



Spooky Halloween Fun Facts

OUR MODERN HALLOWEEN and its customs have derived from both the ancient Celtic festival, the Roman festival, and the Christian holiday. The huge influx of Irish immigrants in the last two hundred years, led to much influence on traditions and customs of Hallowe'en. Here are the possible roots of some of the more popular Hallowe'en symbols:

Witches:

Witch, or "Wica" is derived from the Wiccans who performed rituals in ancient times among the Celts. Often portrayed on a broom or standing over a cauldron, these images derive from the wica rituals of potion making and divination. Superstitions abound, and black cats were often said to be a witch in disguise.

Devil:

In ancient societies, often the animal of choice for sacrifice was the goat. So images we often see of the devil portray him with horns, a pointed chin, hooves, and large eyes.

Owls & Bats:

Owls and bats were nocturnal animals and often owls were seen at harvest time, feeding on rodents and other animals in the fields. The lore of a bat being Dracula, has derived from a species of blood sucking bats. Since Hallowe'en is celebrated mostly at night, these nocturnal animals came to be a portrayed often in stories and decorations.

Ghosts:

Since this time of year was considered to be the time when the veil between the living and dead was at the thinnest, it was a common belief that one could mingle with the dead and commune with dead relatives. Anything that seemed unnatural or odd would be blamed on "ghosts" having done it.

Fortunes:

It was at this time of year that fortunes were sought out, to see what fate had in store for people. It was seen as the time for the most accurate predictions. Through time this led to fortune games at parties and the Victorian custom of twirling apple parings over one's head. When the paring fell to the ground, it formed a shape of a letter, the first letter of the name of a future beau.

Trick or Treating:

It has been suggested that trick or treating derived from the poor begging for food or the poor begging for soul cakes in return for their prayers for the dead. In Scotland in the 1800's, kids would go out "guising" in costume for treats.

Jack o' Lanterns:

The legend of the most familiar Hallowe'en symbol--a lighted pumpkin--comes from a tale of an old Irish miser named Jack. Jack made several pacts with the devil. He also tricked the devil. When he died, he could not get into Heaven for his sins and because he had tricked the devil, he could not get into Hell. The Devil gave him a coal and Jack placed it in a hollowed out turnip, which lit his way as he wandered the earth until Judgment Day.

These lit up turnips of ancient times were also said to help ward off evil. Pumpkins, native to America, were plentiful and took the place of turnips.