



GENEALOGY

Relatively Speaking

October 2023

THE HALLOWEEN ANCESTRY



Tlachtga – a birthplace of Halloween (photo taken from [discoverboynevalley](https://www.discoverboynevalley.com))

THE IRISH ORIGINS OF HALLOWEEN

By Maria Rubtsova

Halloween, a beloved holiday celebrated worldwide with costumes, sweets, and spooky decorations, traces its roots in Ireland's ancient past. While now we connect it with black and orange, Halloween's origins are as verdant as the Emerald Island itself.

The Celtic year, ruled by lunar cycles, was divided into four seasons, with a

significant event occurring at the midpoint between the Autumnal Equinox and Winter Solstice. The festival called Samhain was the most sacred and scary time of the year. On the night of October 31, the Great Fire Festival was held at Tlachtga (the Hill of Ward). The Celts believed that on this night, the boundary between the living and the Otherworld was blurred, allowing ghosts, fairies, and other supernatural beings to cross over into our realm. Bonfires were lit to ward off evil spirits and provide warmth and protection during the approaching colder months. These traditions weren't forgotten even after Saint Patrick brought Christianity to Ireland in 432 AD. Instead, they merged with Christian beliefs to create All Hallows Eve, which later became the modern Halloween. Ancient rituals evolved yet some Irish traditions survived to the present day.

Jack-O-Lantern: One of the most iconic symbols of Halloween is believed to have Irish origins. The legend of "Stingy Jack," a cunning and deceitful man who tricked the Devil himself, has been passed down through generations. According to the tale, Jack was condemned to wander the earth for eternity with only a hollowed-out turnip containing coal to light his way. When Irish immigrants brought this story to America, they found that pumpkins were more abundant, giving rise to the modern jack-o-lantern.

* Indian Trails Public Library has a children's version of Jack's story to check out: *The Story of the Jack O'Lantern* by Katherine Tegen

Costumes: Dressing in elaborate costumes on Halloween isn't merely a contemporary trend. The Celts believed that wearing disguises allowed them to avoid being recognized by spirits and other supernatural entities that roamed freely during Samhain. Masks and costumes served as a protective shield against these otherworldly visitors. Some would disguise themselves as animals or other individuals in the hope of confusing spirits and warding off any potential harm. This practice eventually evolved into the modern tradition of dressing up on Halloween.

Trick-or-Treating: The tradition of kids trick-or-treating on Halloween has its roots in a combination of ancient customs and later Christian practices. In Celtic traditions, during the festival of Samhain, people would leave out food and offerings to appease wandering spirits. Other trace leads back to the medieval practice of "souling," where poor individuals would go door-to-door on All Souls' Day, asking for food or money in exchange for prayers for the souls of the deceased. As time went on, these practices merged and evolved into a modern tradition for children.

The Irish roots of Halloween continue to remind us that beneath the layers of commercialization, the holiday's true magic lies in its ability to connect us to our ancestors. Ireland has gifted us with a holiday that blends the mystical and the playful, the spooky and the joyous - a true celebration of life, death, and all that lies between.

Resources:

- [Ancient Origins of Halloween](#) (from history.com)
- [Top Ancient Irish Halloween Traditions](#) (IrishCentral article)



*Authentic Irish Jack-o-Lantern
(from Dublin National Museum
of Ireland)*

- [Hill of Ward: Did Halloween begin on 'magical' ancient site?](#) (BBC News article)
- [Traditions and customs of Halloween/Samhain](#) (National Museum of Ireland)
- [Tlachtga - Hill of Ward](#) (from Knowth Megalithic Passage Tomb website)

Halloween Family History cartoon by Kevin Beckstrom (2016) [Meridian Magazine](#)



"Family history is great! I love finding all those connections that have combined to make me into the person that I am today!"

SNAPSHOTS OF HALLOWEEN CELEBRATION FROM 60 AND 100 YEARS AGO

ITPLD has a digitized collection of select local Wheeling Independent newspapers. Two snapshots of the newspaper are highlighted below. To access these documents, please schedule a 1-1 appointment or make a research request [here](#).

We also have a database in the library called the NewsBank Historical Archive. Click [here](#). Access is available for ITPLD cardholders.

Hollywood Homeowners Halloween Party



Mrs. Anna Marie Harrod and Mrs. Ruth Hodgins are having fun with the children at the Hollywood Ridge Homeowners Halloween Party. The witch in the background is none other than Mrs. Dolores Erickson. The children were moving a little too fast for this old reporter to get their names.



Mrs. Norma Mack appears to be having as much fun as the youngsters. The party was held at the Jack London Cafeteria last Friday evening. Quite a crowd of youngsters and parents showed up.

The Wheeling Independent October 24, 1963

Prizes For Best Costumes at Halloween Bonfire & Parade

Donna Driscoll will be chairman for the annual Halloween bonfire to be held on October 30th from 7:30 p.m. at the Wheeling Community Pool in the Chamber of Commerce Park. Prizes will be awarded for the best costumes worn at the bonfire. A parade will also be included.

Chairman of the Halloween Teen Dance is Alma Suckow. The dance will be from 7:30 to 11 p.m. at the Amvet Hall on Milwaukee Avenue, with the "Wonderers" to provide the music. Free hot dogs and coke will be provided.

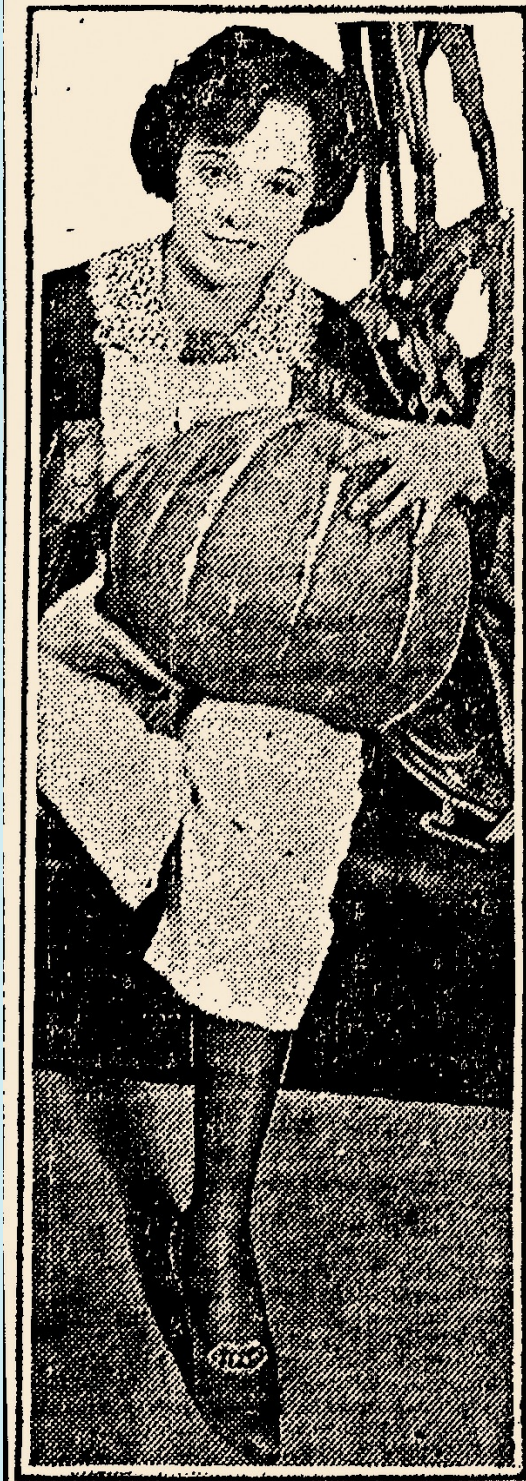
Sponsors of the events are the Wheeling Jaycees and Police Reserve Unit.

The Wheeling Jay Cee Jills met at the home of Mrs. Lyle Van Auken for their October meeting.

The next meeting will be held at the home of Mrs. Tom Brice, 312 Renee Terrace on November 11 at 8:30 p.m.

Halloween plot to bring romances to a climax, Chicago Tribune, October 29, 1920.

From NewsBank Historical Archive



PLOTTER

One of Leaders in Halloween Party Planned to "Speed Up" Tardy Romances.

MARJORY HARNETT.

OCTOBER 23. (TRIBUNE Photo) Miss Marjory Harnett is a Halloween party for board of education employes. 'Actually — as Mrs. Elsa Brinsley, secretary to the superintendent, takes pains to explain—it is a deep dyed plot to bring several romances to a climax.

"Some couples have been entirely too slow in reaching an understanding," she says. "We'll just make 'em bob for apples from the same bucket and go to the same fortune teller."

The seceress is to be Miss Grace Clement, whose blonde locks will be covered with Romani tresses for the evening. Miss Marjory Harnett is the decoration committee, for, Mrs. Brinsley argues, she's the most decorative thing about the place. Tonight's the night.

© Chicago Tribune

GENEALOGY INTEREST GROUP MEETING

Monday, October 30
7-8 pm

Monday, December 4
7-8 pm

Are you looking to get started in creating a family tree? Are you stuck on a particular research conundrum? Join us for a Genealogy Interest Group meeting where you can connect with other genealogy enthusiasts and skilled staff. These sessions are informal and suitable for beginner and experienced

researchers alike. Registration required.

REGISTER FOR MONDAY, OCTOBER 30

REGISTRATION OPENS ON SUNDAY, OCTOBER 15

Website

Events

Catalog

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