

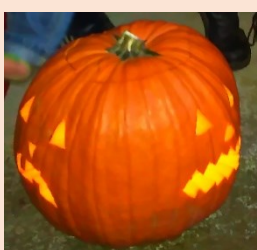
Halloween in Boylston

By Judy Haynes, Gordon Hastings & Fred Brown

Halloween is approaching and for children, in particular, it means a time for light hearted fun, making decorations, carving pumpkins and going door to door dressed in one's favorite costume to receive treats.

How did it start, and what are the roots of Halloween? Halloween, a contraction of All Hallows' Eve is believed by most scholars to have originated 2000 years ago when the Celtic people celebrated the end of the harvest and the start of the new year with the Celtic festival of Samhain. Halloween observance today holds some of the same symbols of the Celtic All Hallows' Eve with bonfires, lanterns, treats, and costumes.¹ All Hallows Eve, October 31 and November 1 and 2, All Souls Day, as it is known in Mexico have similar roots, with the ritual of marking the transition from summer to winter and the remembering the dead.^{2,3} According to Mesoamerican culture, October 31st, The Day of the Dead, was a blend of European religion and Spanish culture with the holiday starting at midnight October 31 and celebrated through November 2nd, All Souls Day. The primary origins include the ritual of marking the transition. Just as plants die at end of summer, and the coming of the cold represents the seasonal change, people use this time to not only indicate the change, but also to honor their dead loved ones.

Over a period of centuries, many different types of celebrations were introduced at this time of year. In the ninth century, Catholics and Anglican Christians celebrated All Hallows Eve as initial day of their three-day season of Allhallowtide with November 1st being All Saints Day and November 2nd being All Souls Day. All Hallows Eve on October 31st commemorating the holiness of the saints' day which was to follow, a day to remember the saints and martyrs who had died.⁴



Double Faced Jack-o-lantern
Boylston, Massachusetts

A popular Halloween icon, the jack-o-lantern stems from the character of Irish folklore who carried a carved-out turnip with a coal inside to light his way.⁵ The "trick or treating was originally an English custom where one would knock on doors to ask for "soul cake" after which they would offer prayers for the dead of the household, sometimes telling a joke, or performing a light hearted prank to receive the treat.⁶

The element of mischief and destruction as part of the Halloween celebration was not to be had by Mrs. Krebs of Hiawatha, Kansas, who was sometimes referred to as the 'Mother of Halloween.' In an effort to protect her garden from vandalism during Halloween, she started holding Halloween parties in 1913 to create a distraction from mischief, with costume contests, food, dancing and sweet treats. Mrs. Krebs then involved the whole town in an effort to save her garden and avoid such wanton behavior.⁷ The Halloween Party celebrations caught on around the country.⁸

Halloween continues to be a light hearted community celebration, focused on the young or the young at heart. And All Hallows Eve (October 31st), All Saints Day (November 1), and All Souls Day (November 2) remains a season of celebration. For it is during this time that the Roman Catholic Church and Anglican Christian Church remember the saints and martyrs.

For many years in the twentieth century, friends in Boylston gathered, put on their costumes and went door to door saying "Trick or Treat." The following is a first-hand account by Gordon Hastings of Halloween in Boylston.



Robot
Boylston, Massachusetts

"There was nothing commercial about Halloween in the late 1940s and early 1950s. No such thing as a store-bought costume. Everything was by hand design, usually with parental help. Lots of ghosts in re-purposed white sheets with holes for the eyes and nose. Hobo looks were popular with ragged clothes, dirt smudged on the face and a tied sack hitched to a pole over the shoulder. Cowboy or cowgirl outfits were common and once in a while an Indian headdress would appear, mostly made of turkey feathers."

"On the night before Halloween, we all carved our pumpkins and affixed a candle inside. On the big night we always set out as a group. Trick or treating was confined to the neighborhood, usually no more than six or eight houses, but many neighbors made the night special. The Garfield's one year blindfolded us all and took us on a ghost walk through their old barn, with plenty of icky things to stick our hands into and spider webs (real). There were strange screams (enlisted parents) from beneath the floor and in the hayloft. One had to touch Molly (Grandpa Garfield's horse) as he represented some strange creature. We were all spellbound and of course a bowl of candy appeared once the blindfolds came off back in the Garfield's kitchen."

"There were homemade goodies made by Florence Young at her house on Central Street (chocolate fudge) and Alice McDougald's pastries at her Cross Street home."

"In the early fifties the Ware family moved to Boylston and lived for a time at the old Stark farmhouse (long since demolished). In their back room they always set up games. We dunked for apples (some with a nickel inside), tried to eat donuts tied to a string (there were plenty available for eating normally after the contest) and played blindfolded Pin the Tail on the Donkey. Candy bars (Old Nick's) for the winners."

¹ www.history.com/topics/halloween/history-of-halloween

² Mark, Joshua J. "History of Halloween." World History Encyclopedia. 2019

³ <https://www.history.com/topics/halloween/day-of-the-dead>

⁴ Shoup, Rev. Steven L., All Hallows Eve, All Saints Day, All Souls Day, Sidney Daily News, October 28, 2021

⁵ Ellis, Hercules, The Romance of Jack O' Lantern

⁶ Shoup, Rev. Steven L., All Hallows Eve, All Saints Day, All Souls Day, Sidney Daily News, October 28, 2021

⁷ Mark, Ibid.

⁸ May, Joey, 100 years of tradition-how it all began with Mrs. Krebs, 2014

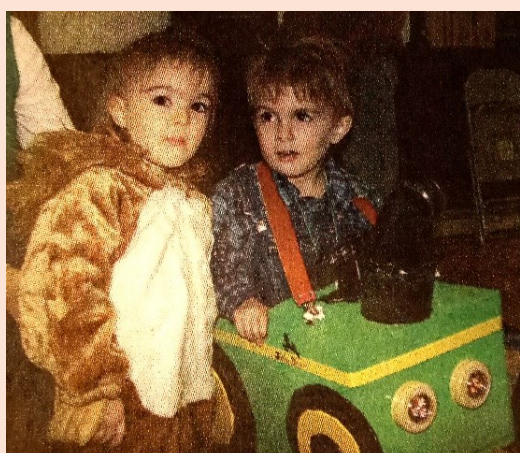
“Bill Kennedy and his wife Nan lived in the original Daniel Hastings House on Central Street. They always served hot cider and donuts for all comers. And of course, there was a candy bowl: Tootsie Rolls, Sky Bars, plenty of Indian Corn and also always apples.”

“I remember it as always being cold on October 31 with frosty dried leaves underfoot. Everyone had a jack-o-lantern lit with a candle on their front steps or porch.”

“On an occasional year as our group trudged up the hill from the Kennedy’s a group of parents hiding behind the Garfield’s stone wall with sheets over their heads would leap into the street and strike terror into us all as we fled toward the safety of the lone street light which sat at Cross and Central Streets. It was a sad time when we all became too old for such simple fun.”⁹

Years back, Fred and Kim were working at the table in the library. “We were all alone in the building when suddenly we heard a scraping sound coming from the auditorium. It sounded exactly like a chair being dragged across the floor. We looked at each other, Kim went upstairs, but nothing had been moved.”¹⁰ What do you think happened that Halloween?

By 2009, the tradition of holding Halloween parties was in full swing by Boylston families and the Boylston Police Officers who worked with the schools on the Drug Abuse Resistance Education program. The youngster in this photograph on the left won “Best Costume in his Age Group.” The youngster in the photograph on the right won a mountain bike for her corpse bride costume. Additional pictures can be found in the *Boylston Historical Society Photograph and Newspaper Collection*.



Costume Contest Winner

*Boylston, Massachusetts
2009*

Photograph courtesy of BHSM Collection



Costume Contest Winner

*Boylston, Massachusetts
2009*

Photograph courtesy of BHSM Collection

There is no loss of interest in making this a fun holiday in 2022. Collaboration and fun events provide an opportunity to enjoy this seasonal activity in a safe environment. This October, The Boylston Parks & Recreation department jointly sponsored with the Boylston Public Library a ‘Halloween for Toddlers’ at the Town Office where the showing off the costumes was just as much fun for the parents as it was for the youngsters.



HAPPY HALLOWEEN

‘Halloween For Toddlers Event’

Sponsored by Boylston Parks & Recreation and the Boylston Public Library

Photographs Courtesy of the Boylston Public Library

Watch for more fun Halloween activities at the second annual
“*BES Pumpkin Festival*”

which will be hosted on Saturday October 29th at the Boylston Elementary School with costume contests, sweet treats, pumpkins carving contest, games, a craft corner, and music along with local law enforcement and firefighters and their vehicles.

⁹ Hastings, Gordon, email, October 2022

¹⁰ Brown, Frederick, email, October 2022

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