



Halloween is a celebration we are all familiar with and is often a controversial one as well since various groups disagree with dressing up as monsters and other ghoulish creatures. A lot of organizations prefer to have fall festivals instead of Halloween celebrations believing it is an evil holiday but the history of it tells a different story. Halloween has its origins in the ancient Celtic celebration known as Samhain. It was a festival held at the end of the harvest season and is sometimes regarded as the Celtic New Year. It was a time the Celtic pagans inventoried their supplies and slaughtered livestock in preparation for winter. They also believed that October 31 blurred the lines between the living and the dead. The dead were dangerous to the living and were the cause of illness and crop damage or failure and the Celts wore masks and costumes to placate the spirits.

The term Halloween is a shortened version of All Hallows' Eve which was the evening of All Hallows' Day and was a day of northern European pagan festivities which was known as All Saints Day by the church which was a Christian celebration that occurred on May 13 but was moved to November 1st by a couple of 9th century popes. The church measured the days as starting at sunset so All Saints Day and Halloween were celebrated on the same day for a while though now All Saints Day is celebrated the day after Halloween since that calendar system has not been used for centuries. Many in the church see it is a demon worshipping holiday but historically it is the day when the living and dead can communicate for a short time. Halloween as we know it was brought to America in 1840 by Irish immigrants fleeing the potato famine in their country.

Some of the traditions and their activities have their roots in historical stories and



events. The Romans added some of the Celtic traditions into their own culture and one of those is honoring the goddess Pomona. The symbol of Pomona is an apple which may be an explanation of the modern Halloween tradition of bobbing for apples. Over time the custom of dressing like witches and goblins became more ceremonial than a belief that the dead were actually walking the earth. Trick or Treating is believed to have started as a 9th century European custom known as souling. On November 2nd Christians would roam from village to village asking for pieces of bread with currants baked into them known as Soul Cakes. They would promise to say prayers for the recently deceased from any of the people who gave them the cakes and the prayers were believed to help the soul on its way to heaven. The jack-o-lantern is a holdover from Irish legends about a drunkard named Jack who tricked Satan into climbing a tree and carved a cross into the tree trapping Satan. The tale says that Jack died but was not admitted to heaven because of his bad ways and was not let into hell since he had tricked the devil. The devil gave him a glowing ember to light his way which Jack placed in a hollowed turnip to make the light last longer. The Irish used turnips initially as their Jack-o-lanterns but the newly arrived Irish in America found that hollowed pumpkins made better lanterns and they have been a fixture of Halloween since. Halloween has become a

large holiday in America from both the economic and social aspects and only gets bigger each year regardless of how it is celebrated.

