

## Hallowe'ne in Ireland

In Ireland in the 5th Century B.C. Hallowe'en marked the official end of the summer. All the Celtic households would extinguish their fires, thus making their homes unwelcome to disembodied spirits. A Druid priest would then light a huge bonfire to honor the Sun for the past harvest and also to repel restless spirits. Following the festivities of that evening all home fires would be relit from torches ignited from the bonfire.

The Celts believed that all who had died in the past year gathered at year's end to choose a body, of animal or even human, to inhabit for the next twelve months, before passing on to a peaceful afterlife.



In order to drive off restless souls Celtic families would dress as demons, witches and goblins. They would parade round their homes and villages being noisy and destructive on their way to the bonfire. Here anyone by reason of appearance or behavior, deemed to be possessed, could be sacrificed in the fire. This was a warning to those spirits contemplating possession of a human. By 61 A.D. even the Romans had adopted the old Celtic customs with the exception of human sacrifice.

The Ancient Celts carved out Turnips with demon faces and lit them. The Irish emigrants of the 19th century brought many of these practices to America. The lack of turnips led to the substitution with pumpkins. Trick or treat is reputed to be an American custom but actually it came out of 9th century European tradition when Christians would walk from village to village begging, and offering to pray for your beloved departed.