

Weird Old Figures and a New Twist:
Cultural Functions of Halloween at the Turn of the 20th Century

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ABSTRACT

Halloween arrived in the United States in the mid-nineteenth century with the surge in immigration from the British Isles – especially Ireland. However, the folk holiday did not gain widespread attention until the late 1870s and 1880s when descriptive pieces containing both accounts of Halloween’s long history increasingly appeared in some newspapers and periodicals. Over the next couple decades, these descriptive pieces became more prescriptive, instructing women how to throw a “proper” Halloween party; what food to serve, games to play, and atmosphere to evoke. By the turn of the twentieth century and up through the 1920s, the middle-to-upper class – specifically women – adopted the holiday all across the country and characterized it with parties, decorative displays, and the propagation of literature, imagery, and ephemera.

Since Halloween had existed as an ethnic folk tradition in America for several decades, why and how did this particular group of Americans adopt – and adapt – Halloween to meet their needs? Which Halloween traditions did they retain and how did they shape the holiday for their own purposes? Finally, how did this particular celebration of Halloween reflect the interplay of certain values among these celebrants through literature, imagery, and ephemera? This study of Halloween asks what the celebration of holidays and rituals can tell us about the culture in which they are celebrated. By employing a method which gives equal weight to historical context, audience, and imagery, we gain valuable insight about the stratum of American society which made Halloween an American tradition.

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GENERAL AUDIENCE ABSTRACT

Until the late nineteenth century, Halloween in the United States amounted to barely anything more than a couple informational inches of column space in October newspapers. By the 1920s, however, full-page advice pieces for Halloween parties and advertisements for themed costumes, decorations, and food were not only in newspapers, but magazines and catalogs as well. Overwhelmingly thanks to white, middle-to-upper-class women, Halloween had transformed from a foreign, ethnic folk holiday of Ireland and the British Isles to an annual, widespread American tradition. These people embraced Halloween as an occasion to both celebrate the imagined simplicity of a shared ancestral past *and* take advantage of the modern industrial and commercial boom that would fuel the mass production of Halloween-themed goods and novelties. This thesis examines newspapers, magazines, postcards, and a line of holiday catalogs to show how the text and imagery of Halloween products successfully integrated conflicting values and secured the holiday a place in the American seasonal canon.

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I had the great fortune of locating a sizable collection of primary sources for my research at the Winterthur Museum, Library, and Garden, thanks to Melanie Kiechle's extremely helpful suggestion. I'd like to thank Emily Guthrie and those at the Winterthur Library who graciously pulled out boxes and boxes of Halloween ephemera and postcards for me to examine and photograph for the entire of a snowy March afternoon. Their help and permission for my use of the images made most of this thesis possible.

Finally, I would like to thank the faculty of the Virginia Tech History Department (especially Glenn Bugh and LaDale Winling), my fellow stalwart graduate students (especially Jonathan MacDonald, Jenny Nehrt, and Daniel Newcomb), and my friends and family for the constant support and feedback when it came to every single one of my endeavors. Extra special thanks go to my parents, Phil and Vicki Williams, for their undying encouragement, confidence, and enthusiasm. I am incredibly fortunate to have a family that never once second-guessed my career ambitions or discouraged me from following my chosen path. This work is for them.

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INTRODUCTION

Today, Halloween is celebrated in every corner of the United States and is one of the most lucrative holidays in the seasonal canon, second only to Christmas. In the mid-nineteenth century, however, Halloween existed in print as small newspaper blurbs only a few column inches in size describing the ethnic folk holiday. The holiday was new to the United States at the time, having arrived with waves of Irish immigrants in search of new lives and opportunities. It was widely celebrated in Ireland and also observed in Scotland, Wales, and England, but in the U. S., decades passed before Halloween gained popularity beyond its original celebrants or appeared in the media with any kind of detail.¹ By the 1920s, Halloween had become a widely popular American tradition, enthusiastically celebrated annually with parties, pranks, and the mass production of materials meant specifically for use in these celebrations. A holiday once confined to lower-class immigrant communities and regarded mainly as an overseas observance by the media had become an annual middle-class celebration planned and executed by women. This thesis looks at news media and ephemera in order to explain the growing popularity of an American version of Halloween.

Since Halloween had existed as an ethnic folk tradition in America for several decades, why and how did middle-class Victorian Americans adopt Halloween as their own and celebrate the holiday as they did? Which preexisting Halloween traditions did Americans retain and how did they shape the holiday for their own celebratory purposes? Modes of celebration for a

¹ Nicholas Rogers, *Halloween: from pagan ritual to party night* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 51-52. Immigrant celebrations of Halloween in America prior to this shift are poorly-documented; in most cases, short descriptions of transatlantic Halloween customs appeared only sporadically in American newspapers until the 1870s and 1880s. In his monograph on the history of Halloween, historian Nicholas Rogers lamented the lack of sources describing Irish immigrant celebrations in cities and rural regions, essentially concluding that such observances likely consisted of traditional divination practices and games held indoors among family members.

particular holiday at a particular point in time can provide valuable insight into class identity and perceptions of the “other.” Halloween at the moment of its widespread adoption and proliferation throughout the United States provides an excellent opportunity to examine how the culture of this new middle-class America provided such fertile ground for an Americanized version of Halloween.

By looking at news coverage and at the messages found in mass-produced objects for celebrating the day, I argue that the American Halloween emerged in the late-nineteenth century because it was a particularly suitable opportunity for a specific stratum of Americans to engage with the new, industrialized culture of consumption while holding onto a powerful attachment to a “simpler,” romanticized past. In Halloween, middle-class Americans found an opportunity to participate in a new culture of consumption as well as the comparably powerful culture of nostalgia that swept American society at the same time. Halloween was new to the middle class (especially in comparison to other holidays such as Christmas and Thanksgiving), but its Anglo-Saxon roots complemented a nostalgic attraction to traditions among white Americans who drew connections between the holiday and the culture of their own ancestors. At the same time, technological innovation and the very means of production which propagated holiday materials were representations of “the new” which participants fervently embraced as recognition of their modernity. As Halloween observances captured the interplay of nostalgia and progress, elements of the old and the new were critical components of celebration. This holiday is not the only example of this melding of the old and the new, but it is a particularly good example of ritualistic expression of class and gender adaptation to a new commercialized culture in turn-of-the-century America.

In the decades following the Civil War, technological advances in manufacturing and production characterized a new industrial revolution marked by a significant increase in consumerism involving mass-produced goods and literature. Entrepreneurial business leaders skilled in finance were the new figures of power. Scientific discoveries inundated Americans with ideas that the pursuit of progress and the “new” were ultimate virtues for those seeking the modern “good life.” The “new middle class” that emerged during this time was overwhelmingly white, professional men and women who believed in attainable upward mobility, the value of education, and the virtue of progress. As the historian Rebecca Edwards explains, these people recognized that old traditions and beliefs were no longer the bedrock of their lives, yet they could not tear themselves completely away from the past. When it came to expression of this tension, women homemakers, armed with the power of the purse and confronted by storefront displays and advertisements, filled their living spaces with collectibles, trinkets, and décor that expressed their style and tastes.²

This era was marked by materialistic lifestyle choices that the new middle class utilized for the purposes of definitive self-expression. Historians have varied in defining the timing for the emergence of the American “culture of consumption,” but there is strong evidence for pinpointing its emergence and solidification in the years from 1880 until about 1930.³ The

² Rebecca Edwards, *New Spirits: Americans in the Gilded Age, 1865-1905* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010); and Michael McGerr, *A Fierce Discontent: The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement in America, 1870-1920* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

³ For influential works exploring the consumer culture of the 1880s to approx. 1930, see: T.J. Jackson Lears, “From Salvation to Self-Realization: Advertising and the Therapeutic Roots of the Consumer Culture, 1880-1920” in *The Culture of Consumption: Critical Essays on American History, 1880-1980*, ed. Richard Wrightman Fox and T.J. Jackson Lears (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983); Grant McCracken, “Culture and Consumption: A Theoretical Account of the Structure and Movement of the Cultural Meaning of Consumer Goods,” *Journal of Consumer Research* 13 (1986): 71-84; Simon J. Bronner, ed., *Consuming Visions: Accumulation and Display of Goods in America, 1880-1920* (New York: Norton, 1989); Charles McGovern, *Sold American: Consumption and Citizenship, 1890-1945* (New York: Basic Books, 2006); and Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982, 2007).

historian William Leach brings together the interchange of business and culture during this period, arguing that the mercantile industry, driven primarily by capitalists, created an entire culture of values, practices, beliefs, rituals, and iconography based on the ethos of desire and consumption. Leach's phrase "the cult of the new" describes an American ideology specific to this moment in time when a booming industrial America was shaped by the idea that "progress" and a constant search for the "new" became the ultimate goal of American desire, work, and life in general.⁴ Leach's work implies that the "cult of the new" would have quickly appropriated Halloween for capital gain, but I find that the adoption of Halloween by middle-class Victorian Americans was more than a mechanical process of dominating capitalistic forces turning Halloween into just another opportunity to acquire goods. Leach argues for an all-consuming nature of "the cult of the new," which worked with commercial capitalism in "appropriating folk design and image, reducing custom to mere surface and appearance." However, the stories, products, and rituals associated with Halloween suggest that the relationship between the two is not so simple.

The key to understanding Halloween's popularity in the U. S. lies in the complex relationship between suppliers and consumers of the holiday. In opposition to a one-sided relationship between the businessmen, their products, and consumers as suggested by Leach, scholar Leigh Eric Schmidt is reluctant to write off the existence of popular holidays to the whims of market manipulation:

Consumers embraced, "bought," and helped create the market versions of St. Valentine's Day, Christmas, Easter, New Year's, Mother's Day, and other holidays, imbuing these rites with their own hopes and desires, recognizing in them resonant and fluid symbols of

⁴ William Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture* (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2011). Though the exact years marking the bounds of the Second Industrial Revolution and Progressive Era in America vary slightly from source to source, I am referring to a time frame of roughly fifty years between the 1870s and 1920s.

love, family, faith, prosperity, and well-being.⁵

These “hopes and desires” in the wake of industrial and commercial changes pointed to a respect, even yearning, for a “simpler time.” Antimodernism, as historian Jackson Lears writes, was a form of pushback against the “overcivilized” nature of modern existence towards the end of the nineteenth century and an attempt to recover some form of meaning and purpose associated with this imagined simpler time. However, notes Lears, antimodernism was significantly more complicated, “often coexisting with enthusiasm for material progress.” He adds that antimodernists ranged in wealth from very wealthy to the moderately comfortable and were “old-stock” moral and intellectual leaders of the “American WASP bourgeoisie” who shaped their own values, norms, and culture. These concerns were part of the pursuit of identity formation; during a tumultuous time of social, technological, and economic change, many people sought to gain a secure sense of direction and self. These Americans found in rituals and celebrations, public and private, the chance to shape their experience and interact with and compromise between tradition and modernity to share a particular identity with other members of their class.⁶

Within the stratum of the “comfortable-to-wealthy,” the realm of leisure-time planning and purchasing rested principally in the hands of middle-class American women, who acted as both prominent consumers and keepers of culture. They sought out literary and material reminders of quaint, age-old customs that could be traced back to their ancestors.⁷ The impulse for the stories and traditions of times past – even if somewhat embellished – fed a desire to locate

⁵ Leigh Eric Schmidt, *Consumer Rites: The Buying and Selling of American Holidays* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995), 9; “The Commercialization of the Calendar,” 1991.

⁶ T. J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1981), xv.

⁷ Ronald L. Davis, “All the New Vibrations: Romanticism in 20th Century America” (1969), in *The New Romanticism: A Collection of Critical Essays*, edited by Eberhard Alsen (New York: Routledge Publishing, 2014), 220. Davis describes the “romantic” as a search for truth and meaning which borrows ideas from nature, simpler societies, civilizations of the past, and even behaviors considered “exotic.”

oneself or one's "group" in the ongoing, multigenerational tale of past, present, and future. Public historical imagery and literature are prominent examples of cultural elements which serve this purpose. Historian David Glassberg writes that images of a "common" history provide a focus for group loyalties and help structure individual memories and a larger context within which to interpret new experiences. However embellished these images or stories might have been, they played a significant role in identity formation. In the case of Halloween, the short historical accounts of its origin and rituals eventually evolved into more elaborate scenes and depictions of the Anglo-Saxon holiday which sparked the shared imagination of a particular group of Americans. This widespread mindset contributed to the proliferation of stories, articles, and other forms of literature – particularly in women's literature – which hailed back to the exaggerated ideal of a romantic, pre-industrial, shared ancestral past.⁸

Halloween was an Irish folk holiday, but media sources tended to include the Irish with the whole of the British Isles – including England, Scotland, and Wales – when discussing the historic origin story of the holiday. This merging is important for the acceptance of Halloween among the new middle class because when Halloween was on the rise, concerns about immigration, race, and ethnicity had shifted in response to new immigration patterns. By the 1880s, immigration from northern and western Europe had dropped off, and southern and eastern Europeans constituted much of the new influx, which was accompanied by a new set of attitudes. In 1909, a professor of education, Ellwood Cubberley, wrote:

About 1882.... Immigration from the north of Europe dropped off rather abruptly, and in its place immigration from the south and east of Europe set in.... These southern and eastern Europeans are a very different type from the north European who preceded them. Illiterate, docile, lacking in self-reliance and initiative and not possessing Anglo-Teutonic

⁸ David Glassberg, *American Historical Pageantry: The Uses of Tradition in the Early Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 1.

conceptions of law, order and government, their coming has served to dilute tremendously our national stock, and to corrupt our civic life.⁹

By the time Halloween gained traction in the United States and readers were looking for more historical information on the topic, the Irish were essentially part of the group of Europeans who formed the “good” components of the “national stock.”¹⁰ This viewpoint supported part of the attraction that many Americans felt towards Halloween – although it was relatively new to the national seasonal canon, it carried a degree of familiarity that appealed to a particular group of white Americans. In his book *Playing Indian*, historian Philip J. Deloria pointed out that Americans – “particularly white Americans – have been similarly fixated on defining themselves as a nation.” While there are obvious differences between Native American and Irish culture, this idea is applicable to the American adoption of Halloween. My examination of literature, media, and merchandise that popularized Halloween reveals choices based on the aspects of history and tradition that a certain group deemed part of their shared identity.¹¹

Halloween was also part of the emergence of a new material culture, especially among women with the leisure time and money to devote to its celebration. The women who defined the celebration held much of the purchasing power within their homes. Consumer demand enticed producers to market literature, imagery, and other ephemera that addressed specific sensibilities and desires, particularly those of white, middle-class women. These women enjoyed special-interest articles in periodicals, read and responded to newspaper advertisements, and used Halloween-themed items and imagery to host elaborate, costumed celebrations for friends and

⁹ Quoted in David R. Roediger, *Working Toward Whiteness: How America's Immigrants Became White: The Strange Journey from Ellis Island to the Suburbs* (New York: Basic Books, 2008), 19.

¹⁰ For an in-depth study on perceptions of race and “whiteness” in relation to European immigrants to the United States, see Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999).

¹¹ Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 5.

family. They read quaint “histories” of Halloween in print and looked for ways to bring the charms of the old British-Isle traditions into the practices and products of their leisure time. The language employed in cultural pieces and advice columns and the imagery that dominated certain forms of art and ephemera show a distinct desire to have the “best of both worlds” in a culture defined by the push-and-pull of progress and tradition. While manufacturers could find ways to entice women to purchase their products, production also stemmed from perceptions of desire among women. In her article “Gender, Consumption, and Commodity Culture,” Mary Louise Roberts advocates for increased attention to the connections between women, commodities, and power. Rather than focusing solely on whether consumption is “good or bad” for women, she argues, we might focus on how commodities are “carriers of ideas,” and therefore, consider women’s power as shapers of culture alongside their “power of the purse.” The history of Halloween – beginning with its initial rise in the late 1800s – is intimately tied to the role of women within these two cultures of nostalgia and modern consumption.¹²

This history of Halloween is part of the histories of consumption and antimodernism, but the work of discovering some of Halloween’s many meanings at a particular point in time is also part of the history of holidays. Scholars in history, folklore, anthropology, and sociology have applied their own methods to researching holidays with the ultimate goal of analyzing their cultural significance to gain insight into *why* they are celebrated and how their meanings change over time. Most make the observation that holidays and festivals are so complicated and

¹² Mary Louise Roberts, “Gender, Consumption, and Commodity Culture,” *American Historical Review* Vol. 103, No. 3 (June 1998), 841. For more on the evolution of consumer culture and women’s relationship to this culture up to this point, see T. J. Jackson Lears, “From Salvation to Self-Realization: Advertising and the Therapeutic Roots of the Consumer Culture, 1880-1920” in Richard Wightman Fox and T. J. Jackson Lears (ed.), *Culture of Consumption: Critical Essays in American History, 1880-1980* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983); Simon J. Bronner (ed.), *Consuming Visions: Accumulation and Display of Goods in America, 1880-1920* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1990); and Victoria de Grazia and Ellen Furlough (ed.), *The Sex of Things: Gender and Consumption in Historical Perspective* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996).

multifaceted, holding many meanings across different cultures, that a single theory does not seem to apply to the entire spectrum of holidays. The term “holiday” itself has several different definitions, depending on the source.¹³ Holiday studies have long been a primary realm of anthropologists and sociologists, and I have utilized a few key contributions from each of these disciplines to gain a sense of meaning behind Halloween’s emergence and impact. Victor Turner, a cultural anthropologist who produced seminal work on rituals and symbolism, presented the premise that collective ritual does not simply mirror culture, but creates it. The act of collectively celebrating a holiday at the same time each year is indicative of a set of values that a particular group of people share and deem significant enough to their culture to observe in a ritualistic manner. Though this process is continuous, new generations of celebrants always impose changes on holidays and their associated rituals. One cannot simply boil down the popularity of certain holidays to the perceptive marketing of shrewd businessmen or a fierce adherence to a single form of celebration. History shows that people throughout time molded and changed their holiday rituals to suit their needs. This idea has resulted in studies which utilize Turner’s ideas to examine how certain societies and groups choose to “use” holidays and rituals.¹⁴

Sociologist Amitai Etzioni offers a theory of holidays which is useful to understanding some of the key components of Halloween and how they applied to turn-of-the-century America.

¹³ Amitai Etzioni in his essay “Holidays and Rituals: Neglected Seeds of Virtue” (2004), groups holidays and rituals together as they “generally serve the same basic role,” but defines “holiday” as a day “on which custom or the law dictates a suspension of general business activity in order to commemorate or celebrate a particular event” (6). In his book *All Around the Year: Holidays and Celebrations in American Life* (1994), folklorist Jack Santino recognizes that many holidays celebrated in America are “folk holidays” which are not recognized by the federal government but are characterized by a specific set of symbols and traditions and widely observed nonetheless; Halloween, then, is a popular folk holiday (xviii). I will utilize Santino’s definition for the purposes of my research.

¹⁴ Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1969); see also *Celebration: Studies in Festivity and Ritual* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian University Press, 1982); and Alessandro Falassi (ed.), *Time Out of Time: Essays on the Festival* (Albuquerque, N.M.: University of New Mexico Press, 1987).

Etzioni states that not all holidays are inclusive of an entire society, though they might be integral for certain “member units” based on class, ethnicity, and gender; that changes in gender roles within the celebration of holidays historically lags behind the institutional sector; and that holidays can be changed and updated to reflect changes in societal values and power relations, but are not “too far ahead of them.” The Halloween that the new middle class celebrated at the turn of the century was integrative of a “member unit” in that it was certainly meant for Americans who could afford to furnish parties and dances that showcased their affluence and affinity for culture. This Halloween was gendered in that women were the hostesses of the parties and dances and were also the targets of Halloween advertising and literature. Women had entered the professional workforce at this time as nurses, doctors, social workers, and teachers, which heralded a new type of economic independence and individuality for women. However, these advancements contrasted with persistent gender stereotypes of domesticity as women often built a professional and personal identity as social mothers and cultural nurturers. The rituals and ephemera of Halloween also suggest that women of the new middle class, who were “keepers of culture,” saw in Halloween celebrations a way to assert their individuality within the private spheres of their genteel homes. In this way, the localized, ethnic traditions of Halloween were both changed and updated to reflect societal values of this “member unit” without subverting them.¹⁵

When cultural historians look at holidays, they tend to focus on one particular celebration and seek to elaborate upon a holiday’s history, trace its changing or unchanging place in society, and uncover the holiday’s contribution to a greater understanding of a culture and its values.

¹⁵ Amitai Etzioni, “Holidays and Rituals: Neglected Seedbeds of Virtue” in *We Are What We Celebrate: Understanding Holidays and Rituals*, ed. Amitai Etzioni and Jared Bloom (New York: New York University Press, 2004), 34-35.

Histories of Christmas in America have been the most numerous of single-holiday studies and have asked questions which focus heavily on the material culture associated with Christmas. Like Halloween, Christmas underwent change during Gilded-to-Progressive-Age, “sold” through advertisements, trade journals, and greeting cards to quickly achieve prominence in American culture as the country’s leading modern holiday. Karal Ann Marling, for example, uses the visual and material culture of Christmas to discover the feelings that it aroused, the role of women and how they shaped Christmas into what it is today, and Christmas as a domestic festival.¹⁶ William B. Waits’ *Modern Christmas in America: A Cultural History of Gift-Giving* focuses on the development of the gift-giving Christmas custom and argues that gift-giving was used as an expression for new social relationships in a newly-urbanized America. Waits’ study successfully uncovers the cultural function of Christmastide during the 20th century through an examination of the gifts themselves as well as the gift-givers and their recipients.¹⁷

Given the intense scholarly focus on Christmas, its turn-of-the-century transformation and the varied material sources to dissect this change, why hasn’t Halloween undergone the same treatment? Cultural histories of Halloween in America exist, but fewer of these are article-length or longer, even fewer are written by academic historians, and none address the holiday exclusively between the 1870s and 1920s. Well-written and informative narrative accounts of Halloween do much to satiate a popular thirst for engaging accounts of Halloween.¹⁸ However, these narrative-style works largely cover the entire “lifetime” of Halloween’s existence and do

¹⁶ Penne L. Restad. *Christmas in America: A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Karal Ann Marling, *Merry Christmas! Celebrating America’s Greatest Holiday* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002). Unlike Halloween, Christmas had existed and been celebrated in America since the arrival of colonists in 17th-century Jamestown; it was not “new” in the same sense that Halloween was at the turn of the 20th century.

¹⁷ William Waits, *The Modern Christmas in America: A Cultural History of Gift-Giving* (New York: New York University Press, 1994).

¹⁸ Some examples include Lesley Pratt Bannatyne’s *Halloween: An American Holiday, An American History* (1998) and journalist David J. Skal’s *Death Makes a Holiday: A Cultural History of Halloween* (2002).

not fully utilize historical methods – or a wide range or quantity of sources – in their work. The single most comprehensive work on Halloween written by a trained historian is *Halloween: From Pagan Ritual to Party Night* by Nicholas Rogers, published in 2002. Rogers describes the long history of Halloween from its pagan roots in Samhain up to the modern day; the brevity of his account leaves meager room for a deeper examination of each specific era of the holiday’s existence. Rogers’ chapter on Halloween’s emergence in America, titled “Coming Over,” demonstrates the value of newspapers in reconstructing the emergence of Halloween in North America. But, there is much more to discover about the cultural implications of Halloween for an entire stratum of society. I examine other print and illustrative sources that each of these authors have either overlooked or only briefly examined within the wide bounds of their studies.¹⁹

As a public historian, I see extraordinary didactic potential in examining the ephemera of a particular holiday and the relationship between its products and customs. I engage with a rich source base of literature, advertising, news articles, imagery, and even some ephemera to explore the meaning of Halloween rituals as they developed in America. In Chapter One, I examine print media – newspapers and magazines – which first made Halloween visible to a larger audience, appealed to nostalgia and romance, and made it female. In Chapter Two, I analyze Halloween-themed holiday postcards and the rituals, changing and unchanging, which they depicted. Finally, in Chapter Three, I look at Dennison Co. *Bogie Books*, a line of special product catalogs which produced materials and favors to supplement Halloween parties and represented the transformation of Halloween into a fully-commercialized holiday that appealed to female consumers. These sources follow a natural chronology in terms of their peaks. Newspapers and

¹⁹ Nicholas Rogers, *Halloween: from pagan ritual to party night* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); Lesley Pratt Bannatyne, *Halloween: An American Holiday, An American History* (Gretna, LA: Pelican Publishing Company, 1998); and David J. Skal, *Death Makes a Holiday: A Cultural History of Halloween* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2002).

magazines first surged with larger, more numerous spreads on the history, celebration, and selling of Halloween during the late nineteenth century, the “postcard craze” of the first decade and a half of the twentieth century, and *Bogie Books* – first published in 1909 – saw their heyday during the 1920s and into the 1930s until their culmination in 1933. By the 1920s, the celebration of Halloween was widely characterized by the combination of print media, greeting cards, merchandise, and parties. These forms of expression developed and reached their zeniths at different rates, but ultimately each contributed to a new-yet-old popular holiday that spread throughout the country.

The “type” of Halloween that emerged at the turn of the century reflected a period of time characterized by conflicted anxieties involving gender roles, modernization versus anti-modernism, and rapid industrialization and urbanization. The two cultural trends of the old and the new coexisted, but not without some degree of tension. The celebration of Halloween was one way that the American middle class accommodated both of these trends. Nostalgia for an “older time” which characterized the holiday was not part of, in historian Daniel Gifford’s words, a “hegemonic circle of manipulation and retroactive need.”²⁰ These products, stories, guides, and images were often created for or by women, whose tastes and preferences played a major part in the Halloween goods and literature that was produced. Consumers attached new meanings to Halloween, and manufacturers of Halloween materials provided businesses with products based on assumptions as to what consumers would ultimately choose for themselves and other recipients. In the space where the cultures of consumption and nostalgia met, Halloween flourished through new products even as its rituals and meaning hearkened back to beliefs and practices of an earlier culture.

²⁰ Daniel Gifford, *American Holiday Postcards, 1905-1915: Imagery and Context* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland Publishing, 2013), 79.

I argue that a new class of American celebrants used objects and rituals of Halloween at the turn of the twentieth century as an occasion to hold onto the past while also moving toward the future. This argument is based solely on the products of these celebrations which allow me to observe the extent to which otherwise conflicting values combined to imagine the celebration of a “new” Halloween which hailed back to an embellished sense of a shared ancestral past. The text and imagery that remains behind in these artifacts not only provide opportunities for preservation, they also give public historians the chance to share their meaning with a wider audience. As an exercise in sharing my research and its foundational sources more broadly, I produced an audiovisual component which condenses the argument and highlights the visual aspects of all three chapters. The video provided an opportunity to include a higher number and variety of text and imagery than I was able to include in this written study, and demonstrates that historians – especially public historians – have many avenues for disseminating their research in compelling, creative ways.²¹

Holidays are useful for historians because they reveal ways in which values unique to certain cultures manifest themselves through rituals and products. Human beings have celebrated holidays, festivals, and seasonal rituals throughout all eras of history and all parts of the globe. Even within specific groups of society, the modes of celebration for a single holiday have never been untouched and unchanged by cultural change. The significance of my research lies in what holidays and rituals – and the means by which they are celebrated – can tell us about the culture in which they are celebrated, and how we can use the varied products of these holidays to discover meaning. Folklorist Jack Santino insists that holidays would die if they carried no meaning, and “even the increased commercialization of our holidays... is really an

²¹ My video, titled “Halloween at the Turn of the 20th Century,” is located on my personal video hosting page at <https://vimeo.com/217051567>.

economic indication of the ongoing importance of holidays.” My own argument points to the new culture of consumption as a key factor in the rise of Halloween in America, but also considers the culture of nostalgia that permeated so many facets of progressive society.²² “Halloween” in 1890 is not “Halloween” in 1990. How we choose to celebrate a holiday is entirely dependent on who we are, and where and when we are celebrating it. Halloween reveals much about late-nineteenth/early-twentieth century American culture and serves as an incredibly useful lens through which we can view the cultural contingency of holiday celebrations.

²² Jack Santino, *All Around the Year: Holidays and Celebrations in American Life* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994), xvi-xviii. Santino states in his introduction that his interest in holidays was initially piqued by Halloween. Though his work does not elaborate on Halloween during the Victorian Era, he provides useful models of research that engage a variety of primary sources to draw connections to the cultures in which they are celebrated. Santino also edited a 1994 volume of essays elaborating on worldwide folk celebrations of life and death to contribute to the understanding of such festivals and their cultural roots, titled *Halloween and Other Festivals of Death and Life* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1994).

CHAPTER I

Halloween on the Newsstands: Newspapers and Periodicals

Newspapers and magazines were the print sources which introduced Halloween to Americans outside of the Irish immigrant community in the years following the Civil War.²³ Industrialization and improved printing technologies made magazines and newspapers more readily available in greater number throughout the country, both of which were bought and read by women. Halloween initially appeared in these publications as “historical,” cultural pieces to satisfy a leisure-time curiosity for the romantic past among wealthier American women – the type of information that women often requested in correspondence with publishers who commissioned the pieces from often-female authors. This trend contributed to a woman’s “inner life” by keeping her well-read and cultured, traits which were key to maintaining the image of propriety. Kristin H. Gerhard’s term “keepers of the culture” is a telling phrase that helps to explain Halloween’s spike in popularity, with its “quaint lore,” party-planning advice, and old-world divinatory practices which hailed to an ancestral past even as it predicted one’s romantic future.²⁴

While information on Halloween and other cultural topics relied on print publications as vehicles for circulation, these print publications and the business leaders who produced them had to be attuned to their readership in order to maintain success. Increasingly, print media and advertisers focused on women as their target audience, specifically among the white, educated,

²³ A keyword search in the America’s Historical Newspapers database reveals that small pieces on Halloween existed in American newspapers several decades prior to the Civil War, but these pieces carried very little detail and overwhelmingly defined Halloween as a holiday of the “other.”

²⁴ Kristin H. Gerhard, “International women’s periodicals: late 18th century to the Great Depression,” *International Women’s Periodicals*, Cornell University Library. http://iwp.library.cornell.edu/i/iwp/women_intro.html.

urban middle class – the same stratum of American society who both preserved and shaped the Halloween of the British Isles into something it would come to call its own. Despite the fact that this particular stratum of women is described as the “target” of publishers and manufacturers, the relationship between the two groups was much more interdependent and balanced. In her article “Gender, Consumption, and Commodity Culture,” Mary Louise Roberts challenges the long-held ideas of inevitability of certain modern consumptive practices and “the dichotomized relationship between Mr. Breadwinner and Mrs. Consumer.”²⁵ This view largely fails to take into account the idea of women as “keepers of culture,” a power separate from the “power of the purse” that complicates the idea of agency. Many of the biggest magazine titles, for example, only discovered great success by paying close attention to the preferences of readers and fostering communication with them. Their readers – women with the time and money to contribute to continual readership – were interested in information that dealt both with household maintenance and advice as well as entertainment and culture. Louisa Knapp Curtis, who co-published the *Ladies’ Home Journal* with her husband, actively identified women as the purchasing agents of the home and encouraged their correspondence and participation with the content of her magazine according to their wants and needs. Louisa Curtis’ husband, Cyrus, solicited advertisers by insisting that the journal’s “real reason” for existing was to “give you people who manufacture things that American women want and buy a chance to tell them about your products.” As historian Mary Ellen Zuckerman points out, these journals “rested on females’ roles as consumers and advertisers’ desire to reach these consumers.”²⁶

²⁵ Mary Louise Roberts, “Gender, Consumption, and Commodity Culture,” 821-22, 841. This idea dates back centuries and contributes to scholars’ portrayal of women as “pathetic victims of male expertise and control” or inspires reactive statements of these women as “mighty consumers with advertisers at their beck and call.”

²⁶ Mary Ellen Zuckerman, *A History of Popular Women’s Magazines in the United States, 1792-1995* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1998), 5-7.

As social and economic change swept the nation, the negotiation of social changes among different societal groups took distinct forms. The “new” middle class that emerged in larger urban centers indicated a significant shift from a time when much of the nation’s people lived in the country and small towns. Much of the art and literature of the time illustrated anxieties associated with this geographic relocation. Historian Peter Stoneley points out that the interchange between city and country became somewhat of a class dynamic, as perceived binaries of country versus metropolis, “uncouth” versus “unspoilt,” and “modern” versus “anti-modern” emerged. Stoneley, in writing about girls’ and young women’s literature, argues that “buying into womanhood” served as a nation’s allegory towards negotiating this change, as “the girl – and above all, the middle-class girl – could serve as the vehicle for both nostalgia and optimism.”²⁷ Stories about Halloween show that the duality also appeared in the context of product advertisements and magazine content, particularly women’s magazines. Women of the middle-to-upper classes exercised more power over household disposable income and were identified as the cultural guardians of the private sphere of the home, two key characteristics that defined their relationship with the products and media that they consumed.

Many newspapers contained small sections on Halloween published around October 31st every year, but Halloween was largely popularized through magazines – especially magazines directed at a female audience. In the years following the Civil War, advanced printing technology and mass marketing techniques increased both the availability and the affordability of periodicals for women, though most working-class women still could not afford the luxury of periodicals. Magazines aimed at a female readership presented cultural trappings that were those of the new middle class of women who were making domesticity into a career. In fact, the

²⁷ Peter Stoneley, *Consumerism and American Girls’ Literature, 1860-1940* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 1.

beginnings of successful women's magazines such as *Ladies' Home Journal* originated in newspapers as advice page supplements for housekeeping purposes and eventually grew to satisfy more needs among a middle-class readership. Publications such as *Ladies' Home Journal*, along with *Godey's Ladies' Book*, *Harper's Bazaar*, and *Delineator*, grew in size and number during this period and contained more and more stories, poetry, and advice for women. These publications offered plenty of housekeeping advice, but also recognized these women as a societal group with more leisure time to spare as well. The magazines fulfilled an "entertainment function," as Zuckerman argues, by printing poetry and short stories along with nonfiction pieces. The balance between fiction and nonfiction made magazines into products both romantic and informative; products which satisfied a nostalgic hunger at the same time as they helped women keep up with modern-day issues and concerns.²⁸

A piece titled "A Calendar of Anniversaries" in an October 26, 1878 issue of *Harper's Bazaar* listed all manner of cultural and historical events and observances for the month of "October the Glorious" that might be of interest to its female readers. Nearly all of the entries hail to particular moments in Roman, English, and religious history and recognize festivals, birthdays of prominent historical figures, and the anniversaries of battles. Halloween, naturally, appears at the end of the article as "the night of the walking abroad of spirits, both of the visible and invisible world." The author described the belief as one "faded into the lapse of time," though "the popular rites belonging to it are still maintained in Great Britain." The anonymous author, however, concluded the entry – and the article – with a telling claim that it was "a testimony to the kinship of the race, however alien faiths or hostile interests or cycles of time may seem to segregate the generations." Here, the author tied the celebration of Halloween in

²⁸ Zuckerman, xiii-4.

with a long, ennobled history of English-speaking peoples and used it to demonstrate the lasting quality of certain values through the centuries.

Authors of informative pieces on Halloween addressed the supernatural qualities of the holiday by counting them as part of their old-world, romantic charm. An 1879 piece in *Harper's Bazaar* described the charms and superstitions of Halloween as if they were “dropped out of some ancient time and heavenly weather”; a “revival of the old ways of heathendom and the superstitions of the poetic pagan.” Authors lightheartedly treated such divinatory practices as trivial, but emphasized their usefulness as components of celebration. “Now is the time,” the author insisted good-naturedly, to revel in the “mirth and jollity” of the festival during a season where “creature comforts” are more appreciated in order to “overcome the dreariness of the elements, and in supplying pleasure denied by the cheerless outside world, that there should come occasions whose celebration is so purely in the region of incorporeal things.”²⁹ Halloween in the United States was only just beginning to creep into the national consciousness, but its history as part of the Anglo calendar was quickly appealing to magazine’s readers and satisfied desires for pieces that were both romantic and informative. Authors encouraged curiosity towards the history and trappings of Halloween, or All-Hallows’ Eve, and such pieces satiated interest and informed a spike in Halloween observances at the hands of a largely female, middle-class readership.

Thanks to pieces in women’s magazines, Halloween was a form of entertainment somewhat like a form of historical fiction by the decade leading up to the twentieth century. It was “exotic” in that its origins were supernatural and rooted in what was once the “other,” but it also rang of the familiar because it was associated with Anglo-Saxon culture and history. As

²⁹ Unknown Author, “A Group of Festivals,” *Harper's Bazaar* (1867-1912); Nov. 15, 1879; 12, 46; pg. 726. American Periodicals.

“keepers of culture,” female readers could claim Halloween as their heritage at the same time as they could shape its migration from “other” to “us.” The nostalgia represented by Halloween offered a way of adapting to and controlling change among the push-and-pull of the modern and anti-modern in American society.

When Halloween pieces began appearing regularly in magazines and newspapers, they were shorter, rarely illustrated, less detailed, and composed with a bit more authorial distance than they would be in subsequent decades. Newspaper pieces of the early 1870s often took up a condensed column that consisted of a short history tracing Halloween from pagan times through Christian influence up until its modern observances in the British Isles. On October 19, 1871, the *Pittsfield Sun* identified Halloween and its rituals (such as the practice that earned it the moniker “Nutcrack Night”) as a “memorable day in Ireland and Scotland, and among our citizens of these nationalities is not altogether overlooked in this country”; it is one of “the popular observances of our old country cousins.”³⁰ The *Portland Daily Press* reported that the day was observed by “mostly natives of the old country and their children who have been taught to keep the day with old time ceremonies,” while a very brief piece in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* in 1874 noted that the holiday would be celebrated by “many families with games and plays peculiar to the event,” though it went into no further detail about who these people were. For the American press, Halloween was still primarily a holiday of the “other,” but these first appearances were what initially entertained readers, male and female, who came to associate this particular celebration with a shared ancestral past.³¹

³⁰ Unknown author, *The Pittsfield Sun*, October 19, 1871, page 1.

³¹ Unknown author, *Portland Daily Press*, November 1, 1871, page 3; Unknown author, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 30, 1874, page 2.

Print media pieces changed by the end of the century, reflecting popularity of holiday and its integration of old into new. Around the 1890s, print pieces changed in tone and content. The articles grew considerably more detailed in their descriptions of Halloween games, customs, and superstitions, and the change indicated a new interest in celebrating the holiday. Newspapers had been publishing descriptive pieces on Halloween for decades, but as general interest and celebrations grew, these pieces became more detailed, more common, and took up more space. A “Women’s World and Work” article detailing the customs and traditions of Halloween in the *Louisiana Times-Picayune* noted that “A number of requests have come to this department from young folks to publish in advance some of the curious old customs and games that pertain to All Halloween.”³² Authors, usually female, provided readers with instructions on how to perform divination rites by burning nuts on the hearth, attempting to bite an apple hung from a string, and holding a candle to a mirror at midnight to catch a glimpse of a future spouse. The print media chronicled the growing popularity of Halloween party celebration. Newspapers featured advertisements for party supplies and social register-type “announcements” for the parties themselves, indicating the change in class and gendered appeal of something once represented as an immigrant holiday. By the 1900s, many of these announcements contained a full “guest list” of the names of everyone in attendance at Halloween parties given by prominent individuals. As middle-to-upper-class Americans sought to slake their interest with celebration, Halloween reached its first major peak in popularity.

Women’s roles as consumers were just as important as their roles as keepers of culture when it came to the popular celebration of Halloween. By the end of the nineteenth century, newspapers, now heavily profit-driven, had truly begun to consider appealing to the female

³² Unknown author, *Louisiana Times-Picayune*, October 20, 1899, page 3.

consumer base. Women’s sections containing advertisements, advice, and fiction – similar to the content of women’s magazines – became more common and prevalent, and advertising took much more of a center stage as ads were the primary source of newspaper profits.³³ Business leaders realized the potential for what Leigh Eric Schmidt terms “new market experiments” using the language of novelty and abundance with occasional nods to “old-time” festivity.³⁴ Ads appeared around the same time as parties were being announced in papers and offered goods to aid in celebration. Newspaper advertisements until the 1890s, in general, had been brief, largely unremarkable, and typographically analogous to the text that constituted the main body of newspapers. In fact, Halloween advertisements up to this point were almost all simple lists of items like “Hallowe’en” dates, nuts, cider, and other foods arranged by bulk prices.³⁵ Thanks to new printing technologies, advertisements gradually bore unique graphics and textual designs which set them apart from the rest of the text.

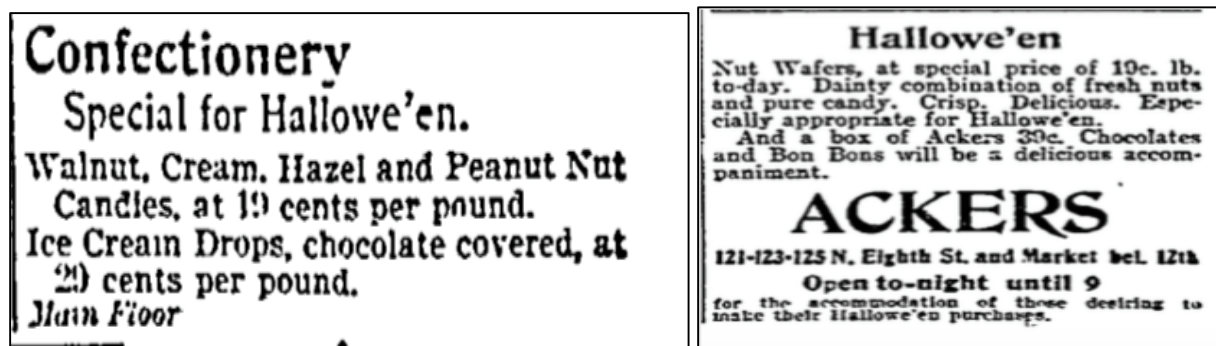


Figure 1. Advertisements from the *Philadelphia Inquirer* on Oct. 30, 1897 (left) and Oct. 29, 1898 (right), in *America’s Historical Newspapers* database. These simple advertisements mark the early stages of ads for Halloween products. Ads would soon expand in size and grow more elaborate in design.

³³ Julie A. Golia, “Courting Women, Courting Advertisers: The Woman’s Page and the Transformation of the American Newspaper, 1895-1935,” *The Journal of American History* Vol. 103, No. 3 (Dec. 2016), 606-628.

³⁴ Schmidt, *Consumer Rites*, 31.

³⁵ Unknown Author, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 24, 1896, p. 12; October 31, 1896, p. 4.

Right at the turn of the twentieth century, merchants across the country seemed to recognize the economic opportunity as Halloween parties grew in popularity. Advertisements included images of the products they were selling, often surrounded by pictures of jack-o-lanterns, bats, witches to advertise a sale of “novel grotesque things for Halloween” that were painted as absolutely essential for hosting a truly unique celebration. These old, deep-rooted symbols formed the basis for the production and sale of new types of products. A large column of ads in the Washington, D.C. *Evening World* promised “Unmatched Values: Choicest Sweets and Attractive Packages for the Great Night of Goblins and Mystery.” This page advertised everything from bulk assortments of candy to a new “toy sensation” that could be pulled around on wheels called a “Jack O’Lantern Awheel,” which was described as a “faithful reproduction of the old-time country Jack O’Lantern in the real pumpkin color” and was sure to prompt delight.³⁶ The symbolism in the ads appealed both to novelty and the old-fashioned qualities that made their products full of promise for hosting the ideal Halloween gathering.

Advertising agencies, which had once simply “peddled advertising space” in newspapers and local magazines, were paid not only for the space, but for the creative content of the space. The advertiser’s job was not only to sell products, but to sell particular products for particular merchants.³⁷ This strategy required more pointed, eye-catching ads that played to more specific needs among consumers, and the ads increasingly included not only a wider variety of goods, but images of individuals showcasing or enjoying the goods as well. Figures 2, 3, and 4 on page 26 all picture figures – most of whom are women – who are interacting with the other text and images on the page. Figure 3, although it does not picture consumers of the items being sold,

³⁶ Loft Candy Corporation, *Evening World* (Washington D.C.), October 8, 1921, page 5.

³⁷ Daniel Pope, “Making Sense of Advertisements,” *History Matters: U. S. Survey Course on the Web*. <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/mse/ads/ads.pdf>.

boasts detailed illustrations which evoke the fantastic nature of the holiday surrounding the actual sales pitch. Text of various fonts and sizes leap out at the eye, drawing attention to the brand of the product (“The Velvet Kind” Ice Cream); the purpose for which the product is advertised (“Halloween Parties”); the bargain price (“At the Special Price of \$1.25”); and the store which sold the product (“Chapin & Sacks Mfg. Co.”). The ads used images of the products to evoke a sense of the world that the products helped create with a jack-o-lantern, soaring witch, and two young people dressed in clothing that evoked times gone by participating in the traditional apple-bobbing ritual that had become a popular party game by the 1910s. Figure 4 features a group of advertisements from 1921 which highlighted “Favors and Decorations to Make Your Halloween Party a Success” alongside apparel “for wear at the Halloween Ball or Party.” One segment sold silver cloth slippers – an item not explicitly associated with Halloween – as appropriate attire that the “Spirit of Youth Would Delight to Possess,” and pictured the items next to an image of a young woman wearing the shoes as she dances with a male partner. This pitch was pictured alongside an ad for Halloween costumes featuring a young man and young woman modeling the costumes, and below both, the ad for favors and decorations insisted that “everything must be weirdly in keeping to create the mystic atmosphere, so secure the decorations, etc. here, tomorrow morning.” Advertisers increasingly seized upon ideas of old, time-honored Halloween traditions, symbols, and settings in order to sell the novel and modern goods of the day.



Hallowe'en Preparations in the Candy Store.
(Basement and main floor)

All kinds of hobgoblins and mischievous sprites are popularly supposed to be abroad the evening before All-Saints Day—October 31. And old superstitions and old customs make half the poetry of our lives. So today you will find most of the time-honored things that are associated with Hallowe'en in and around the candy counters.



"The Velvet Kind"
The Cream of All Ice Creams
Assorted flavors in attractive and appropriate pumpkin, ear of corn and apple designs for

Hallowe'en Parties

At the Special Price of **\$1.25** Per Dozen

Assorted designs and flavors. A real delight for the little folks—their favorite ice cream in forms that fit the occasion.
Order as Early as Possible and delivery will be made at the exact time you state.

Chapin & Sacks Mfg. Co.
Phone Lincoln 390

Figure 2. This advertisement both uses a female figure admiring jack-o-lanterns and the language of "time-honored" "old customs" to sell candy (America's Historical Newspapers).....

Figure 3. An advertisement from the Evening Star (Washington, D.C.), October 28, 1914 which sells ice cream molds in the shapes of traditional Halloween symbols – particularly apples and pumpkins – alongside the images of a witch, jack-o-lantern, and apple-bobbing game.

The Spirit of Youth Will Delight to Possess These

Silver Cloth SLIPPERS

\$6.75

For Wear at the Halloween Ball or Party

—About 500 pairs in all of these "Lucile" one-strap slippers, in all sizes and widths, finished with turn sole and Paris petite heels.

—You will be joyous at the thought of owning a pair of these beautiful silver cloth slippers at the above price, to wear at the Halloween Dance or for future occasions.

—Kane's—Fourth Floor.

Hundreds of Halloween Costumes Still Left Here

For those who have waited until the last minute to buy. Prices for our good kinds range: \$2.49 to \$14.95.

—Kane's—Fourth Floor.

The Well-Fitting Bloomer Makes the Chic Frock Fit Better

—Several good values to select from tomorrow.

—Silk Jersey Bloomers, of a heavy quality silk jersey; knee length; cut full, and deeply reinforced; elastic at knee and waist; in black, navy taupe and brown. At \$2.95

—Heavier Quality Jersey Bloomers, same style. At \$3.50

—Long Bloomers of Silk Jersey. Finished at ankle with double rows of elastic; cut extra full and deeply reinforced; in brown, navy and taupe. At \$3.95

—Heavier quality, same style. At \$5.00

—Kane's—Second Floor.

Favors and Decorations To Make Your Halloween Party a Success

—Fun and frolic is the order of the day, or rather of the night, on Halloween, and everything must be weirdly in keeping to create the mystic atmosphere, so secure the decorations, etc., here tomorrow morning.

- Paper-wrapped wands with tufts of black and orange paper, each—15c.
- Little paper brooms, each—5c.
- Hallowe'en nut cases—6c, 10c and 15c.
- Candy box, with pumpkin decoration at—15c.
- Hallowe'en candlesticks at—25c.
- Snapper in the shape of carrots at—12c.
- Paper caps with heads at—25c.
- Pencils, with heads, at—25c.
- Tally cards, a dozen—25c and 35c.
- Cut-outs, cats, pumpkins, and witches, a box—10c.
- Crepe paper festoons, 10 ft in a roll, at—14c.
- Crepe paper festoons, 40 and 50 ft. in roll, a roll—10c.
- Paper caps of various kinds, a dozen, \$1.50; each—15c.
- Other styles, each—10c.

—Kane's—Second Floor.

Figure 4. This group of ads from the October 30, 1921 issue of the Washington Herald (America's Historical Newspapers) appealed heavily to women and sold non-Halloween-themed luxury items like silver slippers for the purposes of Halloween parties.

For the public historian, Halloween ads reveal how the use of new advertising techniques created opportunities to sell products by capitalizing on the old, and also shows how consumers were expected to use these products. Advertisers for Halloween products quickly picked up on the longing among Victorian Americans for old-fashioned holidays and new ways to celebrate them. “Merchants,” writes Schmidt, “could both stir and satisfy these romantic cravings for sentiment, fantasy, and celebration.”³⁸ The increase in Halloween’s popularity and desire to celebrate provided widespread cues for business owners that there was money to be made in the sale of the precise foods and symbols that hostesses *should* use to make each Halloween party unique. Authors of cultural features on Halloween had long connected the holiday as the high time of year for witches, accompanied by bats, cats, and other supernatural spirits which roamed the wilds of the “old country.” The illustrations on advice pages were extremely detailed and often contained evocative imagery of apple-bobbing, foods tied from strings, and harvest-themed tables, scattered among such symbols evocative figures. Authors of these pieces usually called for specific types of refreshment and decorative pieces that could be used to create the right type of atmosphere for a unique party. Most of them prescribed plenty of nuts, apples, fruits, and pumpkins as homage to old-time customs, but also called for modern goods such as bon-bon boxes, place cards, and crepe paper decorations that were designed to resemble new takes on the essential Halloween symbols. Advertisements made use of old symbols and practices to appeal to the romance of the past, but also offered advice for “best practices” when it came to hosting novel Halloween celebrations.

³⁸ Schmidt, *Consumer Rites*, 31.

As the turn of the century drew nearer, authors of Halloween features in newspapers and magazines not only took more ownership of the holiday, but assumed the role of expert advisers offering “best practices” to the people who were expected to celebrate the holiday. Once advertisers and editors gleaned the needs and desires of their eager audience, newspapers and magazines could serve as a mechanism for “experts” to tell consumers how to celebrate the holiday. The topic of Halloween assumed full-page spreads complete with detailed illustrations which usually depicted a scene from an ideal Halloween party or one or more women dressed in appropriate attire for the occasion. A new group of celebrants sought to bring the “old world” traditions into the private spaces of their own stylish parlors – to “own” them – but in creative, novel ways that would set them apart from their neighbors and peers and tame the foreign qualities of the symbols and rituals. In these instances, women could honor their ancestral roots *and* bring the “power of the purse” to a form of use which also gave them the opportunity to create and “keep” their own culture.

Both newspapers and magazines are sources for understanding how Halloween grew in popularity, since they offered readers advice on what to buy in order to celebrate. In many cases, authors of feature-length pieces on Halloween either recounted – or created – a tale of a particularly impressive Halloween party or relayed the history of the holiday and applied it to ideas for party favors, themes, and games. In October 1904, Miriam Manning wrote a piece for the *Pictorial Review* titled “Talks to Girls,” concerning “manners, dress, and entertaining – suggestions for a Hallowe’en party” and illustrated with a regal-looking woman in a long dress. In it, Manning detailed some of the latest fine fashions in clothing and hairstyles and offered advice on how to utilize these to reflect the spirit of Halloween, such as long cloaks and hair pieces. She concluded by asking her readers to “let her inform them of a Halloween party given

last year,” in which the hostess used “old-fashioned” props and activities – including the traditional mirror divination ritual – to celebrate in “the usual Halloween way.”³⁹ At the same time, *Harper’s Bazaar* published a piece by Elizabeth Robinson titled “A Novel Hallowe’en Party” in which Robinson recounted a party she had supposedly attended. She spoke of a party at a “large hospitable house” with a large Jack-o’-lantern on the porch and decorations which evoked an old-fashioned country setting of “the autumnal spoils of fields and woods.” Guests played the “usual” Halloween games such as apple-bobbing, snap-apple, and blowing out a line of candles to see how many were left burning to indicate the number of years before a woman met her future husband. The old divination games, of course, were solely focused on determining a woman’s romantic future as it related to an unknown man; however, many of the authors who prescribed these games noted that these “seasonable tricks” were meant to evoke a quaint, old-world feel for the gathering. They were treated light-heartedly, as remnants of an ancestral past that fed the holiday’s popularity.⁴⁰

If an American woman at the turn of the century put down her magazine and picked up a newspaper, she would find many of the same articles found in periodicals. The informative and prescriptive Halloween articles that appeared in newspapers during this time exhibited the same trends in content and tone. Over the course of a few decades, the short, condensed sections on the far-off history of the holiday expanded, filling entire pages closer to the fronts of newspapers and utilizing more striking imagery to catch a reader’s eye. The types of party advice pieces found in periodicals flourished in the pages of papers which also carried advertisements for the goods recommended as supplements to these gatherings. Fig. 5 is a full-page spread in an

³⁹ Miriam Manning, “Talks to Girls,” *Pictorial Review (1899-1906)*; Oct. 1904; 6, 1; pg. 34. American Periodicals.

⁴⁰ Elizabeth Robinson, “A Novel Hallowe’en Party,” *Harper’s Bazaar (1867-1912)*; Nov. 1904; 38, 11; pg. 1092. American Periodicals.

October 1900 San Francisco newspaper featuring the background of Halloween as well as prescriptive advice on how to “Give a Unique Halloween Party.” In this feature, the title jumped out at the top of the page in a bold, decorative typeset with the clear directive “How to Celebrate Halloween.” This page also featured inset images which depict a large group of young, well-dressed men and women partaking in traditional Halloween games such as snap apple and apple bobbing. The most prominent figure, however, was an illustration of a young, attractive woman dressed in a fine gown who occupies much of the foreground. This woman, smiling, tosses an apple peel over her shoulder – another traditional divinatory practice. This figure of the young, pretty, well-dressed white woman appeared in the pages of many a newspaper and periodical as the usually-female authors offered a colorful, quaint history of Halloween and many suggestions for celebration.⁴¹

⁴¹ Unknown Author, “How to Celebrate Halloween,” *The San Francisco Call*, Oct. 28, 1900, p. 13.



Figure 5. "How to Celebrate Halloween" in *The San Francisco Call*, Oct. 28, 1900 (*America's Historical Newspapers*).

The frequent appearance of the well-dressed, prosperous hostess presiding over Halloween coupled with what we know about authorship, readership, and marketing and reveals the main functions of the holiday at this time. This version of Halloween was made for and by the white, educated woman of the new middle class. "Newspaper content and marketing materials," writes historian Julia A. Golia, "portrayed the ideal American woman as white, married, financially comfortable, and rooted in her home – though papers rarely mentioned race and class explicitly."⁴² This woman appeared in magazines and newspapers as the cultured hostess-guardian of the most mystical night of the year – a night to gather together and observe the quaint rituals of a shared romantic past, making enthusiastic use of the products of a new

⁴² Golia, 607.

market age. One-sided interpretations of women as victims of manipulation by the market and media fail to take into account women's participation in the process of not only buying Halloween, but selling it. The role of women in the home and the market – the “keeper of culture” and top consumer at once – is largely the product of women's own desires, and they responded by participating in and shaping the system of supply and demand. This participation, writes Jennifer Scanlon in *Inarticulate Longings: The Ladies' Home Journal, Gender and the Promises of Consumer Culture*, “secured their own independence, financial and otherwise.”⁴³ These women requested more detailed accounts of the quaint folk holiday, crafted nostalgic notions of an old-fashioned Halloween that stimulated their imagination and desire, and assumed the late 19th-century role of woman-as-consumer to realize their vision with the novelties of their day.



Figure 6: *The Los Angeles Herald*, Oct. 31, 1897 (*America's Historical Newspapers*). This image notes that Halloween customs will be observed in houses of "rich and poor alike," but these images (including this one) never featured depictions of a "poor" home's Halloween celebration.

⁴³ Jennifer Scanlon, *Inarticulate Longings: The Ladies' Home Journal, Gender and the Promises of Consumer Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 193.

CHAPTER II

Halloween Through the Mail: Holiday Postcards

During the first decades of the twentieth century, a new form of Halloween observance appeared in the form of holiday greeting cards sent through the post.⁴⁴ During this time, consumers could purchase postcards from not only post offices, but also from private printers with displays in general stores. The early twentieth century practice of sending cards was a way of maintaining friendships and social relationships, especially among women, and many of these cards still survive today as they often held sentimental and aesthetic value in the minds of their recipients. Special collections, archives, and even eBay contain hundreds of Halloween greeting cards and postcards with colorful, telling imagery that had been mass-produced in previously-unmatched quantities during the industrial boom in manufactured consumables.⁴⁵ These cards were a product of the most modern, up-to-date technology of mass production, yet the artwork and symbols on the faces of these cards hearkened back to the “old-world” customs and symbols of Halloween. As historian Daniel Gifford writes, “Postcards became texts for the viewing pleasure of women, and that pleasure was rewarded with more sales and greater profits back to the capitalist producers.”⁴⁶ Women ultimately determined the extent of the holiday’s overall commercial success. Postcards, as objects and carriers of symbolism, demonstrate another way in which this group of middle-class Americans could participate in the romance and nostalgia of

⁴⁴ The height of the cards’ popularity lasted between around 1905 to the beginning of World War I, just in time to become part of the chronology of Halloween celebration; however, because of the war, the importation of postcards – most of which were printed in Germany using the artwork of American artists – was largely disrupted and would not reach the same height that it reached in prior years (especially between 1907 and 1910).

⁴⁵ Most of my postcard images are drawn from the John and Carolyn Grossman Collection in the Winterthur Museum and Library’s Special Collections, and a few were found – along with their provenance – on eBay. A number of the postcards that inform my main secondary source in this chapter, *American Holiday Postcards, 1905-1915: Imagery and Context* by Daniel Gifford, are also drawn from eBay.

⁴⁶ Gifford, *American Holiday Postcards*, Loc. 1251 (Kindle version).

Halloween as well as the surrounding consumer culture.⁴⁷ They offer the historian of material culture a means to examine how old-world symbolism was melded with the desires of the new middle class.

Some scholars have critiqued these cards as evidence of the capitalistic destruction of true emotional connections and communication, but Barry Shank, in his work on greeting card culture since the nineteenth century, argues that this stance too simplistically places economic production and the inner life at odds with one another.⁴⁸ Rather, he states, these cards were the dialectical images which “precisely figure the intertwining of material production and human longing in the modern era of the United States.”⁴⁹ Exchangeable cards were displays of interiority in an outward fashion; a “commercialization of the inner life.”⁵⁰ Shank finds that this medium contributed to the cultural display of emotional eloquence and social connection in the U.S., and that “emotional life was conditioned by industrialization and the rise of modern forms of bureaucratic organization, just as the operations of modern business were shaped by feelings of longing and desire.”⁵¹ These senses of longing and desire were main components of the antimodernist movement which spanned from around 1880 to 1920 and responded to the processes of rationalization and industrialization. Affluent, educated Americans of the time

⁴⁷ Daniel Gifford, *American Holiday Postcards, 1905-1915: Imagery and Context* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland Press, 2013), Chapter 1. The first chapter of Gifford’s study determines from a sizeable, random sampling of holiday postcards that senders and recipients of the cards were overwhelmingly white, adult women.

⁴⁸ Barry Shank, *A Token of My Affection: Greeting Cards and American Business Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 6. Shank identifies the work of Luna Lambert, Melissa Schrift, Micaela Di Leonardo, and Eva Ilouz’s work on the exchange of greeting and holiday cards as evidence “damage done to domestic practices of emotional communication and social connection by the intrusion of masculine, capitalist, and technological motives.”

⁴⁹ Shank, *A Token of My Affection*, 7.

⁵⁰ Schmidt, *Consumer Rites*, 62.

⁵¹ Shank, *A Token of My Affection*, 7.

responded to a rapidly-changing social and economic world with a drive to “reclaim” an “authentic experience in the physical or emotional intensity of an imagined premodern past.”⁵²

Jackson Lears argues in his study of American antimodernism that the seemingly paradoxical forces of antimodernism and industrialization were not entirely at odds with one another. As he writes, American antimodernism “provided part of the psychological foundation for a streamlined liberal culture appropriate to twentieth-century consumer capitalism.”⁵³ This intertwining is evident in Halloween products that flooded markets in October. Products of industrial production satisfied the romantic, preindustrial longings of their consumers with provocative imagery and poetic text. Holiday cards rank among the best examples of this manifestation. These cards contained bright, intricate imagery on one side and a blank space for personal correspondence on the other. Americans who sent and received these cards could participate in the booming material culture of the time while maintaining a sense of intimacy, self-expression, and evocative longing. Here, the cultures of consumption and sentiment came together in a visually striking way that helped to confirm the deeper nature of Halloween’s cultural appeal.

Holiday postcards were produced and widely distributed thanks to the technological advances of the period. These included advances in printing and lithography, the adoption of which kept catalogs, displays, and showrooms regularly stocked with many varieties of postcards. Many of these postcards were printed in Germany but bore work by American artists, many of whom were women who perceived and responded to demands for “American” art. Since these women made up the majority of postcard artists *and* consumers, the imagery that

⁵² T. J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 70.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 6.

these cards bore are reliable examples of the type of Halloween they sought to perpetuate. Halloween holiday card imagery exhibited “old-fashioned” sensibilities, rooted in specific themes of ethnic identity, gender, and rural-urban divides. These categories were at the root of social tensions, especially in the early twentieth century, but Halloween postcard imagery had the potential to transcend these tensions in a compromise between the old and the new.

The scenes depicted on postcards often were visual representations of the ancient, ethnic Halloween practices detailed in periodicals and newspapers, but the card also conveyed distinctly modern messages about gender, technology, and progress. Some of the most common scenes depicted on Halloween cards reached back to Anglo-Saxon antiquity with portrayals of divination rites and superstitious practices and symbols. These images mirrored the cultural accounts that appeared in early newspaper blurbs and holiday books which detailed their nature and origins among Americans’ white, western European ancestors.⁵⁴ The cards depicted black cats, wandering spirits, witches, and bonfires of Celtic and druidic traditions up to apple-ducking, lantern-carving, and nut-crack games associated with old English traditions, but also merged them with some progressive depictions of sexuality and urbanism through images of beautiful, modern women and scenes of urban cityscapes. Postcard imagery reflected an amalgamation of symbols and ideas that appealed to emotions on many levels.

The art on the faces of the cards often privileged ancient symbols and customs of the British Isles, even when appealing to a modern audience. Many holiday postcards privileged “old immigrant” figures of western and northern Europe over “new immigrant” images from southern

⁵⁴ Along with the pieces published in newspapers and magazines at the turn of the century, certain holiday books were also devoted to sharing detailed Halloween customs and symbols. For some examples, see Stanley Schell, *Hallowe'en festivities* (New York: Edgar S. Werner Pub. & Co., c1903); Ruth Edna Kelley, *the Book of Hallowe'en* (Boston: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., c1919); and Lettie C. Van Derveer, *Hallowe'en happenings* (Boston: Walter H. Baker Co., c1922).

and eastern European audiences, and Halloween naturally fit into this rift as its origins were primarily identified as Celtic and Teutonic. Halloween histories from the era also made clear the origins of symbols and rituals. Many accounts of Halloween games and rituals, especially the ones found in full volumes, detailed forms of Hallowe'en and "Hallowtide" outside of the British Isles and the United States, but these were less well-documented and did not appear in Halloween imagery. These histories of Halloween traced rituals from the Celtic festival of Samhain and harvest symbols associated with the Latin goddess Pomona up through the coming of Christianity and the British Isles' shaping of Halloween before its customs took hold in America. "In Colonial days," reads the *Book of Hallowe'en* by Ruth Edna Kelley, "Hallowe'en was not celebrated much in America. Some English still kept the customs of the old world, such as apple-ducking and snapping, and girls tried the apple-paring charm to reveal their lovers' initials, and the comb-and-mirror test to see their faces."⁵⁵ These, paired with the harvest symbols and supernatural elements of an ancestral past, were part of a long line of Anglo-centric traditions that overwhelmingly defined Halloween imagery in the United States.

Even specific ethnic symbols which appeared on Halloween postcards – when they *did* appear – were all derived from the British Isles. "All Hallowe'en customs in the United States," wrote Kelley, "are borrowed directly or adapted from those other countries." In Figure 7, symbols of these countries figure prominently into the artwork of two cards. The image on the left is one in a line of Halloween cards titled "Charms of the Witching Hour," which featured various Halloween rituals framed within a shamrock and brought the holiday's Irish roots to the forefront. The image on the right frames a scene of a young, well-dressed, fair-skinned woman playing snap-apple among several thistle flowers, the national symbol of Scotland. American

⁵⁵ Kelley, *Book of Hallowe'en*, 149.

literature and print media shone a spotlight on the history of Halloween stemming primarily from Ireland and Scotland, and Halloween cards also sought to visualize the spirit of these accounts. Imagery and text combined to clearly uphold a vision of an American Halloween which paid special tribute to these white, western European roots and worked as a form of, as Daniel Gifford aptly described, “cultural validation in a rapidly changing world.”⁵⁶



Figure 7. Left: Courtesy, the Winterthur Library, The John and Carolyn Grossman Collection. Right: Postcard by Gottschalk, Dreyfuss & Davis: London, Munich, New York c. 1910. Image from eBay.

A recurring Anglophone motif on some Halloween postcards was that of a pumpkin-headed man wearing tartan patterns and a kilt while playing the bagpipes or another instrument. In Figure 3, this image is accompanied by the phrase, “Guid Luck toe ye this Hallowe’en!” The use of the word “guid” as a stand-in for “good,” as well as “toe” for “to” and “ye” for “you,” is an employment of old Scottish language that signaled the holiday’s roots. The presence of the jack-o’-lantern, an American invention of the mid-nineteenth century, adds a dimension of “new world” iconography that had since become a beloved symbol of the North American Halloween;

⁵⁶ Gifford, *American Holiday Postcards*, Loc. 1624 (Kindle).

according to historian Cindy Ott, the nineteenth-century jack-o'-lantern was “not only a playful spirit but a party favor,” which rounded out its function as an old-world figure *and* a popular commodity. The personified jack-o'-lantern atop a figure clearly upheld Halloween's British-Isle background and signaled a desirable marriage of the holiday's old and new-world characteristics.⁵⁷



Figure 8. Left: Postcard by Gottschalk, Dreyfuss & Davis: London, Munich, New York c. 1910. Image from eBay. Right: Courtesy, the Winterthur Library, The John and Carolyn Grossman Collection.

The divination games that so intrigued Victorian Americans and often constituted the main attractions of Halloween parties frequently appeared on Halloween cards. Bobbing for apples, tossing an apple peel over one's shoulder, placing nuts on the hearth, and looking into a mirror by candlelight at midnight were all “imported” Halloween customs for catching a glimpse at one's romantic future. Halloween cards which featured human subjects most heavily favored young, well-to-do women performing these matchmaking rituals within the comforts of their home, sometimes accompanied by young men (presumably their suitors). Scenes that included

⁵⁷ Cindy Ott, *Pumpkin: The Curious History of an American Icon* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2012), 83.

apple bobbing and nut-crack games, which involved both men and women, always unfolded within the comfort of the living room or parlor. The mirror-and-candlestick ritual in which a woman sought her future husband's face in the reflection at midnight usually unfolded in front of a large, ornate mirror as the woman gazed longingly or lovingly at her suitor. Historian Daniel Gifford also points out that these games were passive in nature, meaning that their romantic fates were already determined and female participants simply waited for Halloween to discover it for themselves.⁵⁸ These cards depicted a Halloween overwhelmingly centered around the woman's domestic sphere at the same time as it kept the old-fashioned traditions alive.



Figure 8. Courtesy, the Winterthur Library, The John and Carolyn Grossman Collection.

These cards were largely focused on courtship rituals as performed by young, well-to-do women, but, as Gifford also points out, there was a progressive element to be found in these

⁵⁸ Gifford, Loc. 2672 (Kindle).

portrayals. The “beautiful witch motif” – a young woman posing as a witch, rather than the traditional “old crone” – appeared on Halloween cards quite often, both in the context of games and rituals as well as scenes surrounded by symbols of Halloween. These “beautiful witches” did not replace traditional images of old gray-haired, hook-nosed witches who gathered around cauldrons in the countryside; rather, they often occupied the same settings and activities in Halloween card artwork. Beautiful young women in daring, modern-style dresses, bright colors, and sparkling accessories were a far cry from the style of female figure associated with the “old-world” Halloween. At this point, all Halloween witches were purported to bring good luck, particularly in the realm of matchmaking, and many of these cards appeared to imply that modern women held a special, supernatural power all their own – one that was also associated with their beauty. Daniel Gifford points out that, in these images, women were no longer “confined” to the passive Halloween games and fates of the past; in fact, they became “proactive” and self-assuming in their power. Far from the passive, fated implications of the mirror-and-candlestick or apple-peel game, many of these images featured women – assisted by the magical qualities of Halloween night and its accompanying witches – pursuing and attaining the men of their choice.⁵⁹

One card in a series by a single artist depicted a beautiful young woman in a flowing pink dress flying through the air accompanied by a goblin and a “traditional” witch with a hook nose and snaggle teeth who appears to be directing the action; the former grasps a butterfly net as three well-dressed young men with frightened expressions flee from her reach. The “Halloween” title takes on the shape of a rope with lassos at both ends, one of which has nearly encircled one of the fleeing male figures. “Flee bachelors flee,” the text reads beneath the young woman, “if

⁵⁹ Gifford, Loc. 2722 (Kindle).

you would single stay, Tis Halloween eve, the witches wedding day.” Still, mixed messages defined the subjects of these cards – a card in the same series featured a young, frightened woman in all white, covering her face with her hands within the arms of a defiant-looking young man as a hoard of witches and goblins fly at them through the night sky. “If you are scart on Halloween,” the card advises, “Never start to run, Get some good strong friend to hold you when the witches come.” Postcards thus addressed in imagery of games and rituals the roles of women on Halloween – a “modern” woman in alluring costume with the power to control her own destiny (however rooted in courtship this destiny appeared to be), or a demure, passive figure anxiously awaiting a glimpse of her future husband’s face, seemingly destined to await the moment of their meeting. The games and rituals spoke to the duality of the modern woman’s life to take control of her future, but also depend on her husband for her physical and emotional livelihood in an adherence to traditional gender roles and ideas of sexuality.



Figure 9. Courtesy, the Winterthur Library, The John and Carolyn Grossman Collection.



Figure 10. Courtesy, the Winterthur Library, The John and Carolyn Grossman Collection.

Postcard Halloween scenes also depicted normative views of heterosexuality and gender roles by showing how women engaged with the symbols of Halloween. For example, some postcards showed women sitting atop or riding in a pumpkin. Ott suggests that “the advent of the Enlightenment and capitalism did not necessarily eradicate beliefs in nature and women’s power but reinforced old ideas in new contexts.”⁶⁰ The “rural and archaic” characteristics of the pumpkin which made it such an appealing symbol of a proud hardworking past were precisely the characteristics that brought meaning to these gendered images. Prior to its adoption as the jack-o’-lantern and its association with Halloween, the pumpkin was cast in terms of the social and class differences, specifically among New Englanders — simple rural workers with connections nature compared to cultured urban intellectuals. However, in the face of a period of increased industrialization and urbanization, many recognized it as a symbol of the past and

⁶⁰ Ott, *Pumpkin*, 75.

shared cultural roots.⁶¹ Many Halloween cards placed youthful women directly in or upon pumpkins and jack-o'-lanterns, as if they served as a carriage, bier, or even a throne. As anxieties around the movement of young, single women to urban areas for newly-independent lives, pumpkin-riding imagery which literally kept these women in touch with the past; however, at the same time, women exercised their own cultural power over the holiday. The use of the pumpkin as a throne or bier suggested the woman's dominance of Halloween as it quite literally served as the seat of her influence. In this way, women were the torchbearers and shapers of Halloween, even as they remained firmly associated with "old ways."



Figure 11. Courtesy, the Winterthur Library, The John and Carolyn Grossman Collection.

Just as Halloween cards appeared to meld both traditional and progressive images of women into a hybrid message, the imagery also merged the urban and rural aspects of American culture. To Progressive reformers of the early twentieth century, rural life appeared to bear none of the trappings of modernity available to urban dwellers. Through the Country Life movement, for example, progressives attempted to bring modern culture to the country. At the same time, as

⁶¹ Ibid, 78. The jack-o'-lantern emerged as a new North American take on an old-world Halloween tradition which also bore its own history and symbolism as a North American native plant.

the frontier disappeared, Americans began to glorify the wild, untamed country life. Some historians described it as an “attempt by nostalgics to preserve the rapidly disappearing rural past,” while others saw it as a “humanitarian attempt by forward-looking reformers to construct socially-satisfying communities for rural people.”⁶² A compromise between progressive modernity and an idyllic rural past worked its way into the subjects of Halloween cards, which – unlike periodicals – circulated heavily between and among urban and rural audiences alike.

Halloween cards most often addressed tensions – such as the urban and the rural, progressive and traditional, the “civilized” and the “wild” – through images which allowed for the presence of both. Magazines and newspapers which described urban Halloween parties often focused on bringing in harvest symbols with divination games to evoke a rural setting within women’s homes. Halloween cards, on the other hand, did not typically bear depictions of modern Halloween parties; despite the presence of city skylines featured as backdrops on some Halloween cards, most indoor, female-centric Halloween scenes are clearly unfolding in rural settings. Gifford partly attributes this trend to the comparatively high volume of postcards which travelled out from rural areas as well as into them, which was indeed a significant factor. However, many of these comfortable, bourgeoisie interiors and their wonderstruck occupants were separated from the sparse rural landscapes by a window, a curtain, or both.

⁶² David B. Danbom, “Rural Education Reform and the Country Life Movement, 1900-1920,” *Agricultural History* Vol. 53, No. 2 (Apr., 1979), 462.

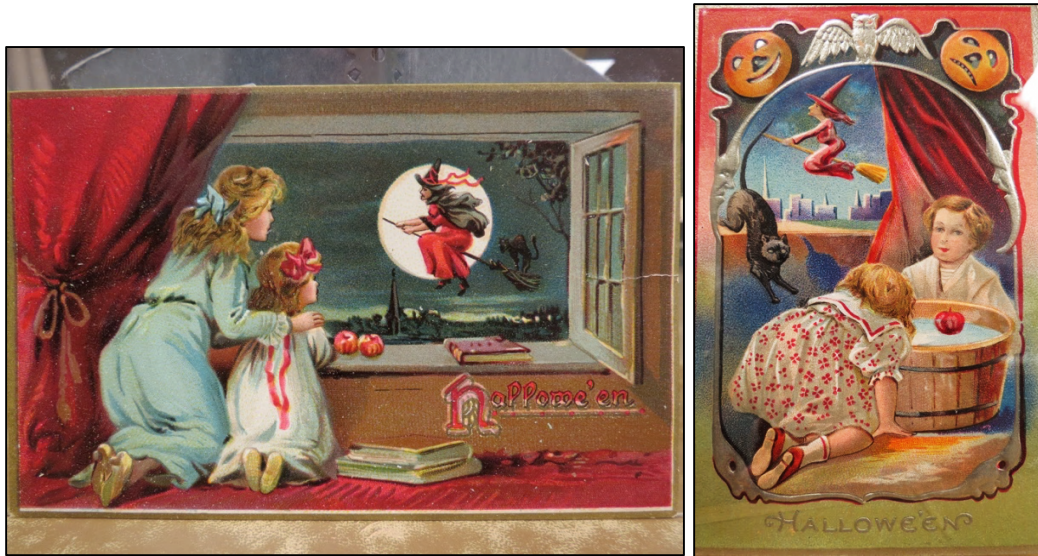


Figure 11. Courtesy, the Winterthur Library, The John and Carolyn Grossman Collection.

In Figure 11, the left-hand card features a young woman and smaller girl – both fair-skinned, fair-haired, and well-dressed – kneeling on a window seat next to an open window with a rich red curtain to gaze curiously out at the figure of a witch and a black cat riding a broomstick over the countryside. Two apples, traditional harvest symbols as well as implements for the old divination rituals, sit on the windowsill. In this case, as in others, the window appears to serve as a window to an idyllic past as the female characters participate in Halloween by admiring the supernatural qualities of the holiday while remaining safe in their own home. The card on the right depicts a similar situation, though the two settings are switched. The young Halloween celebrants are shown participating in a traditional divination ritual, bobbing for apples, as the curtain by the window blows open to reveal a black cat bounding into the room and a witch soaring on a broom over an unmistakable cityscape. Here, the old and the new coexist as a traditional Halloween practice and symbols are celebrated from within an urban setting. The open (or closed) window featured in many Halloween cards served as not only a “window to the past,” but also an entryway through which the Halloween of old could pass to the present,

according to the celebrants' wishes. In any case, modern participants were almost always situated in the comfortable, domestic interior while the ancient, supernatural elements of Halloween roamed the countryside or wilderness beyond.

The early twentieth-century "postcard craze" did not extend beyond World War I, but right up until their decline, the cards worked issues of modernity and progress into Halloween imagery. Their peak coincided with a rise in mechanization and technology, and the occasional fusion of the holiday's harvest iconography with modern innovations such as the automobile bore a mixed message reflecting the mixed character of Halloween itself. However, in the vast majority of cards, figures and practices of the ancient, British-Isles Halloween coexisted in whimsical ways with modern-day participants – most of whom were women – in modern settings. The women who purchased, sent, and received this vast selection of cards could enjoy the high quality and quantity that printers were able to offer, at the same time as they upheld and appreciate the quaint, supernatural romance of the images. The nature of the cards combined with the nature of the holiday at the turn of the twentieth century to offer consumers a new way to celebrate and admire the old.

CHAPTER III

Halloween in the Halls: Dennison Co. *Bogie Books*

From the 1900s up through the 1920s, as Halloween celebrations grew, parties became perhaps the most popular and prominent feature of the holiday celebration. By this point, consumer culture had successfully absorbed Halloween. Despite the decline of antimodernism after the turn of the century, parties still provided celebrants with an opportunity to participate in the nostalgia, romance, and ritual evoked by newspapers' and magazines' cultural pieces on Halloween. These gatherings, announced in newspapers as guest lists of the wealthy or depicted and described in enticing detail in magazines, had come to form the major foundation of the holiday. At around 1900, there was a veritable explosion of advertisements for Halloween candy, costumes, masks, and other novelties in newspapers throughout the country, which were sold for the purpose of augmenting spooky and unique Halloween parties. The female hostess could not consult newspapers, magazines, and catalogs for ways to create the most unique and well-supplied party within her circle of peers. This development opened the door for new ways to merge old and new customs within a fully-realized culture of consumption.

Suppliers sought new ways to participate in this culture, and some manufacturing companies recognized the chance to specifically cater their products to party-giving. They began to regularly published short booklets and catalogs devoted to products assigned for a single holiday. These catalogs were meant to have short life spans as manufacturers expected to circulate a new catalog annually to show off new stock and ideas, but many have been preserved – even reprinted as collectibles. Despite their original purpose as temporary merchandising tools, these pieces of holiday-related ephemera have much to reveal about the meanings and

function of a holiday. In the case of Halloween, Dennison Manufacturing Company of Framingham, Massachusetts made a name for itself by marketing its crepe paper products through the use of specialty catalogs called *Bogie Books*. From 1909 until the 1930s, these books not only employed a strategy that acknowledged the well-loved traditional aspects of Halloween, but also recognized the financial and creative independence of the hostess. *Bogie Books* represented the beginnings of a new “phase” of Halloween in the United States, the point at which the symbolism and the capitalist possibilities had merged to create a uniquely American Halloween.

The Dennison Manufacturing Company was founded in 1844 by Aaron Dennison in Brunswick, Maine, and originally produced paper boxes for jewelry and watches before mechanizing and expanding to sell a variety of consumer paper products. A central plant in Framingham, Massachusetts opened in 1897 after Dennison Co. had established several lines of products and consolidated financial, advertising, marketing, and sales departments into a central location. Two of these lines were the crepe paper line and the holiday line, both of which consisted of mass-produced, consumable products meant to be impermanent decorations that could be discarded each year. Henry Sturgis Dennison, the grandson of Aaron Dennison, took over leadership of the company in the first decade of the twentieth century and carried forward a progressive set of initiatives which included soliciting advice and suggestions from employees as well as conducting market analysis and research. H. S. Dennison’s company published catalogs throughout the late nineteenth century. The company claimed that, “like the goods which they illustrate,” the catalogs enjoyed “the reputation in their field of being the best published.”

Indeed, these catalogs contained numerous detailed and colorful pages filled with bulk product listings, prices, descriptions, and directives for the perusal of the party planner.⁶³



Figure 12. Left: Dennison's Bogie Book, republication of 1915 original (USA: Bramcost Publications, 2011). Right: Dennison's Bogie Book, republication of 1925 original (USA: Bramcost Publications, 2011).

The first *Bogie Book* was published in 1909 and, unlike other catalogs, focused mainly on providing eager party hostesses with extremely detailed advice and instructions for elaborate decorative schemes through the use of Dennison Co. crepe paper. According to the company, this material was an original Dennison Co. product. The company had imported colored tissue paper from England for a few decades for the purposes of lining boxes before realizing the

⁶³ Historical Note, "Dennison Manufacturing Company. Dennison Manufacturing Company Records, 1815-1990: A Finding Aid," Baker Library Historical Collections, Harvard Business School, Harvard University. <http://oasis.lib.harvard.edu/oasis/deliver/~bak00239>.

lucrative potential of producing their own for decorative and novelty purposes. Dennison Co. began dealing in crepe paper in the 1890s, and by the 1920s, it boasted that the “cumbrous machines of a quarter of a century ago, with their annual production of a few thousand folds, have been discarded, and with our modern machinery it is possible to turn out millions of ten-foot folds yearly.” Crepe paper became an essential product for Dennison Co. and eventually warranted its own line. The company proclaimed that “each year new uses for crepe paper have been discovered,” and, in keeping with this claim, released a new *Bogie Book* annually to keep customers up to date with new styles, trends, and innovations.⁶⁴

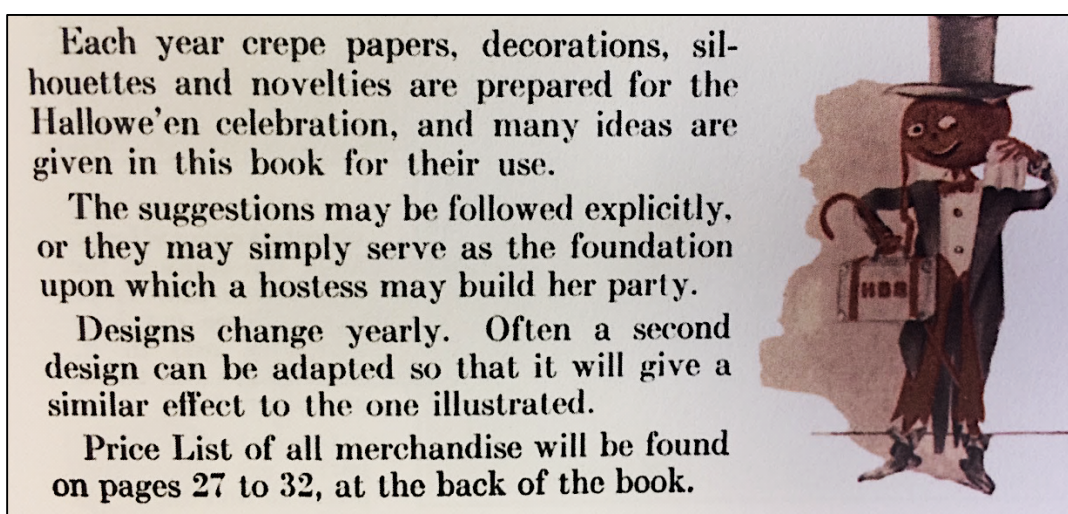


Figure 13. Dennison's *Bogie Book*, republication of 1922 original (USA: Bramcost Publications, 2011). The first page emphasized the annual necessity of a new catalog and, therefore, a new selection of buying options for each hostess.

Even before the *Bogie Books* appeared, Dennison Co. marketed its products specifically to women. The company attributed its success in crepe paper sales to the “Heath Sisters” of Buffalo, New York, members of the very demographic to which the *Bogie Book* was meant to appeal. According to the company itself, these young women discovered the possibilities of

⁶⁴ Dennison Manufacturing Company, *Seventy-five years, 1844-1919* (Framingham, Mass.: The Company, [1920?]), 45.

crepe paper and began to “make all manner of beautiful things with it.” Dennison Co. then invited the sisters to its Boston store to set up a demonstration display for the public, which reportedly proved immensely popular and prompted further displays in New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, and St. Louis. “The success of the demonstrations,” conceded the company, “led us to establish permanent Art Departments in our stores, with the sole purpose of educating the public and our Dennison dealers in the use of our products;” in fact, the company’s advertising slogan “What Next?” was derived from visitors’ impressed responses to the designs and patterns that the art department produced each year. The birth of the *Bogie Book* owed much to the fact that “women as consumers” were not simply passive recipients of manufacturers’ products and ideas. Rather, the catalog was an example of the authoritative dual role that these women assumed in both commerce and culture. On February 27, 1894, the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* highlighted the Heath sisters’ (and other women’s) influence in an article titled “Women in the Ascendant: How Their Fertile Genius Contributes to the World’s Beauty”:

And woman is again the inventive genius who has spread these beautiful novelties throughout the land. It is well known how a few years ago the three Heath sisters of Buffalo, made their reputation by the introduction of lamp shades, made of crepe paper and decorated with vines and flowers made of the same. The idea was most artistic and gave an immense boom to the sisters and also to the Dennison company manufacturers of the crepe and tissue paper. To-day the Heath sisters have their own factory and the most beautiful store in America... Their original idea has in reality opened a new industry, for art and decorations in tissue paper have become the present rage and a fortunate godsend to thousands now earning a living by making fancy novelties of crepe paper.⁶⁵

The article’s author also claimed that women had, “by their own deserving efforts, become man’s competitor even to the very threshold of equal rights, and has enthroned herself within the very sanctuaries that were once sacred to man alone.” Still, the author asserted, “womanly employment” within the “particular sphere of domesticity” had never reached “such a state of

⁶⁵ Unknown Author, *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Feb. 27, 1894, p. 6.

perfection.” For this author and many others, certain realms of work and art were empowering precisely because they were defined as “womanly.” When it came the the use of *Bogie Books* to create the celebration of Halloween that Dennison Co. imagined, these women shaped the cultural observances built on borrowed traditions and creative decisions based on their own desires.

Each *Bogie Book* explicitly emphasized its purpose as a tool for women who sought to fill leisure time and impress her friends with a unique Halloween celebration. The contents were always addressed to “the hostess,” whom they credited with the financial agency to make cost-conscious decisions in selecting catalog products. Dennison Co. “mass-produced individuality” in using the *Bogie Book* to appeal to buyers with the suggestion that the catalog existed solely to serve the needs and desires of each individual hostess according to her tastes. The introductory page of each catalog usually emphasized the inherent romantic, enchanting qualities of Halloween parties before making the point that “it is the desire of Dennison to assist in the planning and in the carrying out of such entertainment, and to this purpose has the Bogie Book been published.” Dennison Co. offered the creative services of its art department as instructors for loyal customers – on a personal, individual basis – who wished to recreate the traditional “spirit of mystery which should permeate the very atmosphere.” The art departments at Dennison, the company assured customers, were “glad to teach the best methods of handling crepe paper, and to suggest schemes of decoration for each particular hostess.” The hostess, praised by each *Bogie Book* as individualistic and “ingenious,” was the key to Dennison Co. crepe paper success.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Dennison’s Manufacturing Company, *Dennison’s Bogie Book*; republication of 1913 original (USA: Bramcost Publications, 2011), 1.

Each new annual *Bogie Book* began with a sort of “mission statement” that explained the lasting cultural and social importance of Halloween and often touched on the holiday’s roots. In what had become a typical justification for celebrating the holiday, these first pages pointed out the timelessness of the ancient rituals which passed through the generations to the very individual holding the *Bogie Book* in her hands. Over the first two decades of the twentieth century, these sections changed. They served less to “convince” consumers of the value of celebrating the holiday, but to serve as a simple reminder of the origins of its decades-long popularity. Dennison expected that people would continue to celebrate Halloween, but also took steps to urge the need for celebration. The company pointed out that Halloween had always been celebrated and should continue to be for the sake of tradition and merriment, and Dennison was the supplier for the job. “The spell has held young people always and will through the ages,” and “at the old-time party, the hostess had her hands full,” proclaimed a 1915 issue before describing the wares which would help the hostess prepare the same type of party with more ease. Earlier issues placed more emphasis on the “old-time” Halloween and set out to help hostesses recreate these types of celebrations with materials that were cheaper and easier to acquire, even in bulk.

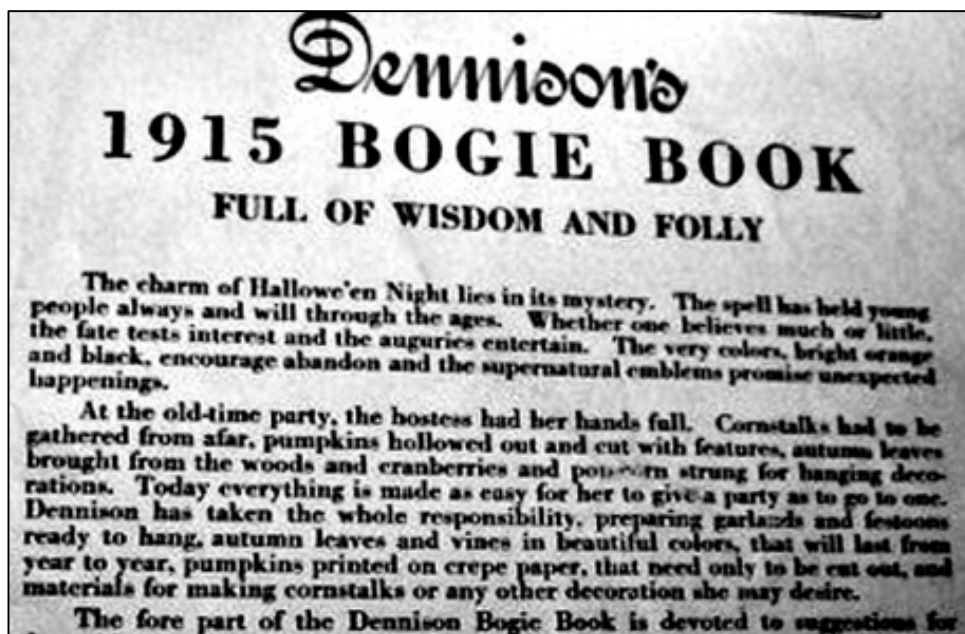


Figure 14. Dennison's Bogie Book, republication of 1915 original (USA: Bramcost Publications, 2011). This proclaimed that it had become just as easy for a woman to host a party as attend one, and an old-time party could be achieved without "gathering" materials from the woods and afar.

"Many of the old superstitions came to this country with the Puritans," reads the first page of the 1922 *Bogie Book*, and "some have been added—some lost; but we today, in America, celebrate the night for its weird mystery and flavor of romance, and because its games foretell the future." As did postcard imagery, *Bogie Books* dismissed the once-serious nature of ancient rites and tamed symbols of supernatural power – witches, spirits, black cats – into endearing favors that adorned food and tabletops. With each year that passed, *Bogie Book* pages offered more options for décor, apparel, and even games which could be played using Dennison Co. favors. Such embellishments were meant to maintain the age-old "spirit of mystery" through a new wave of materials that took advantage of modern technology to meet demand for bigger, brighter, more novel Halloween parties.

Since Dennison boasted the versatility of its crepe paper products, each issue of the *Bogie Book* contained as many suggested variations of Halloween symbols-turned-party-favors as

could fit in their pages. Paper jack o’lanterns were given arms and legs and made into whimsical anthropomorphic hosts that waited outside doors to welcome guests inside, while witches topped baskets of flowers and small cakes. Elaborate, flashy crepe paper costumes, especially popular in the 1920s, were made of solely black and orange paper and always utilized black cats, pumpkins, and other iconography in their designs. Icons and their patterns were sold in bulk and transformed into novelties to supplement a unique celebration, but these age-old symbols were permanently tied in with the “new” Halloween despite the loss of their supernatural implications. Though Dennison’s could not sell the ancient Halloween games and divination rituals with its crepe paper creations, *Bogie Books* contained pages of explanatory “how-to’s” for incorporating some of these traditions into party celebrations. In the 1922 edition of *Dennison’s Bogie Book*, a section titled “Games for Halloween” described the rules of ducking for apples and the cellar stairs test among “new” games, explaining that, “although a few new and untried games may be interspersed on Hallowe’en, the old ones that have been handed down are the very life of celebration and must never be omitted.”⁶⁷ These games, as well as a few key images, were some of the means through which Halloween maintained its roots, despite the fact that celebrants and manufacturers conceived of and produced new games, fashions, and trends in great volume as the years passed.

⁶⁷ Dennison’s Manufacturing Company, *Dennison’s Bogie Book*; republication of 1922 original (USA: Bramcost Publications, 2011), 12.



Figure 15. Dennison's Bogie Book, republication of 1925 original (USA: Bramcost Publications, 2011). This page depicting party favors and table decorations in the form of traditional Halloween iconography; jack o'lanterns, black cats, witches, and spirits.

The *Bogie Book's* pages were filled with suggestions and patterns that party planners followed by using basic packages of Dennison Co. crepe paper. The company always stressed the ease with which hostesses could create elaborate schemes with these relatively simple materials. The company pushed its crepe paper as the “most suitable” material for festivities such as Halloween due to its color, texture, inexpensiveness, and ease of handling. *Bogie Books* contained pages titled “Hallowe'en Price List” featuring charts of roll length, color, and corresponding price which faced an opposite page portraying rooms entirely and lavishly decorated with crepe paper designs. These images implied the ability of hostesses to create fantastic, complicated interiors for their parties using relatively inexpensive and easy-to-use Dennison crepe paper. However, this assumption also implied that the hostess also had the time to invest in acquiring all of the materials, consulting instructions and experts, and producing a setup as elaborate as the pictures in the catalogs. Images often occupied two adjacent pages and



Figure 17. Dennison's Bogie Book, republication of 1925 original (USA: Bramcost Publications, 2011). By the mid-1920s, fashionable frocks and slip-cover costumes featuring orange-and-black color schemes were in vogue; Jack o'lanterns, witches, black cats, and bats remained the most popular forms of iconography.

Just like the catalogs themselves, the crepe paper décor and costumes were not intended to be reused. All of these materials were ephemeral, meaning that they were not generally meant – or expected – to survive beyond their own time. Each year saw a new line of material, styles, and suggestions which still utilized the old-world Halloween symbols but also delved more and more into “modern” takes on celebration. Such is the case of the *Bogie Book* and its crepe paper products. These were, by nature, intended for use on one night out of the year before replacement by a new issue and its stock, themes, and suggestions for the new year. Although these materials were disposable, they survive today as windows onto the cultural preferences of societies past. Kevin Murphy and Sally O’Driscoll point out the paradoxical nature of ephemera – disposable, yet with “content worth treasuring”; easy to destroy, yet “constructed and catered

to popular tastes”; content “both conservative and innovative.”⁶⁹ Dennison Co.’s crepe-paper Halloween party was not meant to last, but it took a good deal of time and effort for the hostess to put together. The *Bogie Book* sold basic stock items in bulk, but encouraged the hostess to exercise her creativity when it came to instructive schemes and only grew more varied and elaborate in stock item designs. The catalog boasted new and exciting modern designs and games, but conceded that the old aspects of Halloween were “the very life of celebration,” never to be “omitted.”

Dennison’s *Bogie Book* exemplifies the function of Halloween throughout the first twenty-five years of the twentieth century for the stratum of society affectionately known to Dennison Co. as “the hostess.” This female “keeper of culture” valued the ancient, nostalgic aspects of Halloween as quaint, curious histories and reminders of a “simpler” time, even as she eagerly sought new, modern means of celebrating them. Businesses thrived from observing the consumer, making the connection, and generating a product which corresponded to her desires and interests. Dennison Co. claimed that if crepe paper was “a child of the jewelry division,” the holiday line might be the “grandchild.”⁷⁰ The Heath sisters’ method inspired lines of products and catalogs which relied on the continued interest of the new middle-class woman – the image of “woman” pictured in the pages of *Bogie Books* as hostess and model. For Dennison Co. and other manufacturers, she held the purchasing power, she defined the culture and, as always, she ultimately defined the old-yet-new Halloween of turn-of-the-century America.

⁶⁹ Kevin Murphy and Sally O’Driscoll, *Studies in Ephemera: Text and Image in Eighteenth-Century Print* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2013), 4.

⁷⁰ Dennison Manufacturing Company, *Seventy-five years*, 53.

CONCLUSION

By the 1920s, the commercial and media presence of Halloween was staggering in comparison to the flickers of its beginnings fifty years prior. Halloween now occupied entire pages in newspapers and magazines, and even more catalogs featured entire sections devoted to the holiday. Advertisements which once only consisted of a few selections of nuts or candies for Halloween now offered countless assortments of foods, drinks, masks, costumes, toys, suits and dresses for children as well as adults. Conglomerations of images and showy fonts fought one another for space and claimed the widest selection of Halloween treats and novelties in their respective areas. The culture of the “Roaring Twenties” fostered and encouraged the forms of celebration that Halloween had taken, and in a growing number of cases, wild revelry – especially among the young – spilled out into the streets. A mounting concern in the years leading up to the Great Depression – and especially during – were the intensifying cases of vandalism, arson, and even violence and shootings that were most common in large urban areas. As the 1920s transitioned into the 1930s, a “new phase” of Halloween characterized increasingly by safety concerns and police reports came to the fore. Even as the decades passed, the nature of Halloween changed again and again. But the first phase – the one that firmly secured Halloween within the American seasonal canon – was simultaneously characterized by the thrill of the new and the lasting power of the old.⁷¹

⁷¹ Occasional reports of petty vandalism and pranks, especially among young men and boys, had been appearing in newspapers for a few decades by this point, but had largely been dismissed as harmless. Nicholas Rogers writes that “if the 1920s saw the emergence of Halloween as a genuinely North American holiday... there remained a nagging problem of just how wild it would be” (*Halloween*, 78).

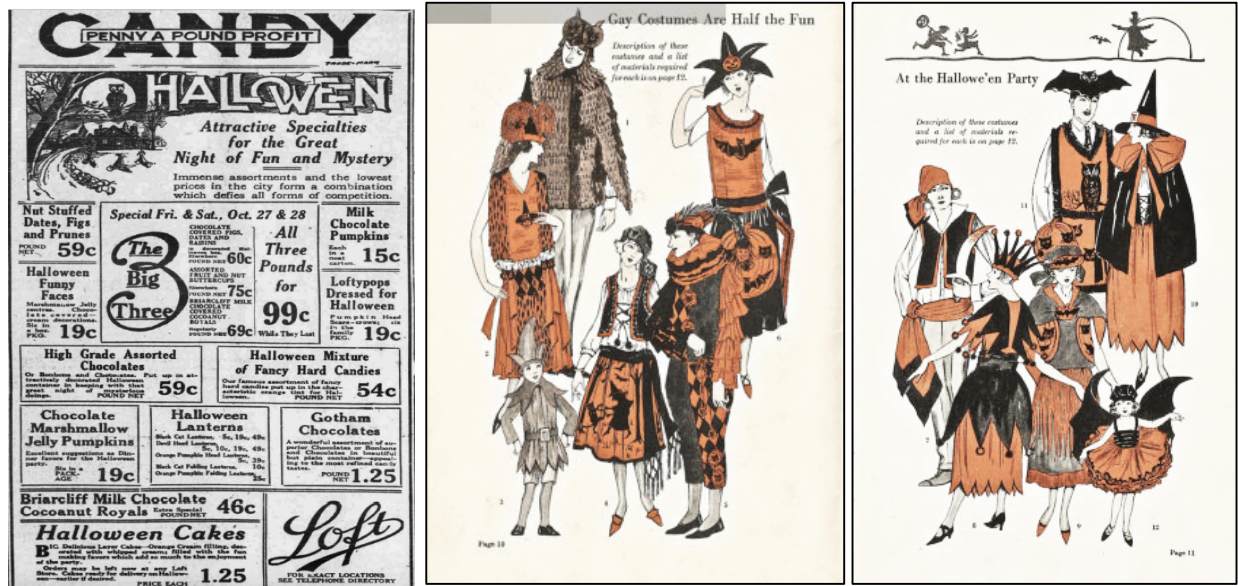


Figure 18. Left: Series of advertisements in the *Evening World*, Oct. 27, 1922 (*America's Historical Newspapers*); Right: two-page spread in *Dennison's Bogie Book*, republication of 1923 original (USA: *Bramcost Publications*, 2011). The detail and variety of these images demonstrate the changing, increasingly commercialized nature of Halloween throughout the first decades of the twentieth century.

The evolution of Halloween between the 1870s and 1920s reveals the story of a group of Americans attempting to shape their identity through the practices and products of holiday celebration. In the time between the first tiny write-up on a festival of the overseas “other” and the publishing of the last *Bogie Book*, Halloween took root in the United States and gradually earned its status as a countrywide, annually-celebrated holiday. *Bogie Books* represented a fully-commercialized Halloween, bought and sold through a variety of products found in catalogs, shop windows, and general stores. The industrial and commercial boom that prompted this first wave of commodities halted sharply in economic downturn, but the new nature of the holiday was already in place. Later developments in forms of Halloween merchandise and celebrations had deep roots in the push-and-pull character of turn-of-the-century America.

Halloween's Gilded-Age roots were not only distinctively commercial, but they were also distinctively female. From the beginning, women of the new middle class with the financial means and leisure time to appear "cultured" sought out quaint tales and romantic histories to satiate their desire. This urge was both a response to the effects of industrial-age modernization as well as a concerted attempt to establish an identity in a rapidly-changing, diversifying society. As the "keepers of culture" for a specific line of Anglo-Saxon ancestors, middle-to-upper-class white women seized upon Halloween in an attraction to its romantic, old-world history within the British Isles. These histories, however embellished, appeared most often in magazines specifically geared toward a female audience and were frequently written by women. Advice pieces and catalogs referred specifically to the Halloween "hostess," and images that accompanied advertisements and formed the faces of postcards prodigiously featured women in costume or fancy dress for the occasion. These women were most often pictured participating in Halloween rituals which had been in place for centuries and transported from the "old world" to modern settings. The holiday was something truly new, but its origin story and long-lasting traditions appealed to its female readers as a natural part of a long, shared history worth celebrating.

During the first decades of the twentieth century, the middle-class American woman who wished to take part in the joys of Halloween had a wide selection of literature and goods to help her do so. The "cult of the new" that manifested during these years certainly spurred the ever-expanding market for new Halloween foods, favors, and other novelties; still, big businesses were obliged to recognize the desire among consumers that fed romantic nostalgia for the ancestral past and "days gone by." Lesley Pratt Bannatyne writes that Halloween in the Victorian Era "seemed to be made of one part romantic inspiration, one part reconstructed

history, and one part Victorian marketing.”⁷² Industrialization, market forces, and the parallel reemergence of the “romantic ethic” in a steadily-mechanized world of reason surrounded a Halloween that America fostered and claimed as its own. With the help of the new middle class, the Halloween of ancient Celtic origins had become a lasting American tradition, waiting to be shaped by new generations to come.

The new-yet-old idea of Halloween took shape through text, imagery, and ephemera which managed to incorporate the powerful, often contradictory forces of progress versus nostalgia. Advertisements, special interest pieces, postcards, and special product catalogs all bore picturesque, detailed depictions of an old-world Halloween that satisfied romantic and nostalgic longings among consumers. These products were an extension of the contrasting needs that Halloween fulfilled among a specific group of Americans at a particular point in time. The growing desire to celebrate a holiday that this group viewed as part of their collective history was met by utilizing the modern capabilities of technology and mass production. This yielded greater quantities of goods designed specifically for sharing through the mail or creating the atmosphere of Halloween at parties. Through this process, Halloween evolved from an ethnic folk holiday into a nationwide, commercialized observance of the American seasonal canon.

The history of Halloween is important because it mirrors the constant dynamic process of identity formation representing the culture and values of different generations. Today, Halloween no longer represents a particular group’s endeavor to assimilate old values and new technology in an economy concerned with consumption rather than frugality. The relevance of holiday studies depends largely on the fact that holidays continue to thrive as long as celebrants have needs which the rituals can address. Halloween and other holiday celebrations, rituals, and

⁷² Bannatyne, 107.

products change when their participants adapt them, and certain ones survive the test of time for not only new purposes, but because they hail to a sense of a shared past.

No matter the people, time, or place, holiday celebrations are contingent on the ways that the rituals associated with holidays lead us to consider cultural dynamics at work. The evidence that turn-of-the-century Americans left behind in the form of newspapers, magazines, postcards, catalogs, décor, and other ephemera carry the power to reveal what values these people held and how they balanced them through the adoption and celebration of Halloween. Since these goods' text and images reveal so much about Gilded-to-Progressive-Age culture, they also suggest the opportunity for historians to apply a similar method to the products and ephemera of Halloween – or another holiday – in another time or place. Future historians might turn to the products of 2017 to discover what they might reveal about today's culture and the “how” and the “why” behind our decision to celebrate Halloween. Public historians should especially consider the ways in which these materials, through their rich and tangible qualities, might be preserved and presented to general audiences so that the wide public might have the chance to consider the meaning behind their annual traditions and the long-lasting cultural importance of holidays. This way, we can begin to grasp and understand how we truly “are what we celebrate.”⁷³

⁷³ Etzioni (ed.), *We Are What We Celebrate*.

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