sup>th</sup> century and continued their evolution into the future American Halloween. One practice was guising or mumming, which became costume-wearing. Another practice was pranking or mischief-making, which eventually evolved into trick or treat. The third was fortune-telling or spiritualism interest, which brought in the supernatural and horror elements of Halloween. All of these practices and influences from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and earlier centuries, were responsible for bringing Halloween celebrations into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. They prepared the holiday for its next evolution in American society.

American folklore is a key component of the American Studies major. The subject of folklore combines history, art, and the traditions and beliefs of a society. Halloween stands apart as one of the most complex, curious, and contradictory of holidays. It is a day that has persisted not because of state or religious recognition; rather, it is a folk holiday, a tradition kept alive voluntarily throughout the centuries by popular demand. The fact that Halloween remains a thriving folk holiday speaks of our deep social and psychic need for a public celebration in which we may drop at least some of the constraints that rule our everyday lives. Halloween allows us to express publicly of our private obsessions through our personal selection of decoration and costume.

Halloween is one example of a harvest festival. These festivals, common in Europe since before the Middle Ages, provided people the chance to honor seasonal changes or important life events through the medium of the play party. Social events of the American colonial period held in the autumn to celebrate the harvest transformed into occasions for play parties and included the traditions and customs of many European countries. Play parties adopted British folk customs such as the use of harvested apples and nuts to discern the future. Another folk custom associated with the harvest time would include tales of supernatural beings, such as witches and ghosts, told in the safety of home and hearth. Mischief or pranks played at dusk during the British celebrations for Guy Fawkes Day and All Hallows' Eve were common at this time of year. Also at this time of year in some areas, guising customs introduced the use of costumes or disguises. Lesley Pratt Bannatyne, a Halloween scholar, described the play party. "By the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century," she wrote, "an annual autumn play party was a common occurrence in many parts of America. Some used it to celebrate Halloween, others knew it as a Snap Apple Night or Nut Crack Night party. To Catholics and Episcopalians the night of October 31 was still a church



holiday—the eve of All Hallows.”<sup>2</sup>Americans around the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, began to discover the fun of the autumn harvest festival.

However, Halloween was not yet a celebration on the national level. It did not have the status or recognition of other mainstream American holidays such the Fourth of July, Christmas or Easter. Instead, Halloween continued to consist of individualized quaint ethnic community celebrations. Around the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Halloween started to evolve into the popular American holiday. According to Bannatyne, European traditions involving the supernatural transported by immigrants and the occult practices of Southern slaves both fed Halloween: “There was already a piece of old England in play-party apple and nut games; a patch of Ireland in the dumb suppers and ghost tales; a bit of Scottish impishness in the mischief of American boys. So, too, is it possible to see the impact of black slaves and their beliefs on the occult folklore of the South.”<sup>3</sup> Hundreds of thousands of immigrants entered America during the 1800’s bringing with them their native beliefs and traditions. These mainly European immigrants would play an important role in the adoption of this new holiday. Bannatyne further notes, “To trace the evolution of Halloween in America, it is important to return to Europe and look carefully at their origins.”<sup>4</sup> This thesis will attempt to do just that by examining American both women’s journals; and the influx of European customs that grew into the American Halloween.

This thesis is not the first work of scholarship to study Halloween. In 2005, the aforementioned Lesley Pratt Bannatyne published a history of the holiday, *Halloween: An American Holiday, an American History*, and another book, *Halloween Nation: Behind the*

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<sup>2</sup> Lesley Pratt Bannatyne, *Halloween: An American Holiday, an American History*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: Pelican, 2005), 63.

<sup>3</sup> Lesley Pratt Bannatyne, *Halloween: An American Holiday*, 63.

<sup>4</sup> Lesley Pratt Bannatyne, *Halloween: An American Holiday*, 63.

*Scenes of America's Fright Night*, in 2011. While these texts offer a treasure trove of information and anecdotes relating to the holiday's past, it does not highlight the role of women's magazines. Other authorities on Halloween, such as Lisa Morton with her publications: *Trick or Treat: a History of Halloween*, published in 2012; *A Halloween Anthology: Literary and Historical Writings Over the Centuries*, in 2008; and *The Halloween Encyclopedia*, in 2003; Nicholas Rogers' with his: *Halloween: From Pagan Ritual to Party Night*, published in 2002; and Jack Santino, probably the foremost expert on Halloween, with two Halloween works: *The Hallowed Eve: Dimensions of Culture in a Calendar Festival in Northern Ireland*, 1998; *Halloween: and Other Festivals of Death and Life*, 1994; and two others on holidays that include Halloween: *New Old-Fashioned Ways: Holidays and Popular Culture*, 1996; and *All Around the Year: Holidays and Celebrations in American Life*, 1994 all have published extremely useful information about Halloween. They, however, also neglect the impact of women and their reading, though they do thoroughly cover the folklore, origins, art, and popular and consumer culture associated with Halloween. This thesis, then, represents the first attempt to bring the women's story into the larger Halloween story.

Not surprisingly, the telling of this new story required access to new materials. In short, archival sources proved invaluable in this thesis project. In order to locate women's magazines and other Halloween-related paraphernalia, I visited several libraries, museums, and archives. Castle Halloween™, a museum in Altoona, Pennsylvania, contained a veritable treasure trove of Halloween-related publications, artifacts, and collectibles. I also visited the Strong Museum of Play in Rochester, New York, whose extensive collections allowed me to achieve a better understanding of how Halloween influenced children's culture. The library at Millersville University provided me with access to some on-line versions of some early women's journals.

Finally, I visited the Alice Marshall Collection at Penn State Harrisburg University. This remarkable archive, which is devoted to women's history, presented me with wide array of women's ephemera that supported findings of this project.

The thesis, divided into three interior chapters, proceeds chronologically. In chapter two, I discuss the Halloween traditions and practices enjoyed by many Americans between 1860 and 1900. More specifically, this chapter details the coverage given to Halloween in magazines, the American adoption of some Halloween customs originating in Victorian England, and the transformation of certain folk customs – Pranking, Guising, and Souling. In chapter three, which covers the first three decades of the twentieth century, our focus shifts to early forms of mass media and popular culture. In particular, I cover popular literature, post cards, and parades, among other cultural forms. Finally, in chapter four, we see the dramatic evolution of Halloween during the Great Depression and World War Two. It is in this period that we see the importance of radio and the movies to the popular conceptions of Halloween, as well as the importance of mass-produced costumes, parades, and the advent of trick or treat.

The story of Halloween in America is a story that is centuries in the making. Many influences were involved in the creation, development, and popularization of our Halloween and the process is fluid; it keeps evolving and changing as new ethnicities, folklore, and customs are added to our melting pot, or more appropriately, witch's cauldron. In this thesis I explore early contributors, folklore and customs, media and technology advances and the importance of women readers throughout the country through women-directed journals to the creation, popularization, and continuation of Halloween in America. With that being said, let's approach the door to chapter two and ring the bell. Trick or treat!

## Chapter 2: Early Influences, 1860 – 1899

In the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, many influences contributed to the beginnings of the American Halloween. Mass immigrations to the United States would occur in the 1840's and 1850's from 1845-1852 as Scots and Irish anxious to escape the potato famines or "Great Hunger" would travel to America. The Second Scottish Highland Clearances from 1847-1854 would also bring millions into America from the British Isles. These peoples would bring their harvest customs, folklore and folktales, Halloween practices, and superstitions to a new and unfamiliar land. Mostly unchanged in Europe for several centuries, these practices would come to America with the great migration.

Once arrived, how did these Halloween traditions spread? Railroads and other innovations in transportation moved immigrants and their customs throughout the United States. The advent of the railroads and their importance to the movement of passengers "began in 1830 with the Baltimore and Ohio line when it started passenger service. From the 1830's to the 1860's railroads would replace canals as the primary method to transport people."<sup>5</sup> The California Gold Rush (1848-1855) also contributed to the movement of immigrant people, and their cultures and customs, to the United States. These immigrants would cling to their familiar folklore, myth, and customs, and would practice them in their new home, eventually contributing new practices to the developing cultural celebrations in America. Here these traditions simmered, awaiting their next iteration. American admirations of Queen Victoria and royalty, and the middle-class emulation of the elite, would also aid in the popularization and continuation of the holiday. Considered another probable contributor to the American Halloween, Guy Fawkes Day,

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<sup>5</sup> "Railroad Facts," U.S. History, accessed October 29, 2016, <http://www.USHistory.org>.

in Britain, celebrates the failure of a gunpowder plot to blow up Parliament and the King on November 5, with bonfires, fireworks, and the burning of figures of Fawkes (the guy) in effigy. All of these factors would meld to become Halloween in America.

This chapter considers the early influences on the American Halloween. It begins by discussing the influences of literature and art and newspapers and women's magazines. The American fascination with Queen Victoria would also be an important factor in gaining respectability for the new holiday. It continues with an exploration of European pranking, souling, guising, and mumming tradition. Journals would play an extremely important role in disseminating this information to American women who would popularize the celebrations and increase awareness across the country. All of these influences would be of critical importance to Halloween's beginnings and continuation in America.

### **Literature and Art**

Literary and art influences on Halloween would abound in the late 1700's and early 1800's. They would be significant contributors to the beginnings of the American Halloween. Popular poems by Robert Burns such as "Halloween" (1785) and "Tam O'Shanter" (1790), and Sir Walter Scott's translation of "Tam Lane (Tam Lin)" (1802) provided rich detailed descriptions of many of the folklore, customs, and celebrations of Halloween in the British Isles in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>6</sup> Lisa Morton, another Halloween scholar asserts that, "... 'Hallowe'en, a poem which surely did more to influence generations of Halloween revel than any other single work. The Burns poem with its detailed descriptions of fortune-telling, food and flirtation, was

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<sup>6</sup> Sir Walter Scott did not publish his popular translation until 1802 although the original appeared in 1548.

quoted throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century in virtually all the popular almanac and miscellanies.”<sup>7</sup> Two other poems of the mid-nineteenth century are especially important to the development of Halloween celebration: “Halloween: A Romaunt” (1842), by Arthur Cleveland Coxe, and “Ulalume” (1847) by Edgar Allan Poe. Women’s journals of the period would publish, share and popularize these poems, and many others of the period.

During the nineteenth century, Americans embraced tales of fright. Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), is considered to be the first horror novel. Gothic novels, such as Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818), and John Polidori’s *The Vampyre* (1819), began the American fascination for the eerie story, the occult, and the strange tales of the supernatural. These novels provided a vicarious scary thrill to their readers. By the end of the 1800’s horror novels would find their niche as well with the publication of Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* in 1897 and *The Snake’s Pass* in 1890. Horror novels would continue to grow in popularity with many more to come in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

It was also in the nineteenth century that American authors started to produce terrifying tales of their own. Washington Irving’s stories from *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.* (1820), such as “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow,” “Rip Van Winkle,” and “The Specter Bridegroom,” would become extremely popular for Halloween celebrations for generations to come. Poems and stories of death and horror by Edgar Allan Poe – such as “The Raven” (1845), “The Black Cat” (1845), “The Tell-Tale Heart” (1850), “The Haunted Palace” (1839), “The Devil in the Belfry” (1839), “Fairyland” (1829), and “Some Words with a Mummy” (1850) – were all published during this early time period and would influence future writers and celebrations. Another important short story from the 1800’s that would become closely

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<sup>7</sup> Lisa Morton, *Trick or Treat: A History of Halloween* (London: Reaktion, 2012), 155.

associated with Halloween was “Young Goodman Brown” (1835) by Nathaniel Hawthorne.

Many if not all of these works would be published and re-published repeatedly in newspapers, journals, and how-to guides for Halloween organizers.

In sum, the nineteenth century proved pivotal in the formation of the modern Halloween. Lisa Morton, a historian who covers the history of this holiday, described the proliferation of Halloween-themed stories, customs, rituals, and games. “It was also about this time that a small explosion of works exploring folklore of the British Isles appeared,” Morton writes. “Over the space of 17 years, dozens of small, regional histories were recorded, and introduced readers to stories of Halloween. By the end of the trend, readers had been introduced to Scottish superstitions, pookas, fire customs, talking corpses on Samhain Eve and fairies in every conceivable shape and mood.”<sup>8</sup> Halloween had not just arrived; more specifically, American *interest* in Halloween had arrived. By the end of the 1800’s, Americans expressed eagerness for a book focused solely on Halloween. In 1898, the Fitzgerald Publishing Company in New York gave in to public demand and published the first book dedicated solely to the celebration of Halloween, Martha Russell Orne’s *Hallowe’en: How to Celebrate It*. This pamphlet provides a short discussion of Halloween history, but spends the bulk of its pages focusing on home decoration, the preparation of invitations, and party games. Judging by its tone and content, we can see that the book is plainly intended for adults.<sup>9</sup> Many other how-to-celebrate-Halloween guides would follow.

Paintings also influenced Halloween celebrations. An early painting by William Hogarth, “Credulity, Superstition and Fanaticism: A Medley” (1762) and “Saul and the Witch of Endor”

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<sup>8</sup> Morton, *Trick or Treat*, 163.

<sup>9</sup> Morton, *Trick or Treat*, 163-4.

(late 18<sup>th</sup> century, artist unknown) were early examples of paintings with a religious theme.

Paintings of spectral dogs and huntsmen, such as George Cruikshank's "Herne the Huntsman" (19<sup>th</sup> century), those depicting ghosts, such as John Leech's hand-colored etching of Marley's Ghost (1843), also provide visual impetus to the Halloween mystique. "The Headless Horseman Pursuing Ichabod Crane" (1858) by John Quidor, and others based on the Washington Irving story, were to become well known and popular with the American public. Visually appealing, these and other paintings like them would evoke what people refer to today as "the scare factor" of Halloween and stoke the imagination.

Beginning in the 1830's, lithographic technology allowed printers to mass-produce the one-of-a-kind paintings of artists. These lithographic prints could be produced and sold quickly and inexpensively, and were hand-colored black and white lithographs. Currier and Ives produced 7500 prints over their 70 years of operation, usually with 2-3 new images available for purchase every week. Many of these lithographs were of wars, disasters, sporting events, and catastrophes. Several such as "The Harvest Moon" (1860-1870), Moonlight: The Ruins (1856-1907), "The Angel of Death (1855), "The Great Fair on a Grand Scale" (1888), "Sights at the Fair Ground" (1888), and "Autumn" (1869), would all include imagery of the autumn harvest or supernatural themes. Currier and Ives called themselves "The Grand Depot for Cheap and Popular Prints" and advertised their lithographs as "colored engravings for the people." With the improvements in offset-printing and photo-engraving, popular demand for lithographs would diminish and Currier and Ives would cease business in 1907.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, these prints were mass-produced during this time period and would further popularize interest in Halloween.

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<sup>10</sup> "Currier and Ives," accessed October 29, 2016, <http://www.currierandives.com>.



## Women's Journals

Women's magazines also shaped the American Halloween. The first American journal was published in 1741, but journals would not become truly important for decades. By the mid-nineteenth century, this new form of entertainment, the magazine, had become popular thanks to advances in printing and distribution techniques. By 1850, more than 600 magazines, the majority of them intended for women, were being printed in the U.S. Helen Damon-Moore, writing about journals, points out that the Postal Mailing Act of 1879 was "enacted to create a national press that might be the 'mucilage' to hold the Northern and Southern states together." After the passage of the Postal Mailing Act of 1879, which created rates that were conducive to mailing journals, journal production exploded. Damon-Moore states that, "between 1865 and 1885, that number would have risen to 3,300."<sup>11</sup> She goes on to add that, "the importance of the numbers of middle-class readers and their buying power changed the focus of the majority of the journals directed toward women. These thousands of journals would be available to hundreds of thousands of subscribers, and that would translate into millions and millions of advertising dollars and journal profit."<sup>12</sup> This massive expansion in print media relates to Halloween for the following reason. The combination of seasonal literature with ads in journals would promote holiday sales of consumables, while furthering the popular celebration of Halloween and helping to spread the word about the holiday across the country. With the volume of journals available and the chance to increase revenues through advertising, these journals would play an important part in popularizing Halloween celebrations and customs.

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<sup>11</sup> Helen Damon-Moore, *Magazines for the Millions: Gender and Commerce in the Ladies Home Journal and the Saturday Evening Post, 1880-1910* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1994), 26.

<sup>12</sup> Damon-Moore, *Magazines*, 26.

All of these journals required content. In 1830, the first magazine aimed at its women readers appeared: *Godey's Ladies Book*. Damon-Moore emphasizes that “While the first major women’s magazine in American was *Godey's Ladies Magazine*, directed toward the wealthy, and which achieved a circulation of one hundred and fifty thousand by 1860, by the 1880’s, helpful-hints magazines would corner the popularity market and appeal to a broader range of income-producing families.”<sup>13</sup> In other words, *Godey's Ladies Book*, though it appealed mainly to women in upper-income brackets, effectively reoriented magazine publishing with its success. It demonstrated that a magazine could thrive simply by targeting female readers. After the Civil War, other magazines would take the Godey’s formula but apply it to women of all classes.

What kind of a Halloween appeared in the pages of this magazine? *Godey's Ladies Book* was one of many nineteenth century journals that would feature curious Halloween-related tales in their pages during the 1870’s and 1880’s. *Godey's Ladies Book* would also be the first journal to mention a Halloween party in an article appearing in an 1872 issue called : “HALLOWE”EN”—“Time in its every-onward course,” the article announced, “ has once more brought us to the month in which this festival occurs. About the day itself there is nothing in any wise peculiar or worthy of notice, but since time almost immemorial All Hallow Eve, or Halloween, has formed the subject theme of fireside chat and published story.” Clearly, the editors had now taken notice of the late October festival on the calendar. Another first by *Godey's Ladies Book* was the first mention of the jack o’ lantern. Not all the Halloween-related poems and stories appearing in these magazines were short stories; many took the form of non-fiction accounts of folklore beliefs. These magazines probably provided many Americans with their introduction to Halloween. Home-centered women of the time probably enjoyed reading

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<sup>13</sup> Damon-Moore, *Magazines*, 22.

about old-fashioned practices and celebrations. At this time in American history, America was becoming more industrialized and urbanized. The middle class, now with disposable incomes, were eager to mimic the celebrations of the American elite and their counterparts in the British Isles. Thanks to these magazines, increasingly affluent Americans became increasingly drawn to Halloween.

The 19<sup>th</sup> century American Victorian Era public was interested in current events and sensational and sentimental literature. These literary tastes would promote Halloween. Women's journals such as *Godey's Ladies Book and Magazine*, the *Ladies Home Journal*, *Harper's*, *McCall's*, *Home Monthly (Beadle's)*, and dozens of others would inform, entertain, and educate tens of thousands of American families mainly through their readership by the women of the family. September, October, and November issues especially would feature harvest recipes, supernatural and romantic Halloween stories or serials, poetry, games, and decorating tips for celebrating the holiday. In short, women's magazines taught mothers everywhere how to celebrate Halloween.

During the Victorian Era in the United States, magazines continued to share large amounts of information regarding Halloween folklore and customs. Women's journals of the time published issues describing quaint customs and practices of Halloween celebrations in Great Britain: sentimental stories of love and loss, folklore tales of brownies, ghosts, witches, pookas, fairies, imps, and other supernatural creatures. Women readers absorbed the information available in printed literature: recipes, invitations, information, plays, games and music, all provided by the journals. Journal writers also provided advice and influenced their readers on how they should celebrate the holiday, and began to offer products marketed to women and their

families to help produce the perfect home Halloween celebration. A continuation of these hints, the how-to guide would become an important publication at the start of the following century.<sup>14</sup>

Some of America's most famous authors published in these magazines. Journal owners and editors required text such as short stories, serialized tales, and poems, for their journals. Many of the most popular and noted authors of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, such as Harriet Beecher Stowe, William Dean Howells, Edith Wharton, Jack London, Sarah Orne Jewett, Rudyard Kipling, Mark Twain, Louisa May Alcott, and many more, would provide poems, short stories, and serialized novellas for these journals. Thus, women and their journals would have an important role in the distribution, celebration, and continuation of Halloween as it evolved in America.

Advertising would get its start during the 1800's by providing journals with ads for basic needs and services addressing the consumer. Eventually fall magazine issues would feature harvest and Halloween-themed products as well. As newspaper editors began to see the benefits of advertising dollars to their publications, articles featuring Halloween appeared there as well.<sup>15</sup> Women would be courted for their consumer buying power on behalf of their entire families. Advertising, harvest or Halloween-themed, and otherwise, would begin to fill the pages of magazines with their content directed toward women. The importance of and general acceptance of the women's "sphere" influenced how popular the journals would become as they competed for advertising dollars and content. Damon-Moore claims, "Women were agitating for change in these years, in large part working to expand their breadth of acceptable activities. In this light we see that buying magazines and consuming commercial products—insofar as they involved choosing, making decisions, and at least some small measure of autonomy—represented an

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<sup>14</sup> Damon-Moore, *Magazines*, 22.

<sup>15</sup> Damon-Moore, *Magazines*, 12.

appealing expansion of activity for a number of lower-middle-class and middle-class women who had some expendable income.”<sup>16</sup> Journals would receive more and more advertising dollars to promote goods and products to women, who represented the buying public, and who purchased the magazines. Women were responsible for disseminating the information about these products and about Halloween. According to Halloween author, Lesley Pratt Bannatyne, “Sentiment sold magazines. Both magazines and newspapers of this period grew in size and circulation and contained more filler: more poetry, fiction and folklore—and now such material was reaching a national audience.” Bannatyne continued, “Halloween celebrations in the Victorian age seem to be made of one part romantic inspiration, one part reconstructed history, and one part Victorian marketing.”<sup>17</sup> In order to reach this national audience, advertising agencies arose. Since products were advertised nationally, rather than just locally or regionally, holiday tie-ins could provide a familiar theme for all consumers. Women’s journals would continue to lead in providing Halloween information to a national audience.

### **American Fascination with Queen Victoria**

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, middle-class and upper class Americans were fascinated to hear details about the daily lives of Queen Victoria and other European royalty. Around the time of Queen Victoria, the celebration and importance of All Hallow’s Eve changed in America and Britain. The Queen is considered responsible for reviving interest in the holiday as a refined, family-centered celebration of the autumn and Halloween. Irish, Scottish, and Welsh folklore, mythology, and customs, transformed into a non-religious British celebration. This interest in the

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<sup>16</sup> Damon-Moore, *Magazines*, 12.

<sup>17</sup> Bannatyne, *Halloween: An American Holiday*, 107.

activities of Queen Victoria and her family, as well as customs and folklore brought to America by additional waves of immigrants, stirred the American Halloween celebratory pot to a boil.

Queen Victoria also attempted to reduce the amount of mischief and destructive pranks performed on Halloween night by replacing them with family parties, games and food. The rising middle-class would copy and popularize high society Halloween practices of the growing upper class during the Gilded Age in America.

What did Halloween look like when organized by Queen Victoria herself? In 1874, a journalist visited a Halloween festival hosted by the queen herself at Balmoral Castle, Scotland. He described in detail a scene rich in gothic pomp and ceremony:

Preparations had been made days beforehand, and farmers and others for miles around were present. When darkness set in, the celebration began, and her majesty and the Princess Beatrice, each bearing a large torch, drove out in an open phaeton. A procession formed of the tenants and servants on the estate followed, all carrying huge torches lighted. They walked through the grounds and around the castle, and the scene as the procession moved onwards was very weird and striking.... An immense bonfire, composed of old boxes, packing cases, and other materials, stored up during the year for the occasion, was set fire to. When the flames were at their brightest, a figure dressed as a hobgoblin appeared on the scene, drawing a car surrounded by a number of fairies carrying long spears, the car containing the effigy of a witch. A circle having been formed by the torch-bearers, the presiding elf tossed the figure of the witch into the fire, where it was

speedily consumed. This cremation over, reels were begun, and were danced with a great vigor to the stirring strains of Willis Ross, her majesty's piper.<sup>18</sup>

David Skal, a writer on Halloween practices and significance, comments on this newspaper article by stating, "This account is especially significant because it includes a rare pre-1900 description of macabre Halloween costuming."<sup>19</sup> The article does describe costumes worn in the event, but the piece offers so much more. I argue that the procession described in the article is a possible precursor to the Halloween parade with its references to lighted torches carried by participants, and with its mention of a pre-set route (circling around the castle). Its author describes the bonfire, which surely refers back to pagan harvest practices. Tossing the witch's figure into the fire would seem to recall the burning of witches and could have mimicked the practices of Guy Fawke's Day celebrations in Britain. With this event alone, Queen Victoria may have promoted American celebrations in the coming decades.

Halloween in the Victoria Era arose from the need to create conformity in its celebrations. Lesley Pratt Bannatyne writes, "Despite the British observations about 'rowdyism' across the Atlantic, Halloween in Victorian America emerges from newspaper and magazine records as a genteel holiday, its energies firmly corseted to fit the fashions of the time. The emphasis is on private parties, matchmaking, and fortune-telling, and games like apple-bobbing and candlestick-jumping. It is first and foremost a holiday of decorous femininity."<sup>20</sup> During the Victorian Age in America, women's clothing required tight regimentation with dresses to the neck, sleeves to the wrist, and skirts to the ankle, while men were required to wear buttoned-up

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<sup>18</sup> *The Delineator*, 1874.

<sup>19</sup> David Skal, *Death Makes a Holiday: A Cultural History of Halloween* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2002), 34.

<sup>20</sup> Bannatyne, *Halloween: An American Holiday*, 105-107.

collars, ties, and jackets. The wearing of costumes at Halloween became popular because it allowed its celebrants a socially acceptable way to loosen up and to escape their current lives and responsibilities at least for a short time. Halloween celebration would allow Victorian Age Americans an outlet to embrace unconformity, at least one day a year.

According to Lesley Pratt Bannatyne, during the late Victorian Era, Americans had distanced themselves from the concept and reality of death and dying. Halloween's original purpose was to pay homage to the harvest, to ancestral dead, and recently departed souls. Contemplating death and dying was too much of a reality check for self-centered Victorian Era Americans. Halloween's original meanings and celebrations needed to be homogenized. These original meanings and practices needed to be submerged under a veneer of refinement and social acceptability. Victorian holiday celebrations would reflect their growing concerns with the security and amusement of the family. Halloween activities must ignore the past and concentrate on approved and respectable outlets for fun and celebration. Victorians were intent on ignoring any hints of the holiday's ethnic past. They would focus solely on Queen Victoria's approval of the holiday, and insist on its celebrations using pleasant unusual British customs. One custom that they did preserve was that of fortune-telling. Halloween celebrations in the Victorian Era were a popular means for young, unmarried men and women of the upper classes to mingle and experience romance in a safe, structured, socially acceptable way.<sup>21</sup> As well as promoting romances, Halloween would allow those living at that time to ignore or mock their fears of death and dying.

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<sup>21</sup> Bannatyne, *Halloween: An American Holiday*, 105-107.



### **Pranking, Guising, and Souling**

Several past practices from prior centuries would become core parts of the American Halloween beginning in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. One such practice was “guising,” (participating while disguised) also known as “mumming,” both of which referred to the custom of wearing a costume. A second practice, one called “pranking,” or, alternatively, “souling” included the supplying of soul cakes to visitors and would later evolve into the modern “trick or treat.” Finally, the practice of fortune-telling, which has since faded in popularity, brought elements of horror and the supernatural to the celebration of Halloween. An example of the practice of “souling,” was the Guy Fawkes Day costume tradition, which crossed cultural, ethnic, and religious lines. Participants went door-to-door asking for food and sometimes causing trouble. The practice was a forerunner of trick or treating, but it was confined mainly to Irish communities. Another of these practices, fortune-telling (or folk divination), was still practiced using apples, mirrors, and nuts, though the practice would fade by the early twentieth century.<sup>22</sup> All of these practices would transform and become part of the American Halloween celebration.

Some of the customs previously associated with Thanksgiving in American would also transfer to the celebration of Halloween. In New York and other East Coast cities, the American celebration of Thanksgiving, first celebrated on a national scale in 1863, thanks to the efforts of influential American women like Mrs. Sarah Hale, remained a buoyant street festival for “ragamuffins” as much as a sedate, family-centered dinner. George William Douglas, American author, noted that, “children in the different neighborhoods dressed themselves in clothes of their elders, covered their faces with masks and paraded the streets blowing tin horns. Thus attired,

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<sup>22</sup> Bannatyne, *Halloween: An American Holiday*, 63.

they went from house to house asking for fruit and vegetables to celebrate the day.”<sup>23</sup> Nicholas Rogers, a Halloween researcher, stated, “As late as 1928 it was remarked that the New York streets were ‘full of Ragamuffins’ – kids dressed in ridiculous Hallowe’ en costumes, begging for pennies.”<sup>24</sup> These mask and costume wearing customs as well as the requests for fruit, vegetable, or pennies would morph into trick or treating. Although originally part of Thanksgiving celebrations, these practices would become associated with Halloween.

By the late 1890’s, most American celebrations would have replaced rowdy antics with socially acceptable ones. Halloween was still an exception to the rule, and remained an untamed celebration. Nicholas Rogers notes that, “Indeed, Halloween appears to have appropriated some of the rituals associated with its rivals; or at the very least, reinvigorated older traditions of masquerading by contact with them. The practices of masking and cross-dressing became more pronounced. The callithumpian custom of flour-bashing, very visible in the New York riot of 1828 and also observed at Mardi Gras, received a resounding revival.”<sup>25</sup> Rogers also cites a newspaper article from the time period that describes the bacchanalian atmosphere. “All the ‘vagrom’ boys were out in all sort of cheap harlequin and clown disguises, with bags of flour, whitening each other,” remarked the New Orleans Daily Crescent in 1859 of its Mardi Gras celebrations.<sup>26</sup> The primitive spirit of Halloween would continue to be a factor in practices of the time. Halloween celebrations still needed a unifying societal force.

Beginning in the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, costume wearing became an important part of the Halloween celebration. Some of the first reported instances of costume wearing may

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<sup>23</sup> George William Douglas, *The American Book of Days*, rev. ed. (New York: H. W. Wilson Company, 1948), 616.

<sup>24</sup> Nicholas Rogers, *Halloween: From Pagan Ritual to Party Night* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 73.

<sup>25</sup> Rogers, *Halloween*, 73.

<sup>26</sup> Rogers, *Halloween*, 73.

be seen in the traditional mummer's and guiser's plays from the early 1700's, which would be adopted by Halloween celebrants. Another influence are the souling traditions on All Saint's Day (November 1st) and All Soul's Day (November 2<sup>nd</sup>), when 'soulers' went house-to-house singing songs, and being gifted with food, drink, or coins. Bannatyne states, "The custom of begging for food from house to house on Halloween came from the old Catholic soul-cake custom. Once charitable in nature, 'souling' took a popular turn as it evolved over the years. Irish Halloween begging always involved a masquerade and some sort of good-natured bribe..." She goes on to add that, "In Ireland's County Cork, a mummer's procession marked All Hallows. It was composed of young men, self-proclaimed ambassadors of Muck Olla (a boar known in Irish folktales). The leader (Lair Bhan – or white mare) wore white robes and a horse's head; the rest of the procession fell noisily behind, blowing cows' horns to announce themselves at each new house. Prosperity was promised to those who gave food, drink, or money to the revelers."<sup>27</sup> These traditions, especially the mumming practices, came to America with the thousands of Irish immigrants in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. All of these practices would transform and meld into accepted Halloween practices such as costume wearing. These customs would also be responsible for traditions such as Halloween parades and trick or treating in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Guising may date back to the 15<sup>th</sup> century and early Christian customs in Western Europe. Elaborate masquerades that date back to the 15<sup>th</sup> century or even earlier celebrated marriages and important events during late medieval times. Mardi Gras and Carnival may also be ancestors of our penchant for Halloween costumes. Bannatyne refers to, "One of the most popular old-world Scottish customs of the time was 'guising' on All Hallows' Eve. Guisers – groups of young men in disguise – were found all over the Scottish countryside in the 16<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Bannatyne, *Halloween: An American Holiday*, 67.

century, and guising persisted there among the younger children well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.”<sup>28</sup> In other words, original sources do not mention the use of masks at Halloween. Other common European holiday traditions such as masquerades at pre-Lent carnival or Guy Fawkes Day practices, and Christmas or Saturnalia rituals of mumming or cross-dressing did feature the use of masks and disguises. Most of these practices would transfer to Halloween celebrations.<sup>29</sup> England would abolish Halloween celebrations following the Protestant Reformation fomented by Martin Luther. Lutherans refuted the notion of saints, therefore, they did not commemorate All Saints’ Eve or Day. A new fall ritual did emerge. Guy Fawkes Day festivities commemorated the execution of a notorious English traitor, Guido (Guy) Fawkes. On November 5, 1606, Fawkes, a Catholic who wanted Protestant King James removed from power, was convicted of attempting to blow up England’s king and parliament building. Immediately after his execution, the first Guy Fawkes Day was celebrated with bonfires, called “bone fires”, which were erected to burn effigies and the symbolic “bones” of the Catholic pope. Two centuries later, effigies of Guy Fawkes replaced those of the pope. The gunpowder plot to blow up Parliament and the King on November 5, with bonfires, fireworks, and the burning of figures of Fawkes (the guy) in effigy is still celebrated in Britain, Its celebration in America would be outlawed in American in 1833.<sup>30</sup>

Another early Thanksgiving practice may have influenced Halloween celebrations. Morton notes, “In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, costumed children at Thanksgiving (mainly around New York) sometimes dressed in costumes and went house-to house begging.”<sup>31</sup> In America,

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<sup>28</sup> Bannatyne, *Halloween: An American Holiday*, 44.

<sup>29</sup> David Skal, *Halloween: The History of America’s Darkest Holiday*, rev (New York: Dover Publications, 2016), 35.

<sup>30</sup> Douglas, *American Book of Days*, 583-4.

<sup>31</sup> Morton, *The Halloween Encyclopedia* (North Carolina: McFarland & Co, 2011), 59.

costume-wearing attendees first appeared at family Halloween parties during the latter part of the 1800's. The popularity of Halloween and its celebrations were brought to the attention of tens of thousands of Americans, through the thousands of magazines, available especially to women readers during this, the beginning of the Golden Age of the Magazine. Ideas for costumes would come from illustrations and directions in the women's journals.

Costume wearing began to be an important part of the Halloween celebratory experience. Family members or friends created Halloween costumes during the late 1800's. If the family was wealthy enough, the village seamstress could create costumes to order for her customers. The most popular costumes during the late Victorian Age (late 1890's), were witches, ghosts, devils, skeletons, clowns, jesters, cats, hoboes, and fairies. These costumes usually featured homemade cloth masks, sometimes created from pillowcases and costumes created from patterns sometimes using sheets for ghosts. All of these costumes drew on familiar folktales and folklore as well as from the imagination of the costume-wearer. Many consider these practices to be the customs and traditions that evolved in America and contributed to the celebrations of the American Halloween.

These customs would also transform the Halloween celebration of the following decades. Early cultural folklore and practices assimilated into new practices and celebrations of Halloween. Women's journals continued to educate the public about this holiday and to provide a blueprint for the successful Halloween participant to emulate. New media and influences added to Halloween practices in the coming years.

In this chapter, we discussed the influences that contributed to the transformation and popularization of the American Halloween. Thousands of immigrants, as well as Victorian interest in British royalty affected Halloween celebrations. European rituals such as souling,

pranking, guising, and mumming began their transformation into American Halloween festivals.

Of special note is the importance of women readers and women's journals on popularizing Halloween within their family circles. With the advent of the railroad, and The Postal Act of 1879, women's journals were able to spread information to women about the holiday across the country. Literature and lithography also had an important part to play in Halloween's popularization. In the next chapter, we will see how Halloween will continue to evolve and change.

### **Chapter 3: The Beginnings of Popular and Material Culture, 1900-1929**

This chapter focuses on Halloween in America as it shifted from its early European influences. From 1890 to 1920, many localized folk traditions yielded to the new Americanized Halloween. Halloween had now arrived. Thanks to the innovations of radio and film during the Golden Ages of both, the holiday's popularity spread. Advertising created opportunities for commercialization. Women readers continued to remain a force in the popularization and celebration of Halloween through journals and how-to-guides such as Dennison's Bogie Books. These and other how-to-guides provided recipes, costume patterns, hints, and home decoration ideas for the party host to achieve a successful event. Pranking continued to be a problem. In an attempt to have more control and to curb vandalism, communities and towns proposed new ways, such as parades and parties, to deal with the "Halloween Problem." Children and adults attended the parties, and they soon became the main form of celebration. The rise of the Halloween party marked the demise of any remaining traces of Halloween's original religious and superstitious connotations. Civic leaders attempted to limit the frightening aspects of Halloween by focusing on food, games, parties, and parades rather than on ghosts and goblins. Upbeat and brighter costumes were often preferred to those worn in the past that referenced the supernatural menaces of old. Greeting card companies promoted a light-hearted view of Halloween with endearing symbols. World War One, Prohibition, and the Great Depression all impacted the celebration of Halloween either directly or indirectly. These new influences continued to shape, and standardize Halloween celebrations in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Halloween at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was a combination of the Victorian Age celebrations that Queen Victoria popularized in the latter part of the 1800's. Americans, in love with all things British and royal, admired her. She induced them to celebrate the holiday as a child-oriented, family one with games and tea parties. In America in the early 1900's, boys and men played tricks or pranks such as removing fences and stranding livestock on top of buildings. In some areas of the country, pranksters fostered burning nights of donated and scavenged flammable objects. Rural communities and towns tolerated these practices as long as pranksters did little irreversible damage. The communities considered these tricks part of the fun.<sup>32</sup> Also during this time, the practice of guising or begging by children from door to door continued as it had for centuries. Impoverished American children usually participated in this ritual around Thanksgiving time. They often received pennies or home-made treats for their efforts. The early 1900's would see the transformation and assimilation of these pranking and Thanksgiving customs.

### **Pranking: The “Halloween Problem”**

The pranking customs that characterized Halloween at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century would not fade quickly from American celebration. According to Rogers, while children might don masks or costumes and celebrate in the streets with their friends, teens and young men would plan to continue the pranking traditions. Unlike the more benign pranks of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, these pranks were destructive and mean-spirited. Rogers claims that, “on Halloween pranksters would destroy fences, remove signs and gates, barricade roads, immobilize trolley cars, smash street

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<sup>32</sup> Rogers, *Halloween*, 78.



lighting, and tip over outhouses.”<sup>33</sup> Pranksters might also concern themselves with theft, arson, and destruction of property. As one might imagine, the automobile, representing wealth, was a particular target. Pranksters would, Rogers asserted, “soap windows, deflate tires, and at busy intersections would unceremoniously ‘bounce’ cars, or rock them from the back to the discomfort of the passengers.”<sup>34</sup> According to Bannatyne, these destructive practices became known as ‘the Halloween Problem.’ What began as a benign practice, transformed into a yearly reign of havoc. Community officials and other concerned citizens started to question the appropriateness of a celebration that supported destructive mischief, and began to look for ways to divert Halloween’s destructive potential. Adults wanted to reform Halloween and return its benevolent aspects. The *Delineator* encouraged its ‘Boy Knights (club of boys sponsored by the magazine)’ to solicit donations of necessities for the less fortunate in their areas. Newspaper and magazine editors and journalists, with the power of print behind them, advocated for generosity. Families and communities also tried to divert the destructiveness. They pooled their resources to provide edible treats and propose alternatives for those inclined toward pranking.<sup>35</sup>

One such concerned city was Chicago. City leaders addressed the problem in the following fashion:

In 1925, the Chicago Principals’ Club mounted a widely publicized, organized campaign to alter the nature of Halloween. Their basic idea was one that would gain credence in hundreds of American communities over the next three decades: ‘substitution of reputable fun for mischief.’ Teachers in all Chicago schools, public and parochial, gave lessons prior to Halloween geared to make children feel responsible for the safekeeping

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<sup>33</sup> Rogers, *Halloween*, 78.

<sup>34</sup> Rogers, *Halloween*, 79.

<sup>35</sup> Bannatyne, *Halloween: An American Holiday*, 124,126.

of their own city. The principals' instructions to teachers were very specific: demonstrate to the children that the money for their education comes directly from taxes paid by the same shopkeepers and home owners who are most often the victims of Halloween pranks."<sup>36</sup>

The town of Anoka, Minnesota proposed a different solution. They became so concerned as Morton states, "with the yearly destruction and finding their livestock wandering the streets, that in 1920 they introduced a community celebration of parades, giveaways, and bonfires to induce pranksters to forego pranking and participate in the town-sponsored festivities instead. Anoka alleges that they were 'the first city in the United States to put on a Halloween celebration to divert its youngsters from Halloween pranks.'"<sup>37</sup> The problem of Halloween had become serious enough that towns and communities considered discontinuing its celebration. The holiday needed major changes to redeem itself and to make it socially acceptable.

## **Ephemera**

Many relics of the 1920's remain in the form of ephemera, items created for use once, or for a limited time, and then discarded. The items would then be replaced the next time with newer and better (more popular) items. Mass production of some of these items began in the 1920's. Items included games, stickers, postcards, party invitations, crepe paper designs, honeycomb decorations, lithographed and plastic Halloween decorations, *papier mache* products, German die-cut figures, and how-to-guides such as Dennison Bogie books (1908-1931).

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<sup>36</sup> Bannatyne, *Halloween: An American Holiday*, 124-6.

<sup>37</sup> Morton, *Trick or Treat*, 77.

According to Morton, the Dennison Bogie and Party Books sparked dozens of imitators and contributed to the American efforts to entertain and celebrate Halloween. Many of these items did not survive their initial use. Items discovered today are considered rarities and curiosities.<sup>38</sup> Examples of these products are available for purchase today at antique dealers and flea markets. They are a prime find for students looking at the history and customs of previous eras.

By the end of the Victorian era, Halloween celebrations required the assistance of adults to organize and create the celebration. According to Morton, mothers and fathers had to mail the invitations, design and make the costumes, and hang the decorations prior to the event. These activities required time, knowledge, and resources. As the Victorian era ended, and the Edwardian era began, times were better. At the beginning of the 1900's, businesses dedicated to disposable holiday supplies for the consumer arrived. In the 1910's, companies such as Beistle and B. Shackman, who provided die-cuts and decorations, and Collegeville, which began as a flag maker, began both to produce and to import pre-made decorations, reducing the onus on the adults. Publishers produced dozens of how-to pamphlets and guides giving advice and product information for celebrating Halloween. The Dennison Company published yearly guides called *Bogie Books*. These guides offered products for sale and proposed ways to use them to 'quickly and attractively decorate' for Halloween parties.<sup>39</sup> Many other American companies also provided consumer goods, supplies, and guides to enhance the Halloween experience. These guides provided Americans with ideas for party planning, making favors and decorations, recipes for Halloween-related food, games, and costumes. Many examples are available for purchase

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<sup>38</sup> Morton, *Trick or Treat*, 173.

<sup>39</sup> Morton, *Trick or Treat*, 80.

today at antique dealers and flea markets or as reprints from book sellers. They are a historical record of early 20<sup>th</sup> century Halloween celebrations and material culture.

During the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, post cards were another important type of ephemera. Although by 1904 three million telephones in the United States were connected by switchboard exchanges (the number would skyrocket to ten million by 1918).<sup>40</sup> Postcards were a cheaper and more widely used form of communication during this, the golden age of the postcard. Morton emphasizes that, “Vacationers, travelers, business associates, and advertisers sent postcards to their clients, friends, and families. Postcards featured scenes of places, people, events, and holidays.”<sup>41</sup> The beautiful, fanciful depictions of Halloween symbols used on post cards served to standardize Halloween imagery. Pumpkins, jack o’ lanterns, fruits and vegetables assumed human features or emotions. The subject could be driving a car, running away from a scary situation, or scaring others in turn. Portrayed in one of two ways, witches appeared either as decrepit old women, or as lovely young ones. Although many of the post cards depicted symbols still used today in our celebrations, those Halloween post cards still showed fortune-telling practices and rites of the previous century.<sup>42</sup> Post cards became an important part of the material culture of the time while promoting and popularizing many of Halloween’s iconic symbols.

Post cards became an important method of communication during the end of the 1890’s through the early decades of the 1900’s. Used as holiday greetings, special occasion markers, and invitations, post cards became the preferred method of social interaction for a time. One of

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<sup>40</sup> “Telephone Facts,” Independent Telecommunications Pioneer Association, accessed November 14, 2016, <http://www.nationalitpa.com/history-of-the-telephone.html>.

<sup>41</sup> Morton, *Trick or Treat*, 80.

<sup>42</sup> Morton, *Trick or Treat*, 81.

the most celebrated Halloween post card artists was Ellen H. Clapsaddle. From 1870 to 1920, she created more than 4,000 designs for cards and post cards. She was one of the first female illustrators and commercial artists. Prior to the start of World War One, she worked for, or co-owned, Wolf Brothers of New York, a subsidiary of the International Art Publishing Company of New York City. Clapsaddle and the Wolf's created a successful business. Their factory located in Germany printed more than 500 million post cards from 1905-1917. The majority of post card publishers in America also purchased their post card stock from Germany. Eventually World War One and the destruction of Germany's printing factories would end the production of printed ephemera overseas. The final death knell for the Golden Age of the post card industry would be the telephone.<sup>43 44</sup> Holiday ephemera collectors enjoy these early post cards today.

With the postal service at that time, mail could be sent and delivered to the same city on the same day, a service that is unheard of today. People wished for a quick and easy way to send a note without the use of an envelope. Post cards using a one-cent stamp were also often cheaper than letter postage, while cost of the post card was minimal as well. A post card required a stamp, as opposed to a postal card, which contained pre-printed postage. Private companies, individuals, or organizations printed postcards or post cards. A postal card was issued only by the Post Office. Another name for the postcard was the 'penny postcard.' Depending upon the year it was purchased and when it was used, the postcard was also known as a private mailing card. Use of the post card versus the letter could compare technology-wise to our use of the text message versus a standard telephone call today.<sup>45</sup> The telephone would eventually replace the

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<sup>43</sup> Dan and Pauline Campanelli, *Halloween Collectibles* (Indiana: L-W Book Sales, 1995), 71.

<sup>44</sup> "Ellen H. Clapsaddle," Antiques, accessed November 14, 2016, <http://www.Antiques.about.com/od/collectingbookspaper/p/aa112308.htm>.

<sup>45</sup> "Post cards," United States Postal Service, accessed November 14, 2016, <http://www.usps.com/publications/pub100/pub100-076.htm>.

post card. The telephone, which aided in the development of suburbs and the separation of homes and businesses, became the reason for the separation between women occupying the private sphere and men in the public sphere. This would continue to isolate women and the home but would eventually lead to jobs for women such as switchboard operators and receptionists. This development would allow women to develop new relationships and nurture pre-existing ones in their private lives. Social relations are essential to the access and usage of telephone networks.<sup>46</sup> They would replace post card usage for every day contact. Holidays were popular and acceptable ways to entertain and socialize with others, both as families and as single people. During the early decades of the nineteenth century, post cards served as a method to increase Halloween's popularity. Whether used for party invitations, or as a means to keep in touch, post cards were an important piece of ephemera.

### **Celebrations: Parties and Parades**

Because of its mainly Celtic, immigrant beginnings, Halloween attracted a rapidly growing following across North America. According to Rogers, By the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, holiday celebrants included all social classes, religions, races, ages, occupations, and financial statuses. A harbinger of the harvest past and the winter to come, Halloween was eagerly embraced by those pondering a sedate family occasion as well as by those intent on mischief. The holiday had become part of the newly emerging American material and consumer cultures. Its religious roots were gone. Celebrated as a secular festival, Halloween possessed supernatural

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<sup>46</sup> Damon-Moore, *Magazines*, 82.

manifestations that had turned into games such as apple-dunking and nut-cracking, while retaining the important practice of fortune-telling or mate selection.<sup>47</sup> Important cultural practices revolved around the importance of choosing a mate after the harvest was successfully completed, and before the onset of the harsh, cold winter. Predicting a future mate through fortune-telling games and superstitions would remain important and popular into the 1930's. Marriage was an important subject. Halloween traditions and folklore provided inexpensive, socially acceptable methods on Halloween of predicting future mates.

In the early decades of the twentieth century, Halloween continued as a family-oriented celebration as well as an evening of nightly mischief. These two methods of celebration were gender-based, with home and hearth practices identified with feminine space, and the bonfires, masking, and pranking mischief with the masculine, especially with male bonding. The boy's role might consist of robbery, arson, and destruction, while the girl's role was bobbing for apples, and trips into the basement with a lighted candle and a mirror in which to glimpse their future spouse. As the decades progressed, however, Halloween also became a peer-group holiday, celebrated in different ways by different generations. By the early twentieth century, church groups, high schools, and service groups took over some of the family and hearth practices of the holiday.<sup>48</sup> Public celebrations included parties and dances. At these sites, participants engaged in many of the games previously reserved for the home.

Children and adults attended the parties, and the party soon became the primary vehicle of celebration. Civic leaders attempted to limit the frightening aspects of Halloween by focusing on food, games, parades, and plays rather than on ghosts, goblins, and mischief. Playful,

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<sup>47</sup> Rogers, *Halloween*, 74.

<sup>48</sup> Rogers, *Halloween*, 75.

cheerful garb became popular. Isabel Gordon Curtis, a writer for St. Nicholas Magazine, noted that “Such stunts as mirror-gazing at the shivery hour of midnight, as following a thread through a dark cellar, or pulling kale sticks; none of them could be called child’s play.”<sup>49</sup> Victorian Era parents began to protect children rather than consider them as workers or non-producers. Childhood became a time of enjoyment.

At the beginning decades of the twentieth century, theme parties became popular on Halloween. Themed parties such as a Cinderella party where participants played games such as picking up a burst bag of cornmeal with a sieve, a black cat party where participants contended with omens of bad luck such as open ladders and umbrellas, even a Mother Goose themed party where everyone dressed as a nursery rhyme character. Something new to the Halloween festivities was the introduction of the haunted house. Hosts might disguise their basements as caves or grottoes. They would arrange all kinds of scary surprises for their guests that would keep the night exciting. Scares that evoked all the senses were part of the fun.<sup>50</sup>

Family celebrations and mate selection rites remained popular through the beginning of the 1900’s, but children became the focus of Halloween festivities. In 1919, the U.S. Congress passed the Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution and banned liquor production and sales. Adults lost interest in parties for themselves, and Halloween reverted to a child-centered celebration, Although Dennison continued to publish the Bogie Books, adult participation in parties took a serious blow when liquor became absent.

Increasingly, parents removed all scary elements from the holiday celebrations and were extremely concerned with children’s safety. According to Bannatyne, parents advertised

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<sup>49</sup> Isabel Gordon Curtis, “A Children’s Celebration of Halloween,” St. Nicholas Magazine 32: 1124.

<sup>50</sup> Bannatyne, *Halloween: An American Holiday*, 116.



Halloween as a child-friendly celebration with appropriate age symbols and decorations. Holiday activities now included scavenger hunts, games of skill, races, counting games, musical chairs, and ball games. Cardboard spinner games or fortune-telling booths suitable for younger children became popular while mate selection and kissing games disappeared from the celebrations.<sup>51</sup> Bannatyne writes that, “Mothers and fathers of this period lined their witches’ caps with asbestos and filled their apple-bobbing tubs with lukewarm water so that no one would catch cold.”<sup>52</sup> The old practices rooted in rites and superstitions began to disappear while child-friendly practices took their places.

During the early years of the 1900’s, Halloween celebrations began to include parades as part of the festivities. Communities and towns began to use parades to overcome the destructive practices perpetrated by boys and young men. Halloween parades have been around in the United States since the early 1900’s. According to Bannatyne, one of the oldest and longest-running Halloween parades in the nation, is considered to be the annual Halloween parade in Allentown, Pennsylvania, which started in 1905. The parade included uniformed band members and costumed marchers. Many other small town communities in Pennsylvania began annual Halloween parades at this time. Glen Falls, New York community groups sponsored a Halloween parade starting in 1927.<sup>53</sup> One of the first community-wide Halloween celebrations began in Anoka, Minnesota in 1921. Inhabitants decorate town streets and two parades take place, one for younger children and one for the all ages. Anoka also blocks a street for dancing.<sup>54</sup> Bannatyne observes that, “Halloween and masquerades have gone hand in hand since medieval

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<sup>51</sup> Bannatyne, *Halloween: An American Holiday*, 116-120.

<sup>52</sup> Bannatyne, *Halloween: An American Holiday*, 119.

<sup>53</sup> Bannatyne, *Halloween: An American Holiday*, 121-124.

<sup>54</sup> Roxy Orcutt, *History and Hauntings of the Halloween Capital* (Minnesota: North Star Press of St. Cloud, 2014), 15-17.

times. Parades of ghoulish characters drove the spirits from the villages of old Europe and parades of disguised townspeople begged house to house down through to the modern age. . . . Although there are fewer costumed parades today, the ones that do exist are truly glorious tributes to the age-old spirit of community and grotesquerie.”<sup>55</sup> Although parades began with the intention of preventing destructive behavior, they evolved into annual family celebrations. They also allow individuals the opportunity to express their creativity and feelings in an individualistic manner. Parades have become an important part of the American Halloween.

## Costumes

Another practice that influenced the early 20<sup>th</sup> century celebration of Halloween was that of costume making and wearing. Costumes were another important example of earlier Halloween traditions. Proposed as another alternative to destructive mischief, costumes would become an important part of the holiday celebrations. Originally, costumes would have been hand-made by a family member or by someone who made their living as a tailor or seamstress. Women’s journals and how-to-celebrate guides provided costume patterns for women’s use. Phyllis Galembo, author, states that, “the U.S. Mask Company in Woodhaven, New York, made masks for early Halloween revelers constructed of gauze made of buckram, sprayed with starch and steamed over a mold.”<sup>56</sup> Available choices were witches, clowns, and animals. Early mass production of costumes by companies such as Collegeville Costumes from Collegeville, Pennsylvania, started as the Collegeville Flag and Manufacturing Company in 1910. They used

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<sup>55</sup> Bannatyne, *Halloween: An American Holiday*, 151.

<sup>56</sup> Phyllis Galembo, *Dressed for Thrills: 100 Years of Halloween Costumes and Masquerade* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Publishers, 2002), 55.

leftover flag remnants to construct costumes such as clowns and jesters. The Dennison Manufacturing Company in Framingham, Massachusetts, maker of the popular 'Bogie Books,' also began making paper costumes in 1910. The Ben Cooper Company, from Brooklyn, New York, was founded in 1927. Cooper originally created costumes for the Cotton Club and the Ziegfeld Follies, and later began costume construction. Another costume maker was Halco (J. Halpern and Company) from New York, who provided an extensive selection of costumes for children.<sup>57</sup> All of these companies provided patterns or paper costumes for the consumer.

What did people do when dressed in costumes? Some early reported instances of costume-wearing may be seen in the traditional mummer's and guiser's plays from the early 1700's, and the Souling tradition on All Saint's Day (November 1st), and All Soul's Day (November 2<sup>nd</sup>). On these days, Soulers went house-to-house singing songs, and being gifted with food, drink, or money. Guising, or dressing up and going trick or treating, may date back to the 15<sup>th</sup> century and early Christian customs in Western Europe. Elaborate masquerades that date back to the 15<sup>th</sup> century or even earlier celebrated marriages and important events during late medieval times. Mardis Gras and Carnival may also be ancestors of our penchant for Halloween costumes.

An important description of Halloween practices and costumes during the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is the travel diary of a 13-year-old American girl, Eleanor Goodrich, accompanying her father and family, while he did business in Europe. Her diary entry contains the following description of Halloween costumes. In her diary entry on Monday, October 30,

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<sup>57</sup> Gale Phyllis Galembo, "Halloween Costume," Encyclopedia of Clothing and Fashion. Ed. Valerie Steele (Detroit: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2005), accessed April 10, 2015, <http://www.gogalegroup.com.ezaccess.libraries.psu/ps/retrieve.do?inPS>.

1911, Eleanor reports, "...with the proprietor's wife, we all dressed up as ghosts in sheets..." and her diary continues on Tuesday, October 31, "in the afternoon... and made paper masks. We then went to a party in a little dining room where all the children in the hotel had supper together... [sic] [wearing] masks we danced before the guests of the hotel and then had our fortunes told by a witch."<sup>58</sup> This is important eye-witness account of a young person's celebration of Halloween during the 1910's. She describes costumes with masks of paper, and ghost costumes made of sheets. Her account is also important because it shows that even while traveling abroad, Halloween activities occurred.

What were the popular costume choices for the early part of the 1900's? Bannatyne confirms that, "...children's costumes in the 1920's reflected the public's idols and interests; there were Topsy's, Chinamen, Pierrots, clowns, Charlie Chaplins, cowboys, Indians, and the ubiquitous hobo."<sup>59</sup> These costume choices reflect American interests in other places and lifestyles, early film idols, and humor-provoking costumes. The hobo costume probably represented the unsettled and out-of-work men following their discharge from the army in World War One.

## **Journals and Advertising**

During the early twentieth century, women's journals continued to be important sources of information and products for their women readers. Important businesses continued to use the power of advertising to encourage their readers to purchase new consumables, and in the case of

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<sup>58</sup> Eleanor Goodrich, *Personal Travel Diary 1911* (PSU Paterno Library, Eberly Family Special Collection, Rare Books Room).

<sup>59</sup> Bannatyne, *Halloween: An American Holiday*, 149.

Halloween to apply Halloween and harvest themes to the items present in the August, September, October and November issues and publications. Multiple products were created to tie into holiday times and businesses invested heavily in advertising to promote their seasonally-linked products. Magazines and newspapers quickly began to see the benefits of seasonally-themed product advertising to increase revenues and to increasing public exposure through ads featuring Hollywood stars, holidays and seasonal products.”<sup>60</sup> We had become a consumer society and women’s journals became the primary method of imparting products. Advertising featuring Hollywood stars would play an important part in dictating American tastes.

Important factors would emerge during the early 1900’s that affected the celebrations of the American Halloween. The United States entered World War One in 1917. Paper shortages for newspaper and journal publication began at this time, which resulted in the doubling of newsprint prices between 1916 and 1917. In 1920, many newspapers across the nation could not obtain newsprint and had to publish abbreviated issues. This was not caused by rationing for the war effort, or by a lack of interest in publications. Rather, advertising exploded, causing increased demands for production in the strong World War I economy. <sup>61</sup> The paper shortage would affect the production of journals, books, and newspapers. It would also restrict the inexpensive paper necessary to create home-made costumes and party decorations.

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<sup>60</sup> Katie Bible and Mary Mallory, *Hollywood Celebrates the Holidays: 1920-1970* (PA: Schiffer Publishing, 2015), 7.

<sup>61</sup> James Grantham, *Wholesale Price Movements of Paper in Chicago: January 1, 1913 to June 30, 1922* (Illinois: Northwestern University, 1922), 1-13.

## Media

As another important factor beginning in the 1920's in America, radio, quickly became the chief method of information and entertainment. According to Richard Hand, "Radio arrived and infused the domestic environment and permeated the living space of the listener. People lived their lives by the sound of radio. Not only were news events broadcast 'as they happened,' but also, all radio broadcasting was live." He adds, "In addition to live 'factual' broadcasting, radio exploited its 'escapist' potential with similarly literal simultaneity. Shows such as the situation comedy *Amos n' Andy* (1926-1960) enjoyed a massive and sustained popularity the scale of which we struggle to comprehend with, during the peak of its popularity, over 50 million listeners tuning in to its live episodes each weekday night."<sup>62</sup>

Americans also went to the movies in large numbers. Film production was a third factor affecting media in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. According to Bible and Mallory, movie producers recognized the opportunities for personality photos to promote their stars, upcoming starlets, and movies by selling these photos to the many journals and newspapers eager for content such as written text and pictures. Journal and newspaper editors of the time required filler to complete their editions and content that would appeal to a large portion of the buying public, especially to women. Hollywood studios produced publicity campaigns centered around popular holidays to increase exposure of their stars by providing newspaper and magazine filler.<sup>63</sup> Some early movies of this period included: *The Three of Us* (1914), *The Way of a Man with a Maid* (1918), *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920), *Do the Dead Talk?* (1920), *At the Sign*

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<sup>62</sup> Richard J. Hand, "Stay Tuned for Tricks, Treats and Terror: Halloween and Horror Radio in the Golden Age of American Live Broadcasting," in Foley, McDonald, eds. *Trick or Treat?: Halloween in a Globalizing World* (UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), 214-15.

<sup>63</sup> Bible and Mallory, *Hollywood*, 7.

*of the Jack O'Lantern* (1922), *Nosferatu* (1922), *The Phantom of the Opera* (1925), and *Cheaters* (1927). Through films like these and others, Hollywood helped to manipulate and to popularize our popular culture ideas of Halloween customs, costumes, and related necessary products for the celebration of Halloween. Thus, Hollywood played its part in the consumerism, popularization, and continuation of Halloween in the United States.

Journals and newspapers published photos of many of their upcoming and popular stars. Also according to Bible and Mallory, studios produced stills of Anita Page, Clara Bow, Madge Bellamy, Nancy Carroll, Mary Miles Mintner, and Esther Ralsh, just some of the stars posing for Halloween-themed photos of Hollywood in the 1920's. Stars and starlets appeared in promo stills costumed as clowns, witches, farm girls, black cats, etc. and could be seen holding pumpkins or jack o'lanterns while posing on sets decorated with hay bales, scarecrows, ghosts, full moons, skeletons, black cats, skull, and brooms with spooky back-lighting.<sup>64</sup> These stills aided the Hollywood studios to keep the faces (and figures) of their stars continually before in the public eye.

This chapter focused on the celebration of Halloween in America as it shifted from its early European influences. From 1890 to 1920, many localized ethnic practices yielded to the new Americanized Halloween. Halloween had now arrived. Thanks to the innovations of radio and film during the Golden Ages of both, the holiday's popularity spread. Advertising, as well as the beginnings of material culture, created opportunities for commercialization. Women readers remained a force in the popularization and celebration of Halloween through journals and how-to-guides. Pranking affected American perceptions of the holiday, and would remain a problem in the coming decades. Communities continued to sponsor and search for alternative methods of

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<sup>64</sup> Bible and Mallory, *Hollywood*, 7.

celebration to avoid the destructiveness of pranking. Hollywood would retain its grip on the public while radio's importance would start to fade. The next decades would be crucial to the continuance of Halloween.



## Chapter 4: Consumerism and Material Culture, 1930's – 1940's

This final chapter follows the evolving celebration of Halloween in America. Effects of the Great Depression, the interwar years, and World War Two would continue to influence the practices of pranking and vandalism. In an effort to lessen or discontinue these practices entirely, more and more communities adopted alternate celebrations such as community parties and parades. At one point, some communities wrestled with the problem of dispensing with the holiday altogether. The latter part of the 1930's would see the beginnings of another important pranking alternative, trick or treating. Radio and Hollywood would continue to influence the popular face of the American celebration of Halloween. By the end of the 1940's, Halloween in America was firmly in place as a national celebration.

### Pranking

Pranking, or the Halloween 'Problem' continued to affect Halloween celebrations into the 1930's and 1940's. Its destructive practices would accelerate for a time as joblessness, hopelessness, poverty, and insecurities following the Great Depression and post-World War One America led adults and teens to perpetrate violent acts against the government, and the upper classes. Nicholas Rogers, a noted Halloween scholar, observes that, "During the Depression years, the Halloween custom of holding storekeepers ransom for candies, nuts, and apples became something of an economic imperative among the unemployed and their dependents. There was always the possibility that the holiday would become raucously aggressive. When the Chicago World's Fair of 1934 ended on 31 October, the authorities should have predicted trouble. At midnight, some 300,000 revelers, some of them masked as witches, took complete

control of 32 miles of streets and concessions, “drank everything in sight except Lake Michigan,” and rifled everything “moveable as souvenirs.”<sup>65</sup> This was a time of unrest and to the unemployed, pranking represented rebellion against those in authority. To those in need, helping themselves to anything those more affluent possessed seemed just.

Communities searched for ways to decrease the occurrences of destructive pranking. According to Lesley Pratt Bannatyne, town and community recreation departments created solutions for dealing with the problem such as radio giveaway contests on Halloween to ensure that children returned home directly from Halloween events. A week before the holiday, youngsters could register for the contest. Following local celebrations, the radio stations called chosen homes within an allotted time. If the child returned home within the stipulated time and received a call, they would win a prize. Some towns and communities organized parades and community parties for large numbers of their young participants. Another solution for the problem as Bannatyne points out, was to enlist children to be alert for others causing damage and to report them. Groups of likely transgressors were convinced to form into units and make the rounds of their city or town to prevent those bent on destruction and vandalism from achieving success.<sup>66</sup> Bannatyne reports that, “But despite the good attempts of many communities, the problem of vandalism persisted, especially in urban areas. In Queens, New York, for example, 1,000 windows were broken on Halloween 1939. Tires were slashed, car windshields pelted with eggs, gas caps stolen and false fire alarms rung. Such activities escalated throughout the late 1930s and nearly ruined Halloween in some cities.”<sup>67</sup> Town leaders, and newspaper articles and editorials called for an end to the vandalism.

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<sup>65</sup> Rogers, *Halloween*, 82.

<sup>66</sup>Bannatyne, *Halloween: An American Holiday*, 133.

<sup>67</sup> Bannatyne, *Halloween: An American Holiday*, 129.

During World War Two, destructive pranking faced even more censure. Bannatyne asserts that, “Even Chicago, with its successful Halloween safety program of 1925, considered eliminating the holiday by 1942. America had just entered World War II, and adults everywhere were caught up in a worldwide drama that demanded vigilance and conservatism. Anything destructive or wasteful—like Halloween mischief—was treated with new seriousness. Towns called in their air wardens to help guard against vandals, and stern warnings were issued from municipal, church and especially school authorities.” Bannatyne also reports, that according to James M. Spinning, superintendent of schools in Rochester, New York:

Letting the air out of tires isn't fun anymore. It's sabotage. Soaping windows isn't fun this year. Your government needs soaps and greases for the war. Carting away property isn't fun this year. You may be taking something intended for scrap, or something that can't be replaced because of war shortages. Even ringing doorbells has lost its appeal.<sup>68</sup>

A solution proposed by many towns and cities was to end Halloween celebrations until the war ended. An article by the New York Times reported that, “The Chicago City Council voted unanimously today to abolish Halloween for the duration and called upon Mayor Edward L. Kelly to issue a proclamation making October 31 ‘Conservation Day.’<sup>69</sup> Halloween pranking was considered a serious offense during World War Two. As rationing of items began, if pranksters destroyed items such as fences or doorbells, home and business owners could not find replacements. Scrap of any kind was diverted to the war effort. Pranking during the war years eventually disappeared in many places, but a form of pranking still exists in the Halloween celebrations of today.

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<sup>68</sup> Bannatyne, *Halloween: An American Holiday*, 129.

<sup>69</sup> *New York Times*, October 15, 1942, 20.

### **Celebrations: Parties and Parades**

During the 1930's and 1940's, Halloween parties and parades were important events, especially for children. Recall that community celebrations were originally scheduled to channel the destructive forces of pranking into socially acceptable activity. In the 1930s, those celebrations assumed a fresh purpose. During the Great Depression, family budgets were understandably tight. However, money issues did not stop people from celebrating Halloween. Parade participants could create costumes from rags and other leftover items. Thus, parades became inexpensive ways for Americans to enjoy Halloween. In 1936, city officials of New York hosted a massive Halloween party in Central Park. Three years later, Newark, New Jersey organized a parade that attracted 300,000 people. Across the country, cities and towns hosted similar events, though on a smaller scale.<sup>70</sup> What is the significance of all of these public celebrations? They show that Halloween remained an important part of American life, even at a time of great financial insecurity.

American leaders considered it important to celebrate holidays, and to continue to pursue normal daily activities during the war years. Although some areas ceased Halloween celebration during World War Two, many others continued the practice. Leaders considered Halloween celebration to be a chance for Americans to socialize, to ignore the war for a short time, and to enjoy life. Previous instances of pranking caused some officials to consider dropping celebration of the holiday. Many others though, considered public morale of the utmost importance.<sup>71</sup> Another example of the thought that Halloween celebration was important to America was one declared by the War Recreation Congress of 1942, "...Now, of all times, the restful, rebuilding,

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<sup>70</sup> Bannatyne, *Halloween: An American Holiday*, 124.

<sup>71</sup> Bannatyne, *Halloween: An American Holiday*, 131.

healing, creative power of recreation must be released to all the people. Recreation is a source of spiritual power from which one returns with renewed spirit....”<sup>72</sup> Halloween had become an important part of American holiday celebrations. During the war, it was important to keep up some semblance of usual celebrations. Keeping holiday traditions alive during a most difficult time meant life continued as usual no matter what the circumstances abroad.

The Allies declared victory in 1945. American service men began to return home and daily life started to return to normal. Holidays returned to their former importance. According to Bannatyne, after the war, pranking practices began to fade away. The holiday changed and became one celebrated by children.<sup>73</sup> Halloween had become a part of America’s national celebration of holidays. Americans were anxious to forget the lean years and enjoy the fun aspects of Halloween parties and parades.

## Media

The Golden Age of Radio would continue through the 1930’s and 1940’s. Millions of Americans owned radios. According to Richard Hand, radio introduced horror and suspense programs that kept their listeners on the edge of their seats. Listeners preferred eerie programs and had a selection of more than 80 to choose from every week all year long. Anticipated annually, Halloween episodes were favorites. One of the first radio horror programs was *The Witch’s Tale* (1931-38). The *Witch’s Tale* created the first character host, Old Nancy, ‘the witch of Salem.’ A famous Halloween episode was ‘All Hallow’s Eve (30 October 1933, revived 26

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<sup>72</sup> “A MANIFESTO from the War Recreation Congress, Sept. 28-Oct.2, 1942 in Cincinnati, Ohio,” *Recreation Magazine* 36: 384.

<sup>73</sup> Bannatyne, *Halloween: An American Holiday*, 135.

October 1937). Other examples of radio serials featuring horror were the *Inner Sanctum Mysteries* (1941-52), *Quiet Please* (1947-49), and *Suspense* (1942-62). Even though they dealt with suspense and horror weekly, they created Halloween special episodes. Comedy and variety radio shows also offered some of their greatest work at Halloween. *The Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy Show*, the *Sealtest Variety Hour*, *The Aldrich Family*, *Our Miss Brooks* and *The Jack Benny Program* all provided Halloween episodes for their listeners. Jack Benny's Halloween episodes from 1938 and 1941 provide a glimpse of American Halloween practices of the times. Through comedy sketches, these shows highlighted benign pranks, such as sticking a pin in a doorbell so that it rings constantly, pails of water balanced above doors, stealing sundials and other garden objects, and soaping windows.<sup>74</sup>

Radio is also responsible for one of the most infamous Halloween pranks ever. Mercury Theater performed a live broadcast radio program based on H. G. Wells's, *War of the Worlds* (1898) and adapted for radio by John Houseman and Howard Koch. This show aired on the evening of October 30, 1938 with incredible results. Historians calculate that some six million heard the CBS broadcast of which 1.7 million believed the events to be true and 1.2 million of whom were 'genuinely frightened.' While only six million were listening to this broadcast, thirty million others were tuned in to *The Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy Show* on NBC. This prank caused hundreds of thousands of people to panic and flood the streets. The radio station felt the effects of the live broadcast when police officers began to enter the studio a mere twenty minutes into the one-hour broadcast. The show continued until Welles delivered his memorable and supremely ironic final speech, 'Boo...It's Halloween,' after which he was taken in for

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<sup>74</sup> Richard J. Hand, "Stay Tuned for Tricks," in O'Donnell and Foley, eds. *Trick or Treat?: Halloween in a Globalizing World*, 215, 217.

questioning.<sup>75</sup> This was the ultimate Halloween prank and a true exploitation of radio and the horror special. Unfortunately, radio's popularity would fade as television became available to the masses and the medium of choice in the United States.

During the 1930's in America, pin-up photographs and Hollywood stills became popular with adults. They provided another instance of Halloween material culture and advertising aimed at consumers. Studios photographed their starlets and stars enticingly attired and posed with props for various holidays. For October events, starlets might be dressed as witches or portrayed with jack o' lanterns and pumpkins. Pin-ups were extremely popular during World War Two with American G.I.'s.<sup>76</sup> Hollywood stills continued to remain valuable promoters for major American holidays and, during the 1930's and 1940's, continued to be used as content in journals and newspapers. These stills were used to promote upcoming movies and as important product tie-ins. Photographs such as these could also be found in publications such as *Modern Screen*, *Silver Screen*, and *Photoplay*. Famous, and newly discovered actresses, such as, Esther Williams, Veronica Lake, Ruth Ross, Dusty Anderson, Ann Miller, Jane Greer, Anne Nagel, Betty Grable, Myrna Loy, Nan Grey, Judy Garland, Joan Crawford, and child stars Robert Coogan and Jackie Cooper (Uncle Fester in the original Addams Family television show from the 1960's,) were all available for purchase.<sup>77</sup>

Hollywood produced many popular and important movies with a Halloween tie-in or influence during the inter-war and war years. During the 1930's, releases were *Dracula* (1931), *Frankenstein* (1931), *Freaks* (1932), *The Mask of Fu Manchu* (1932), *The Old Dark House* (1932), *The Mummy* (1933), *As the Earth Turns* (1934), *Smoking Guns* (1934), *Dracula's*

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<sup>75</sup> Richard J. Hand, "Stay Tuned for Tricks," in O'Donnell and Foley, eds. *Trick or Treat?*, 223.

<sup>76</sup> Morton, *Trick or Treat*, 81-82.

<sup>77</sup> Bible and Mallory, *Hollywood*, 7.

*Daughter* (1936), *Boy of the Streets* (1937), *The Wizard of Oz*, © 1939, MGM-Turner Entertainment, and *Boy Friends* (1939). Animated features included *Halloween* (1931) featuring Toby the Pup, *Betty Boop's Halloween Party* (1933), *Topper* (1937), and *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, ©1937, Walt Disney Company. Releases for the 1940's featured *The Invisible Man Returns* (1940), *Black Friday* (1940), *Holiday Highlights* (1940), *I Wake Up Screaming* (1941), *Man Made Monster* (1941), *Here Comes Mr. Jordan* (1941), *I Married a Witch* (1942), *Between Two Worlds* (1944), *The Ghost and Mrs. Muir* (1947), *Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein* (1948), and *A Portrait of Jennie* (1948). An animated film produced during this time was *Fantasia*, © 1940, Walt Disney Company. Also produced was the first purported cartoon short to introduce Casper, *The Friendly Ghost* (1945). All of these films included either imagery or practices important to Halloween and Halloween celebrations, horror, or plots based on Halloween. The horror genre would increase in importance in the decades to come. As tastes changed, so would the types of horror addressed in the movies and literature created during future decades.

### **Trick or Treat**

American adopted the practice of trick or treating in an effort to prevent destructive pranking during the 1930's and 1940's. The earliest mentions of the phrase dates from the 1930's. As Jack Santino, Halloween scholar notes, "No one knows exactly how it began, but it is clearly a contemporary version of the British "guising" (from 'disguise') meaning, to wear costumes or disguises and roam the community."<sup>78</sup> I argue that the practice of trick or treating

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<sup>78</sup> Jack Santino, *All Around the Year* (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 150.



not only stems from guising traditions, but also incorporates aspects of mumming, souling, and pranking customs from Western Europe. I describe these practices in more detail in chapter two of this thesis. There is some disagreement about where the term first originated. The earliest recorded usage of the actual phrase 'trick or treat' that references Halloween is mentioned by a 1927 Alberta, Canada newspaper. Their article mentions pranksters (without costumes) demanding 'trick or treat' at houses. One of the first mentions of 'trick or treat' in an American newspaper occurs in their article from 1939 entitled 'A victim of the Window-Soaping Brigade?', which both refers to 'trick or treat' as the 'age-old Halloween salutation' and states clearly that the practice of trick or treat was replacing pranking. After the Second World War rationing ended. Rationed goods such as candy were again for sale and the practice of trick or treating became popular across the country.<sup>79</sup> Trick or treating became popular in America and it continues to be a major part of Halloween celebrations today.

Books, magazines, and how-to guides continued to be of importance to the celebration of Halloween. For the most part, publishers produced books for children, and magazines specially produced for children included Halloween folklore, games, and stories. Women's magazines were still important during the 1930's and 1940's for home decoration and hints for child-friendly celebrations. Dennison's ended production of Bogie Books, mainly aimed at adults, in 1934. One of the last of their publications, the *Halloween Fun Book*, was produced in 1937. The introduction notes that 'Instead of condemnation for pranks which too often overstepped the line, youth should be given the cooperation of their parents and leaders in making Hallowe'en a gala carefree holiday.' This issue refers to house-to-house parties and costuming events, all precursors

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<sup>79</sup> Morton, *Trick or Treat*, 79.

to the popular celebration of trick or treating.<sup>80</sup> Women were still important to the continued popularity of Halloween celebration, but their influence by the end of the 1940's was in providing the ultimate holiday experience for children. Destructive pranking continued to be a problem associated with Halloween until the 1950's. Trick or treating developed during the 1930's and the 1950's in an effort to divert pranks into a more constructive celebration. Trick or treat combined many of the European customs of guising, mumming, souling and pranking practices. Costumed children begging for treats became an accepted part of the holiday celebration.

### **Consumerism and Material Culture**

The 1930's and 1940's would see a major increase in the types of decorations available for Halloween celebrations. Costumes were mass-produced and would no longer need to be home-made. The end of World War Two and rationing would provide products and choices for the American consumer. The practice of trick or treating became the commonplace solution to the problem of pranking and turned the practice into one of consumption. Costumed children went door-to-door requesting treats and most had no idea of to what the trick portion referred. Like many other American holidays, it became a chance for consumerism. Advertising for holiday related products exploded and childhood consumerism became a usual practice.<sup>81</sup>

Changing cultural values in the roles of children and of the family in the United States after World War II brought about consumerism. People had money to spend, a new importance of family and family values, and family activities became important. All of these factors

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<sup>80</sup> Morton, *Trick or Treat*, 79.

<sup>81</sup> Rogers, *Halloween*, 87.

combined with the availability of consumer goods with factories changing production from wartime needs to consumer goods to produce the perfect consumer set-up for Halloween.

Halloween parties, Halloween parades, and many other Halloween activities directed toward children and families exploded in popularity. Manufacturing processes created during the war, improved post-war and produced better costumes with a much larger selection. Rationing ended and candy production returned to its pre-war production now that sugar was again unlimited in available quantities. Neighborhoods and communities encouraged and expected activities such as Halloween parades to involve the family and to reduce significantly destructive pranking practices.

## Chapter 5: Conclusion

Halloween stands apart as one of the most complex, curious, and contradictory of holidays. It is a day that has lasted not because of state or religious reasons. It is a folk holiday, a tradition kept alive voluntarily throughout the centuries by popular demand. The fact that Halloween remains a thriving national celebration speaks of our deep social need for a public festival in which we may drop at least some of the constraints that rule our everyday lives. At Halloween, we may publicly express our private selves through our costume and decoration choices.

Since Halloween is no longer associated with any of the religious aspects of the celebration, all American citizens are able to participate to their preferred degree. The celebration of Halloween does not require belief in any of the folklore (historical or created) in the United States. Those who believe in the lore and traditions of Halloween can celebrate in perfect harmony with those who embrace the holiday celebration emotionally, or as expressions of personal choice and individuality.

This thesis explains how an eclectic hodge-podge of European folklore, customs, rituals, games, and practices evolved over time into a single set of unified practices that I call the “modern Halloween.” Major influences such as the folklore practices and beliefs of hundreds of thousands of immigrants including the Irish and Scots; admiration for Queen Victoria; the hardships and adversities that accompanied participation in two world wars; and the Great Depression all contributed to our celebration. Modern advances such as the railroad, the radio, and Hollywood all assisted in shaping our celebration. Literature and art of the decades preceding the Civil War contributed images and stories of the past. Though several factors influenced this process, this thesis focuses on the role of women’s mass market magazines in the

mid-nineteenth century through the early decades of the twentieth century. Indeed, a central argument of this thesis is that these magazines instructed thousands of American mothers and house wives how to celebrate the holiday. It was through the act of reading that mothers learned about costumes, party games, trick or treating, benign pranks, and fortune-telling. When those women then went on to construct the holiday in a way that their children and families would love, the modern Halloween was born.

Where does Halloween go from here? There is so much information available about Halloween, but more work could be done in different areas. One possibility for exploration could be relating childhood consumerism to Halloween. Books have been published with photographs of Halloween costumes, but work could be done to show the significance of costume selection in each decade. Another choice might be to compare the post war and family-centered Halloween of the 1950's to its celebration in the upheaval of the social order of the 1960's. More regional studies of Halloween might be done in order to preserve remaining memories of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Candy is another subject that deserves mention. Halloween favorites by decade of the twentieth century, and changes in distribution and production methods of candy might be of interest. The rise of the horror genre is another subject deserving attention. The possibilities are there. Choose **your** trick or treat.

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