

# Old-Time Halloween Party Suggestions

*"The Suggestions may be followed explicitly, or they may simply serve as the foundation upon which a hostess may build her party." (Dennison Bogie Book, 1926 edition, pg 1)*

THROWING AND OLD-FASHION HALLOWEEN AFFAIR lends a quaint and timeless feel to any Halloween party. Your guests will revel in the silliness of old-time games and stunts, fortunes that are told, and the imagery you conjure up from Halloween celebrations past. Diane C. Arkins refers in *Halloween Merrymaking* to the "Golden Age" of Halloween as being 1875 to 1935. Old-time parties were typically dances, church and club socials, bridge dinners, and masquerade balls. Today they also include jack o' lantern carving parties, school and church carnivals, and pre-trick or treating parties for kids.

The following basic suggestions are taken from old party planning booklets from the 1920s and from modern vintage style parties. When planning a party, focus on the following categories to set the right mood: *The Invitation, The Welcome, Party Decor, Setting the Table & Favors, Lighting and Music, and Party Games.*



## The Invitation:

Invitations should be bold and have an air of mystery to set a haunting mood and entice your guests.

Suggestions include: handmade paper invites or computer printed invites with magical wording.

Use images with vintage flair or copies of old images from vintage postcards and other paper ephemera.

Some examples of old-time invitation wording:

**"Won't you come and  
Sport with fate  
on Hallowe'en  
at ----- o'clock"**

**Whe-ee - Who-oo!  
We-want-you oo  
At this number: \_\_\_\_\_  
On this street \_\_\_\_\_  
Hallowe'en's the time  
We meet**

**If on a broomstick you can't fly  
Some other way of traveling try,  
But come you must, at \_\_\_\_ o'clock  
to \_\_\_\_\_ St.**

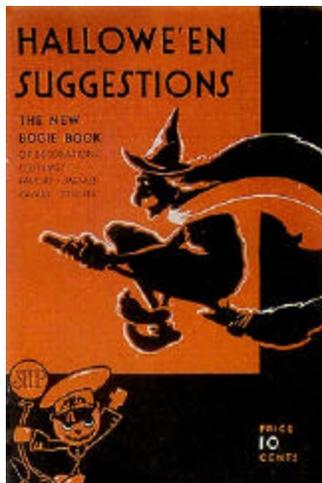
**Come to our  
Hallowe'en "Hoop-te-dee"  
Scare-crows -  
'n everything  
on a Spree!**

Other invitation suggestions include delivering jack o' lanterns to your invitees, asking guests to bring a jack o' lantern as their ticket of entry, and creating a box filled with trinkets and favors along with the RSVP information.

#### The Welcome:

Spook your guests as they enter your party by adding flair to a doorway, entryway, or porch. Cobwebs, garlands, wreaths, an assortment of feathered owls or ravens or other creepy crawlies, beckoning jack o' lanterns, and strings of festive lights provide a jump start to the fun. Decorate depending on your theme and run with it!

#### Party Decor:



"Fortunately, Hallowe'en decorations need not be a related scheme, the more weird and spooky the better." (*Dennison Bogie Book, 1922 edition, pg 4*)

The Dennison Bogie books featured amazing displays of crepe and festooning that literally filled up and set the mood for any party scene. Swags and crepe moss, garlands and hanging diecuts artfully decorate just about any room. Finding a focal point in a room--a light fixture or a beam--and then sweeping from corners to that focal point is a great way to lay a foundation upon which to build your decorating scheme.



A great list of basic starter crafting and decorating items to use for your parties includes: crepe paper streamers, crepe paper, tissue paper, balloons, garlands, diecuts and scraps, seals, cardstock, silhouettes, construction paper, scrapbooking papers, wire, charms, and ribbons in various sizes and types. From these items, you can embellish things you've bought or made and create the right theme items. Color copy old

decorations and paper ephemera like postcards to add to your scheme for that vintage flair!

Use vintage collectibles as decorations--grouped on tables or in centerpieces, displayed in windows or on a welcome table. A Halloween tree can be as simple as a store bought piece or you can take gnarly tree branches and paint them black for effect. A wide variety of ornaments can be hung or hang favors for your guests. Hanging nutcups or treat cones are perfect for trees.

### **Setting the Table and Favors:**



A quick and easy festive table cover is crepe paper. It stretches slightly and can be swept over and around a table with ease. Crepe borders, diecuts, scraps, and seals can be added for extra flair. Felt makes a nice cover as well and felt decorations can be sewn or glued on in various patterns.

Other table items included placecards, favors, nut cups, and center pieces such as Jack Horner Pies. Jack Horner "Pies" were not real pies. They were typically a candy or favor container that was created using cardboard and crepe with embellishments. Candy and favors were placed inside it for guests to take. An easy "pie" is a container that you wrap with crepe and festoon with ribbon and scraps. A cauldron hung

from a small tripod was also a popular centerpiece.

Nut cups are great for nuts and also various candies and small favors. Blowouts and noisemakers were common favors--an old time custom for warding off evil spirits with noise, grew into the making of spirited noisemakers with spooktacular Halloween imagery. Quaint favor ideas often consisted of crepe, seals and scraps and wire to create creatures that stood up on wire or wrapped around objects like lifesavers. A goody bag, treat cone, or nut cup makes a nice combination place card and favor at the dinner table.

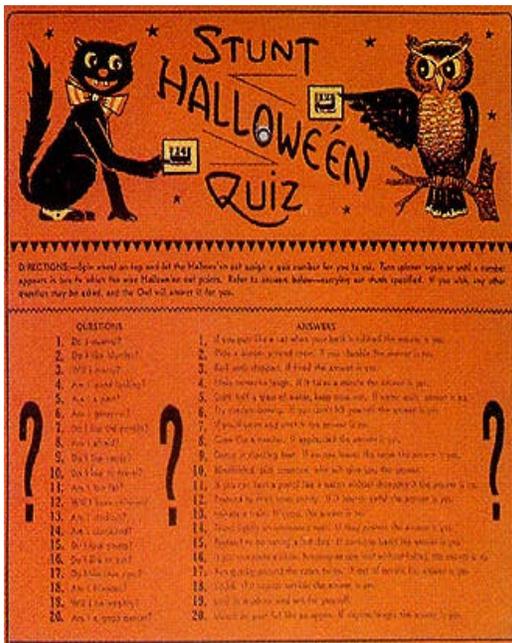
### **Lighting and Music:**

Jack o' lanterns all aglow in your windows beckon visitors to the



mystery inside. Papier mache lanterns--vintage or new reproductions and home crafted versions--are delightful. Group them on porches, display tables, and consider stringing them as light garlands or hang them from the ceiling and trees. A bucket of floating candles can light the way: use floating candles and also consider sticking votive or tea lights into carved apples or into "walnut boats." For modern parties, musical selections abound--but the more haunting the better. You may not want to play music the whole evening, but instead, time it to various events for a more spooky effect. Haunting music is best to create an eerie atmosphere--footsteps, creaking doors, lightening and thunder, chilling screams and ghostly sounds, animal sounds like owls hooting or wolves howling, and a mix of other sounds are just right.

**Party Games:**



It was traditional to bob for apples, cut a fortune cake, pull a root of kale, walk backwards down stairs with a mirror in one's hand, and blow out lighted candles. Other activities included sailing walnut boats, stringing popcorn, apple paring, and telling fortunes.

Walnut boats were half shells of walnuts to which a piece of a candle taper was placed inside. These were floated in water and their action helped decipher the future. If they floated together or stayed apart. The first person's candle to go out was fated to be a bachelor or a maid. Apples were pared in one long strand of apple skin which was thrown over one's left shoulder. The initial it formed would be a favored escort.

Fortune telling and fate was a common theme in old-time parties. Ladies looked to see their future mate in mirrors and hoped their initials might be revealed in the parings of apples--these scenes are commonplace in old-time postcard images. Companies like The Beistle Co. created fun games to play--use a vintage game to craft your own for game play or use a vintage one (carefully of course!) Often these games involved fortunes and stunts. Fortunes were often read to guests or drawn from objects like kettles. Once drawn, they were read allowed. Fortunes could be found in your cake--in the way of charms, fortune charm pulls were popular, and also fortune verses handed out to guests.

Prizes were often given for individual winners and groups who won the various games. Old-time suggestions included wrapping prizes to look like corn or pumpkins. Crepe paper is perfect for this task.

No matter how you throw together your fabulous affair, come back to [www.vintagehalloween.com](http://www.vintagehalloween.com) help provide the flair!