



Halloween in Vermont, 1870–1940: Modernizing Pranks, Fortune Telling, and Parties

If newspaper appearances were any indication, the story of Halloween in Vermont truly began in the early 1870s. This article focuses on three Vermont Halloween practices—pranks, fortune telling, and parties—and how the forces of modernity, including urbanization, commercialization, and the horrors of World War I, shaped them.

By ELIZABETH A. ALLEN

Barbara and Bobbie Young entertained their cousins, Mildred and Margaret Bessette and George and Sidney Thomas, at their home Tuesday afternoon. The rooms were gaily decorated with Hallowe'en colors as was also the supper table, black cats being much in evidence. Among the goodies which the table bore, were a goblin pie containing favors, a cake surmounted with favors, and candy suckers masquerading as fashionable dolls. Fortune telling followed the supper, each guest being presented with a mask. Games were also enjoyed.¹

This survey of Halloween practices in Vermont began when I was researching my paternal grandmother, Margaret “Peg” Jessie (Bessette) Allen (1916–2010), who grew up in Orwell and Rutland, Vermont. I discovered five-year-old Peg and her six-year-old sister Mildred in a 1922 *Orwell Citizen* report of a small private

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Halloween party. Wondering if Peg's experience was typical, I searched more broadly for Halloween activities in Vermont newspapers. The richly detailed articles convinced me that this was a subject worth pursuing.

In this article, I cover the period from about 1870, the approximate beginning of Halloween observances in the Green Mountain State, to 1940, when trick-or-treating was introduced. After contextualizing the American version of Halloween in history, this article focuses on three Vermont Halloween practices—pranks, fortune telling, and parties—and how the forces of modernity, including urbanization, commercialization, and the horrors of World War I, shaped them.²

Modern historians agree that our current Halloween observances draw their mixed nature of harvest festival, supernatural intensity, merrymaking, and mischief from the holiday of Samhain.³ For the Celts, who had a pre-Christian presence in the British Isles and across northwestern Europe, Samhain served as one of two pivotal festivals, pairing with the fertility festival Beltane on May 1. Beginning on the evening of October 31, it was their three-day celebration of the new year and preparation for winter, with crops harvested, livestock brought in from fields, and animals slaughtered. It also combined governmental administration with carousing in a yearly gathering at Tara, an ancient location of Celtic kings, where participants settled debts, went on trial, feasted, and partied.

The Celts regarded Samhain as a time of increased supernatural activity from spirits of the dead and fairies. Despite sensational accounts linking druids (Celtic priests) to human sacrifice and Samhain to adoration of a god of the dead, Samhain was not a festival of the dead.⁴ Instead, Samhain's connection to death and the supernatural occurred because it was the pivot point of the year. The kind of festival termed liminal by anthropologists, Samhain occupied a threshold where boundaries blurred and the possibility of transformation was imminent.⁵

As Christianity predominated in Europe, the Catholic Church replaced Samhain with All Saints' Day (November 1) and All Souls' Day (November 2).⁶ Collectively called Hallowtide, these holidays marked one of the most important times of the Christian liturgical year by the 1100s.⁷ Requiem masses honored the dead. Bells were rung, either to commemorate souls in purgatory or to scare off malevolent spirits. Bonfires flared throughout England, Scotland, and Ireland—sometimes in cemeteries—for similar protection against demonic influences. In Naples, Italy, people opened charnel houses on All Souls' and decorated the corpses with garlands. In Brittany, France, people blessed the graves of relatives with holy water or milk. Throughout England, poor people went to the homes of more prosperous people to ask for small "soul cakes" in exchange for saying prayers for the dead, an activity known as "souling."

Hallowtide also allowed boisterous violations of community standards. In English parishes, “lords of misrule” led gangs of men in mischief. These pranksters, decked with ribbons and bells, rode hobby horses around churchyards, demanded food from people whose houses they stopped at, and harassed those who refused to participate.

Most Hallowtide customs vanished from England by the 1650s because of the Reformation’s anti-Catholicism and the introduction of Guy Fawkes Night on November 5, which became England’s primary fall festival with bonfires, house-to-house begging, and pranks.⁸ Outside England, though, Hallowtide observances persisted. People in the Scottish Highlands kindled bonfires, held torchlight fertility parades, and warded off evil spirits with firelight. In Ireland, people held vigils for the dead and prepared feasts for departed family. Irish superstitions also stated that fairies were especially active around this time.⁹

Halloween superstitions related not only to the dead and the supernatural but also to matchmaking spells and courtship rituals (addressed in greater detail in the section on fortune telling). Many practices of this nature drew from Irish and Scottish lore. Poet Robert Burns’s “Halloween,” a humorous depiction of Scottish couples’ attempts to divine their love lives, first appeared in 1786, capturing some of these fortune-telling rituals and connoting Halloween as a quaint, ethnic celebration.



The tartan border and the Scottish phrase “auld lang syne” on this Halloween postcard, sent in 1913, remind us how Robert Burns’s 1786 poem “Halloween” cemented a connection in the minds of late Victorian and early Edwardian Americans between the holiday and Scottish traditions. Source: Author’s collection.

Halloween thrived in the US and Canada when Irish immigration surged in the 1840s and 1850s, followed by a smaller swell of Scottish immigrants later in the century.¹⁰ Both groups imported their Halloween traditions, which Queen Victoria of England gave the royal stamp of approval in 1869 when she attended a Halloween observance at Balmoral in Scotland. The event included a torchlight parade, bagpipe music, and group dancing.¹¹ Influenced by the fashionable royal, people in the British Isles and North America imitated her.

If newspaper appearances were any indication, the story of Halloween in Vermont truly began in the early 1870s. In 1883, the *St. Albans Daily Messenger* reprinted a report of an 1873 Halloween party in Montreal, Québec, whose guests agreed to meet in ten years, “dead or alive,” compelling a guest to attend from beyond the grave a decade later.¹² The reprinted article assumed readers’ familiarity with Halloween and Halloween parties. By 1880, then, Halloween had apparently decoupled from its Irish and Scottish connotations to become an observance for all. Furthermore, the article suggested that Halloween celebrations occurred in areas around Vermont and within the state proper during the early 1870s.

One of several ways to celebrate Halloween in the Green Mountain State, pranks were initially conceived of as innocent fun for boys and men. Though girls and young women perpetrated mischief and disputed the gendering of Halloween pranks, young people supported the idea that the holiday’s minor vandalism was harmless. Nevertheless, after 1900, the danger and violence of Halloween mischief soared, with more severe property damage and casualties being reported in the press. Urbanization seemed to be a factor, as did the trauma of World War I. Halloween became a heavily policed holiday.

PRANKS, PARTIES, AND POLICE

One of the earliest reports of a Vermont Halloween prank involved a jack-o-lantern. Modern readers imagine jack-o-lanterns as essential Halloween decor, but carved and lighted pumpkins, the term “jack-o-lantern,” and October 31 took a while to converge in Vermont.

“Jack-o-lantern” initially referred to *ignis fatuus*, also known as fool’s fire or will-o’-the-wisp: a light appearing in marshy areas at night and caused by the decomposition of plant matter. Interpreting these lights as lanterns, people occasionally followed them and became lost, so “jack-o-lantern” began to refer metaphorically to a deceptive distraction. Even as late as 1870, people in the US used the term in this sense without connoting pumpkins.¹³

Immigration brought carved lanterns to North America. The custom originated in the British Isles, though the lanterns were not pumpkins,

which are indigenous to the Americas. Turnips, rutabagas, potatoes, and similar root vegetables, if hollowed out, pierced at the sides, and filled with a few coals, became makeshift lights to accompany nighttime parades, souling, bonfires, or other Hallowtide activities. The concept crossed the Atlantic with English, Irish, and Scottish immigrants. So too did the Irish tale of Stingy Jack, a man condemned to roam the earth with a lantern endlessly, who brought the name “Jack o’ the lantern” into the mix.¹⁴ Jack-o-lanterns began to tie in with Halloween.

Before Halloween became prevalent in Vermont, people carved and lighted pumpkins as a generic autumnal custom. In Brattleboro in 1867, “some boys created quite a sensation . . . by surmounting the tops of gravestones in our village cemetery with Jack-O-Lanterns, fashioned from pumpkins, illuminating this resting place of the dead with ghastly and sepulchral lights.”¹⁵ Despite a ghoulish location in a cemetery, these were not yet Halloween decorations, appearing at the end of September rather than the end of October.

Halloween jack-o-lanterns were not far behind, though. Eva Edgerton Ames (1855–1929) dated them to the 1860s too. She remembered that, when she lived in Salisbury, Vermont, as a girl, several students boarded with her family while attending a local academy. “I was in [the boarders’] room one evening, Hallowe’en time,” Ames wrote, “when a hideous grin flamed at the window. After sane thinking, the same evolved from a jack-o-lantern pumpkin, hoisted on the end of a long pole,” held by a boy she knew.¹⁶ She was writing in 1915, by which time jack-o-lanterns needed no explanation, having developed a permanent place among the Halloween icons of the US and Vermont.

Ames’s recollection focused on a boy scaring girls with a Halloween prank, illustrating a long-standing tradition of male Halloween pranksters. A Middlebury citizen fulminating against pranks in 1872 assumed that mischief makers were male too: “There is in every village and hamlet in America, a vulgar class of mortal, who endeavor yearly to signalize the anniversary of ‘Halloween’ by acts and deeds more characteristic of devils than of boys or men!!” The writer complained of gates exchanged or hidden, cast-iron lions knocked over, doorbells rung, “and many other annoyances too numerous to mention.”¹⁷

Vermont newspapers recorded a variety of mischief beyond the theft of gates. Heads of cabbage were stolen and windows broken. In 1887, “the academy boys at New Haven celebrated Hallowe’en by tying Deacon Potter’s ram to the door of the room where the young ladies of the school were holding their ‘Browning [Poetry] Club.’”¹⁸ In 1889, Middlebury College students put fifteen sheep in the college chapel.¹⁹ In 1891 in Montpelier, pranksters placed “dummy girls” in the beds of young male

boarders.²⁰ St. Johnsbury vandals hung dead cats from house doors in 1894.²¹ Island Pond tricksters dumped M. C. Davis's safe "in the pond" in 1898, "causing him several dollars expense to get it out."²²

Vermonters debated how far Halloween pranks should be tolerated. Predictably, victims agitated for a curb on mischief. An 1888 open letter in the *Rutland Herald* suggested that the thieves of expensive doormats should return them to avoid prosecution for larceny.²³ A 1902 complaint from St. Johnsbury decried houses splattered with red paint and government mailboxes nailed shut, stating, "There is a vast difference between fun and the defacement of property and it is high time something was done to stop the latter."²⁴ But even though the Rutland victims of doormat theft expressed no tolerance for pranks, the anonymous writer from St. Johnsbury allowed for "fun" without "the defacement of property," showing that, at this time, certain kinds of Halloween pranks were accepted and perhaps expected.

Rutland High School students picked up on this license to trickery when, in 1890, town trustees planned a special Halloween police detail. Twenty students launched a counterargument:

We desire to enter protest against stringent police measures. . . . A little good-natured fun and a few practical jokes played upon friends cannot be such a serious matter as to warrant the provision of a special police force. It is hard to believe that Rutland's citizens have outgrown their youth to such an extent as to be unwilling to allow the young people at least one night in the year to carry on their proper fun uninterrupted. Not advocating the destruction of property, but believing that the maintenance of Hallowe'en customs is conducive to order the remainder of the year, we sign as *Twenty Members of the Rutland High School*.²⁵

Characterizing pranks as "good-natured fun and a few practical jokes," these students apparently referred to such stunts as moving gates, swapping doormats, and putting sheep in unexpected locations. If permitted pranks at Halloween, they claimed, they would behave themselves for the rest of the year.

Hal Marsh, a longtime Brattleboro resident, wrote in 1968 about pranks "50 years ago," so between approximately 1910 and 1918. Marsh documented mischief with the same forbearance and affection that Rutland High School students exhibited in 1890. "Pure vandalism was rare," he recalled, "but mischief was certainly the order of the hour." He continued:

Street signs mysteriously wandered, front steps took leave of absence, and even tenanted henhouses were known to move out onto somebody's front lawn. Even the small fry got into the act. . . .

Up in West Brattleboro, such fertile minds as Lotin Newcomb, Don Allen, Lee Corbett, and Bummer Copeland used to bedevil the inhabitants of that area. And one gala night they even enticed a cow up into the belfry of the old Academy School—a matter which caused some consternation the next morning when the custodian hit the school bell and Bossy resented it. . . .

Up in the vicinity of the Common, leprechauns like Jack Vanderveer, Truxton Britton, Ed Culver, Lindley Hartwell, Dougie Cain, or the Emerson boys made life merry for the whole precinct. . . . In those days, an old naval gun used to defend the Common and a pile of cannonballs . . . [stood] in front of the surviving monument. [The balls] were about the girth of a duckpin ball, much too big for the gun, but they looked nice and represented a considerable weight in molded pig iron. But each fall, along about Halloween, they would rouse themselves from their summer lethargy and go thundering down the Common bank.²⁶

Marsh's column, full of male mischief makers, pointed out that Halloween pranks were strongly gendered. Trickery was not expected from girls. Others made similar observations. An Enosburgh Falls correspondent objected to girls' pranks in 1895: "It is unbecoming to young ladies to masquerade in male attire in the early hours of the evening. Last night [on Halloween] tricks were performed which were better left undone and which, in fact, are punishable by law."²⁷ Cross-dressing girls had participated in holiday disturbances, and the writer found it unconscio-



In their great numbers and variety, Halloween postcards represented the extent to which the holiday became commercialized. On the other side of this postcard, Hazel Thorton wrote to Thelma Shepherdson of Fairfax in 1921 about the pranks they had done the previous year. Source: Postcard from Hazel Thorton to Thelma Shepherdson, postmarked 31 October 1921, Burlington, VT. Author's collection.

nable, seemingly wanting such gender-transgressive behavior declared illegal. In a Vermont Folklife interview, Dorothea Streeter Clark (1900–2002), who grew up in North Poultney, shared the same attitude in her girlhood in the early 1900s, saying, “I wasn’t allowed to go out. . . . The boys went out and did those things [Halloween pranks].”²⁸

Vermont girls committed seasonal mischief anyway. On Halloween 1921, Hazel Thorton of Fairfax²⁹ wrote on a Halloween postcard to Thelma Shepherdson of Fairfax, “What are you going to do for excitement to-night? Do you remember what we did last Halloween?”³⁰ Thorton, who was twenty-five when she sent this card, and Shepherdson, who was seventeen when she received it, clearly perpetrated some pranks together “for excitement” the year before, and Thorton expected Shepherdson to do more of the same in 1921.

In Vermont Folklife interviews, Katharine Flint DuClos (1907–2010) recalled her and her friends’ “Halloweenin’” prank. Weaving together interviews with both Katharine and her father Perkins “Perk” Flint (1898–1969), an episode of the Vermont Folklife podcast *VT Untapped* portrayed Katharine’s trick, which occurred in Braintree, probably between 1915 and 1925:

Perk: There were three Flint brothers, Eric Flint, Lester Flint, and Walter Flint, and they ordered each other never to step foot on each other’s land. Of course, all the neighbors knew about it. Some of the young folks at Halloween time took Lester’s wheelbarrow that he was very choice of and wheeled it down into Walter’s mowing down below his barn. When Lester went out in the morning, he could look right down and see it.

Katharine: Lester wouldn’t go get it off of Walter’s land. We knew that, and that was what we did to be bad. Lester had to pay his nephew fifty cents to go and get the wheelbarrow off from his brother’s field.³¹

Vermont girls recognized the gendering of Halloween pranks and responded to it variously. Eva Edgerton Ames fondly recalled having pranks played on her. Dorothea Streeter Clark accepted the prohibition against girls’ pranks and stayed inside. Other Vermont girls like Hazel Thorton and Katharine Flint DuClos agreed with Rutland High School students that Halloween was a time when young people of any gender should have “their proper fun uninterrupted.” Vermont Halloween pranks had a reputation as harmless fun, but this was not to last.

Along with throwing cabbages, upsetting flowerpots, ringing doorbells, and other minor annoyances, pranksters of the Green Mountain State also pulled off bigger stunts after 1900. In Essex in 1918, some people unloaded a hayrack, scattered the hay around town, carefully took the rack apart, and then reassembled it inside the bandstand.³² In

Vergennes in 1927, pranksters put a wagon on top of the school building.³³ In 1928, St. Johnsbury firefighters responded to two blazes “due to the pranks of some Hallowe’en actors” at “the small shack at the town dump.”³⁴ Green Mountain Halloweens seemed to be more destructive than they had been in the past.

More Halloween pranks resulted in injury in the early twentieth century. Burlington tricksters frightened a horse in 1904, causing Hattie Hefflon to fall from the carriage and sprain her shoulder.³⁵ People regularly hurt themselves after the front steps of their houses were removed or burned themselves on jack-o-lanterns. In 1920, Joseph Landry of Springfield hit a phone pole that Halloween pranksters had laid across the road, and his car went out of control, colliding with a house.³⁶ Mozart Bourget of Burlington was shot in the right eye with an air rifle in 1927.³⁷ In 1936, Margaret Mayo of Middlebury nearly suffocated to death when pranksters opened a chimney vent and a draft blew coal gas into the house.³⁸ The rate of joints sprained, bones broken, and near misses ballooned.

Though some Halloween pranks harmed innocent bystanders, injury more often came to tricksters, in part because Vermonters regularly shot at them. In 1896, Eugene Cooney and his friends were out rattling Burlington windows with peashooters when Cooney was shot in the leg by Joseph L’Heureux.³⁹ In 1919, William Hopkins of North Danville exchanged bullets with William Clark when Clark and others vandalized Hopkins’s house and farm buildings. Hopkins was not arrested, but Clark ended up in the county jail.⁴⁰ In 1922, Abner Davis of Cambridge fired at four boys on Halloween, injuring them. Davis was not arrested.⁴¹ John Laflamme of West Charleston shot Herman Wing, age twelve, for trying to remove his well house in 1925. In that case, Laflamme was arrested and jailed.⁴²

The increasing intensity and harm of Halloween pranks after 1900 had no single origin, but correlated with Vermont’s greater urbanization, as represented by the rise of the automobile. Gas-powered cars became more common in Vermont after 1900, with 373 registered in 1906, over 30,000 in 1920, over 90,000 in 1929, and 88,458 in 1942.⁴³ Despite their meteoric rise, gas-powered vehicles remained a novelty early in the century and thus an irresistible target for tricksters. Pranksters treated cars as they would carts or buggies, scaring the drivers,⁴⁴ taking obnoxious joyrides,⁴⁵ moving them around,⁴⁶ and removing parts from them.⁴⁷ Unlike horse-drawn vehicles that could be repaired with a trip to the local wheelwright or blacksmith, however, cars were expensive machines, and damage to them was more likely to incur an owner’s wrath, greater expense, and legal involvement. H. H. Miller, vice president of the Automobile Club of

Vermont, indirectly supported the idea that Vermonters vandalized cars because of the novelty when he said in 1934, "The annual loss to motorists due to the overenthusiasm of Halloween celebrants usually runs to a huge sum. . . . In many instances it may be attributed to children who do not realize the damage they are causing."⁴⁸ Miller's remarks showed how Vermont's changing technology led to new opportunities as well as new annoyances.

An incident in which a police officer shot at University of Vermont students pointed to the impact of World War I in generating violence on Halloween. On Halloween 1933, two police officers stopped a group of UVM students on College Street in Burlington. Students, who were pulling a stolen apple cart, threw fruit at the police. Taking cover in the trees, one officer fired his gun in the air; the other fired four times into the crowd. A bullet pierced the arm of Ray Collins Jr. of Colchester, causing minor injury. The officer who fired into the crowd was suspended from the force, but, in an interview, Mayor James Burke blamed both the students for "resisting official authority" and the officers for "shooting directly at the gang."⁴⁹ He also espoused the use of tear gas to break up crowds.

The encounter suggested that the recent experience of World War I promoted a more violent response to pranks. Tear gas, the most common chemical weapon of the war, was used in combat before it was banned along with other chemical weapons by the 1925 Geneva Protocol. Nevertheless, the use of tear gas by police for self-defense remained legal, and tear gas grenades were developed for riot control in 1919 and distributed to police by the early 1920s.⁵⁰

The permissibility of using combat weapons like tear gas against civilians demonstrated how World War I contributed to a confusion between the home front and the theater of war. Burke's allusion to tear gas suggested that a more militarized concept of civilian life had taken root. Burke evidently saw himself heading the forces of law and order in a war against pranks. Because he was in combat, he was justified in escalating the use of force; instead of having police talk to would-be pranksters, he considered chemical weapons appropriate. The traumas of the war apparently gave some Vermonters a sense that they were under siege, which could explain some of the burgeoning Halloween violence.

Vermonters responded to Halloween violence in two ways: with community parties and with more legal consequences. A typical community Halloween, organized by the White River Junction Rotary, entertained three hundred children in 1932 with a parade including a boys' band, fire trucks, and costumed children. After games such as tug of war and a pie-eating contest, the festivities ended with a massive bonfire.⁵¹ The *Rut-*

land Herald approved of such events, saying in 1921 that “some such reasonable and lawful direction of youthful energy would be a great thing for any town.”⁵² These civic observances in Vermont followed a larger trend adopted in places like Anoka, Minnesota, which, in 1920, instituted a week-long program of family-friendly events that earned the city the label of “Halloween capital of the world.”⁵³

To suppress violence before it started, law enforcement became a more notable presence on Halloween. Burlington and St. Johnsbury instituted a 10:00 p.m. curfew on Halloween night. Montpelier and Rutland tasked extra police officers to roam the streets, and they cracked down on those they apprehended. Sometimes tricksters were merely arrested and fined. Later, however, youthful offenders were more likely to be charged and taken to court. On occasion, they were even put in jail, like three Middletown Springs young men, who were charged in 1910 for unlawfully discharging firearms on Halloween the previous year.⁵⁴

The tolerance for Halloween pranks had decidedly diminished in the Green Mountains by 1940. As Vermont urbanized, pranks that would have been minor disturbances in small towns were viewed more suspiciously as threats to property and health. The Great War was implicated in this transition. Halloween mischief was being reconceptualized as crime.

GIRLS’ “MYSTERIOUS RITES”

Instead of pranks, Halloween fortune telling was the quintessential way for girls to celebrate the holiday, according to Georgia White (1868–1940), longtime reporter for the *Randolph Herald and News*. In 1905, White decried girls’ pranks in favor of “revels appropriate to Halloween” with “the damsels within doors, performing their mysterious rites, while bands of anxious youths struggled from without to force their way into a share of the frolic.”⁵⁵

By “mysterious rites,” White meant fortune telling. Halloween was once a holiday so romantic that courtship-related images rivaled witches, ghosts, and jack-o-lanterns in Halloween postcards of the early twentieth century. Early Halloween fortune telling was gendered as an activity of special interest to Vermont girls who, even as they enjoyed increased educational, political, and civic opportunities, were generally expected to marry and have children. By 1940, however, fortune telling, like many other aspects of Green Mountain Halloweens, had been largely evacuated of traditional significance and retooled as a capitalist diversion.

Halloween fortune telling as practiced in the US first emerged in the British Isles. Most people in the US linked Halloween and Scottish romantic rites, for the characters in Burns’s “Halloween,” a reference point



In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Halloween iconography rivaled Valentine's Day for its depiction of matchmaking and romantic liaisons, as evidenced by this early twentieth-century postcard showing an amorous heterosexual couple. Source: Author's collection.

for many early Halloween observances, engaged in several. They pulled cabbage stalks and examined their shape and health for hints about their future spouses' nature. They named pairs of nuts after lovers and set them on the hearth, and the nuts' actions—burning

together or rolling away from one another—presaged the lovers' relationship together. Burns also mentioned a young woman looking into a mirror by candlelight to see the visage of her future spouse. These methods of foretelling were first linked to other holidays and probably moved to Scottish Halloween in the eighteenth century.⁵⁶

Halloween fortune telling circulated in Vermonters' imaginations as far back as 1803, when the *Windsor Federal Gazette* reprinted from "a London paper" an article discouraging the practice. In the story, "a young girl of the name of Mabel Carr, servant to Mr. Mathewson, type-setter, would needs keep her Hallow-eve." Though Mathewson "represented the impropriety and absurdity of prying into the secrets of futurity," Carr woke at 10 p.m. on Halloween to make candlelight incantations and scatter hempseed. Expecting to see a vision of her future husband mowing the hemp, she instead witnessed "a tall meagre figure." She died soon afterward, killed by "the impression made upon her imagination by the fancied apparition."⁵⁷ Newspapers across the country regularly inveighed against fortune telling in the early days of

This 1913 postcard illustrates a young woman going backward down cellar stairs, hoping to see her future husband's reflection in her mirror—one of many Halloween fortune-telling practices. Source: Author's collection.



the republic, and this example preceded other reports of Halloween and Halloween fortune telling in Vermont papers by more than sixty years. Even from this early article, we see that Halloween fortune telling primarily concerned young women.

Vermonters did not practice such Halloween rites to divine their spouses until much later in the nineteenth century. “How many young ladies went down the cellar stairs, walking backward with a candle and a mirror, in hopes of seeing their future husbands, we cannot say,” commented a Bennington paper in 1879.⁵⁸ A few young women did the same in Burlington in 1885.⁵⁹ In Randolph in 1895, “twenty-eight young ladies assembled in the Williams hall on ‘witches night’ to burn prophetic chestnuts and by other magic rites pry into the future.”⁶⁰

Among Halloween fortune-telling methods, mirror divination was the most well known and widely practiced in the US. The superstition held that a girl could look into a mirror at midnight and, after reciting a spell, see her future spouse’s reflection by candlelight. The practice had ambiguous antecedents. Burns’s version—in which the girl pared or ate an apple while also combing her hair—suggested a Scottish origin. Meanwhile, English author Jane Wilde’s account of mirror divination posited an Irish origin. Wilde reported the story of an Irish servant girl who used a mirror to summon the devil on Halloween and asked him to tell her the

future, “but what she had seen she dared not speak of.” Like the young woman whose story was reprinted in the 1803 *Windsor Gazette*, the unfortunate girl literally died of fright. The mirror in question lay broken around her for added drama.⁶¹

Wherever they came from in the British Isles and despite published warnings against them, superstitions about matchmaking via mirror caught on rapidly in the US, judging by the number of depictions in period media about Halloween. A detailed account of such fortune telling has survived from Daisy Turner (1883–1988) of Grafton. Interviewed many times by Vermont Folklife founder Jane Beck, Turner told the story of her older sister’s courtship game circa 1890:

We had the idea that on Halloween that if you . . . place a mirror down at the foot of the stairs and went down backward, when you get down there you . . . would see the face of the man you were going to marry. Those kind of odd things.

And my brother William . . . unbeknown to [my mother], he’d taken the mirror from the parlor and had carried it downstairs at the cellar step because his twin sister . . . Wilhemina was wondering who she would be dating. And she was only about fourteen.

And so he carried my mother’s mirror—my mother would have had a fit if she had known it—down the cellar stairs. And then when Wilhemina got down the cellar stairs, he was down there, hid down behind there. He went down the bulkhead way while she went down the steps in the kitchen. And then he showed himself in the picture in the mirror—don’t you know? And he had put on a different, you know, fancy [indiscernible word] and stuff.

Oh, he was awful bad, my brother William was. It was really funny. He was always up to something.⁶²

Turner’s story illustrated how quickly the US had Americanized Halloween. Merely two decades earlier, Halloween was a festival associated with old-fashioned Scottish and Irish customs. It was an ethnic celebration for the mostly White populations of those regions and their descendants in the US. By 1890, the specific cultural origins of mirror divination had largely disappeared, leaving a belief that Turner and her siblings could claim as middle-class, Black Vermonters. Turner gave vivid proof that Halloween in Vermont and the rest of the US was a novel celebration that recombined beliefs and practices from various sources.

As the foregoing accounts pointed out, early Halloween fortune telling was a girls’ pursuit. Using easily obtainable items like a hand mirror or a few chestnuts, they practiced prognostication either in solitude or with groups of other girls. Though groups told fortunes for entertain-

ment and social purposes as much as for the hope of finding information, early Halloween fortune telling by individual girls with mirrors indicated that some of them divined in earnest without an audience. Like Wilhelmina Turner, they were anxious to know “who [they] would be dating.”

Around 1900, Vermonters’ Halloween fortune telling grew more complicated and less serious. For example, an 1898 St. Johnsbury party gave guests several theatrical ways to see the future: a mock phrenologist, a practitioner of palmistry, a magic mirror, and even “a Sybil’s tent with leaves.”⁶³ Fortune telling also transformed into a set piece, with a costumed seer surrounded by props, as evidenced by the greater number of designated fortune-telling booths at parties. In Brattleboro in 1895, for example, “at one end [of the hall] was a booth where a witch sat telling fortunes.”⁶⁴ A 1903 Randolph event had a soothsayer in “an Indian wigwam” wearing “a marvellous costume of red and with long elf locks.”⁶⁵ A 1911 reprint short story in a Bennington paper included an illustration of a witchlike fortune teller with pointed cap, a cauldron, and creepy lanterns hanging over head. A line of costumed children stood before the fortune teller, implying that the party’s success depended in part on the inclusion of this evidently popular character.⁶⁶

Additionally, fortune telling turned into an economic transaction; people paid the fortune teller to tell their futures. In 1907 in Barre, the St. Mary’s Guild of the Church of the Good Shepherd offered, among other diversions, “typical g---y fortune tellers who, for a stipend, revealed your past, present, and future in a manner that would cause a professional to blush with envy.”⁶⁷ In North Springfield in 1911, “the booth of the fortune-teller proved quite an attraction, some even paying a double fee that the pleasant visions might be prolonged.”⁶⁸ Though the fortune tellers were always women, both men and women patronized them. Now less of an earnest inquiry into one’s prospects, Halloween fortune telling functioned more like a carnival amusement. This is an indication of how Halloween was becoming commercialized.

COMMERCIALIZATION: PARTIES, COSTUMES, POSTCARDS, AND NOVELTIES

Along with pranks and fortune telling, Vermonters observed Halloween with parties. Parties demonstrated the effects of industrialization, urbanization, and mass production on Halloween practices. Vermonters’ party activities and costumes also revealed their connections to local and global events and contemporary societal preoccupations.

At parties in the era before the holiday became commercialized, Vermonters often danced, like the thirty-five couples at a Halloween ball in a Norwich hotel in 1885 (one of the earliest Vermont Halloween parties

mentioned in the papers).⁶⁹ They also performed vocal solos, group sing-alongs, instrumental performances, plays, pantomimes, and tableaux.

Sometimes they dressed up too; one of the first recorded Halloween costume parties in Vermont occurred in 1884, with an Island Pond “Old Folk’s [*sic*] party, in ‘ye costumes of ye olden times.’”⁷⁰ Masks and organized masquerades spread in the 1890s. Helen Emerson of Brattleboro hosted a party in 1890 with “twenty-eight young people in various masquerade costumes. The “unmasking,” a key activity in costume parties of the era, revealed the host’s sister from out of town.⁷¹ Miriam Lodge Daughters of the Revolution in Bennington advertised their “Halloween evening” masquerade ball in 1895,⁷² and Morrisville teens held their own masquerade party the same year.⁷³ Brattleboro High School students postponed their 1896 masquerade party to the weekend after the holiday.⁷⁴ Echo Council No. 1 Daughters of Light held a “masquerade sociable” in Barre in 1898, admission ten cents.⁷⁵

Precommercial Halloween parties in the Green Mountains were intimate, local affairs. Even if they drew guests from surrounding towns, attendance topped out at around seventy, as at the 1885 Norwich couples’ dance. The food for Halloween parties in this era was simple and, down to the ice cream and candy, homemade. Reports of precommercial parties appeared in newspapers, but the parties themselves generally were not advertised. Even though fundraising parties flourished, their aim seemed to be more charitable and social. Parties were not yet money-makers in and of themselves.

Just as Green Mountain Halloween pranks escalated after 1900, so did Green Mountain Halloween parties. More people attended them. “Nearly all the students and professors” of UVM showed up at a 1902 party given by “the ladies of the faculty.”⁷⁶ The Evergreen Club’s 1911 event drew 125 guests in North Springfield.⁷⁷ About 150 people celebrated at the Ever Onward Unity Club’s Springfield party in 1917,⁷⁸ 160 at a 1922 Newport fete,⁷⁹ and at least 200 boys at the Middlebury Rotary Club’s entertainment in 1930.⁸⁰

The size of Halloween party guest lists grew in part because people now advertised their Halloween parties in the newspaper, reaching a larger crowd. The cheapest ads contained a line or two of text in the standard newsprint font and ran at the bottom of a news column devoted to a particular town. A typical example of this kind of ad, appearing in the 1914 *Rutland Daily Herald*, said succinctly, “Hallowe’en Party at Universalist church; Refreshments; Admission 10c.—adv.”⁸¹

More costly ads with boldface and a variety of fonts debuted slightly later. In 1917, the Odd Fellows of Burlington paid to announce their dance with an unignorable boldface sans serif in the *Burlington Free*

Advertisements for Halloween parties commanded increasing space in Vermont's major newspapers, as seen in this 1930 clipping from the Burlington Free Press. Source: BFP, 31 October 1930, 8.

Press.⁸² Vermont's largest papers saw a deluge of similar ads in subsequent years. By 1928, the *Burlington Free Press* filled a half-column of ads for various Halloween parties in Williston, Colchester, Burlington, Ferrisburgh Center, South Burlington, and Milton.⁸³

Besides decorations, a vast array of Halloween items including invitations, postcards, decorations, and favors (also called novelties) popped up. Beyond this kind of commercialization, Vermonters' Halloween parties after 1900 engaged with local and international events. Costumes embodied casual racism and notions of White supremacy. Theme parties exposed contemporary preoccupations with socioeconomic class.

The commercialization of Halloween was facilitated by the advent of department stores. Department stores followed the innovations made in the 1860s by New York City wholesaler A. T. Stewart: fixed prices, high stock turnover, and goods organized by department. A central location, low markup on items, and bargain counters also drew crowds. The fabrics, sewing supplies, and household decor attracted women, who traditionally did the shopping, and new expectations enticed them to browse and even sit without purchasing.⁸⁴ These merchandising revolutions reached Vermont, penetrating Rutland in the early 1880s,⁸⁵ Barre by 1887,⁸⁶ and St. Johnsbury by 1895.⁸⁷ The quick stock turnover and

261.11 DANCE Saturday, Nov. 1 CITY HALL Winooski Ladies' Night Free Admission To the First 25 Ladies Wood's Orchestra Dancing 8:30 to 12. Adm. 50c.	Big Halloween Skating Party Ethan Allen Pavilion Friday, Oct. 31st Wear Overalls and Bonnets SKATING 7:30 TO 12. Closing Nov. 2nd 259.31
261.11 Halloween Dance at Post Office Hall MILTON TONIGHT Wood Bros. Moonbeam Serenaders will be in attendance. 260.21	ROSE MARIE Beauty Parlor Facials—Curlings—Wavings Nassages Permanent Wave \$5 10 1/2 N. Winooski Ave. Phone 3738-W. Mrs. Freeman and Mrs. Deterge.
DANCE TONIGHT K. of P. Hall, Underhill, Vt. Bob Minotti's ORCHESTRA Admission \$1.00 Per Couple Extra Ladies 25c. Refreshments free—Dancing 9 to 1. Benefit Pythian Sisters. 261.11	DANCE Halloween Masquerade M. W. A. Hall, Hinesburg Fri. Night, Oct. 31 Music by Doc Kenyon's Moonlight Ramblers Adm. Gents 15c.—Ladies 25c. Dancing from 8:30 till 1. REFRESHMENTS. Prizes to Ladies and Gents in best costumes, also prizes to the two fun- niest costumes. Let's not forget this is the place where there is always a good time. 260.21
HALLOWEEN DANCE TONIGHT at Corporation Hall Winooski Round and Square Dances. Music by the Joy Makers Admission 50c. 261.11	Halloween Masquerade Dance Tonight Benefit P. T. A. Town Hall, So. Burlington Friday, Oct. 31st Bob Minotti's ORCHESTRA Dancing from 8 to 12. Admission 50c. Prizes for Best Costume. 261.11

low prices in Vermont's mushrooming department stores enabled people to purchase inexpensive Halloween ephemera.

Holidays turned into occasions for greater consumption than usual in the mid-1800s, with Christmas being one of the most well-studied examples. Early colonial US Christmases involved feasts, drinking, and observances with family and friends, often in church services. Gift exchanges formed a minor part of Christmas traditions. In fact, before the Civil War, Christmas was an occasion to stop business and avoid commerce. As the nineteenth century wore on, however, traditions of gift exchange that originally occurred in December and at New Year's became clustered around Christmas, and factories churned out affordable objects for consumers. Gift exchange and consumption became paramount.⁸⁸ Similarly, as industrialization boomed, businesses recast holidays, including Halloween, as opportunities for ritualized consumption of food and other goods.

Like Christmas, Halloween became another occasion for consumerism, a fact that can be seen in the tremendous number of Halloween postcards from the early twentieth century. Postcards represented a democratization of the greeting card, which began in earnest in the US with Louis Prang's high-end, engraved Christmas cards in the 1880s.⁸⁹ As paper and printing techniques became cheaper and more mechanized, celebratory greeting cards and postcards encompassed all holidays by 1900. Halloween postcards were produced in such voluminous variety that they are one of six categories of holiday postcard analyzed in Daniel Gifford's *American Holiday Postcards, 1905–1915: Imagery and Context*.⁹⁰ Beyond being indicators of commercialism, these postcards depicted contemporary customs, and they are therefore a prime source of information about Halloween practices.

Another sign of Halloween's increasing commercialization was the proliferation of Halloween-themed advertising. Halloween items initially showed up in Green Mountain advertisements in 1900, when George Earle of Morrisville trumpeted the "great deal of Hallowe'en matter of extreme interest" (actually a single illustrated poem) in the November *Delineator* magazine on sale at his store.⁹¹ Most of the ad, however, discussed new clothing stock and corsets. Similarly, a 1903 Burlington grocery briefly mentioned a "special for Hallow'een" among other supplies: "We have a nice lot of Pumpkins for jack lanterns; also Apples, Sweet Cider, Walnuts and Popcorn."⁹² Halloween was a passing reference in these Vermont newspaper ads of the early 1900s, not a centerpiece.

Halloween-specific ads apparently coincided with an increase in popularity for Halloween novelties. The 1913 ad placed by Austin's Phar-

The commercialization of Halloween resulted in a plethora of inexpensive seasonal decorations and novelties, like those listed in this 1925 advertisement.
 Source: "Hallowe'en Novelties," Waterbury Record, 25 October 1922, 5.

macy in Orleans, one of the earliest Halloween-focused ads in Vermont newspapers, exemplified the variety of Halloween novelties, advertising pumpkin lanterns, black cats, witches, skeletons, napkins, decorated crepe, and more.⁹³ A 1917 ad from McAuliffe Paper Company in Burlington listed "cutout witches, cats, snapping [caps]," and hats among their offerings.⁹⁴ In Bennington in 1927, Griswold's promoted "noisemakers, false faces, . . . masks, nut cups, etc.," as appropriate souvenirs.⁹⁵ Party hosts enthusiastically picked up the trend.

Halloween developed its own color palettes during the early 1900s, and they extended beyond the orange and black that we typically associate with the holiday. Some Halloween events coincided with "harvest suppers" and featured autumnal hues of red, brown, and gold. A 1908 reprint article suggested as "effective color combinations" yellow plus black or red plus black.⁹⁶ A 1912 Vergennes Halloween social took place in a dining room "prettily trimmed with green and red crepe paper over the doors and windows."⁹⁷ Alice Tyndall's 1925 Waterbury Halloween supper displayed black and yellow candles along with chrysanthemums.⁹⁸

Like decorations, Halloween costumes ran riot. Beyond the ever-popular witches with black robes and pointed hats, horned and red-suited devils, ghosts wearing sheets, and clowns, Vermont Halloween costumes also linked to local and global concerns.

White Vermonters' costumes illustrated their uninformed views on non-White people. A 1903 Randolph party doubled down on stereotypes by seating the "g---y fortune teller" in "an Indian wigwam."⁹⁹ Attendees at a 1907 Hinesburg masquerade donned yellowface and stereotypical Chinese and Japanese dress.¹⁰⁰ A 1915 preview of Bennington's



**HALLOWE'EN
NOVELTIES**

A good assortment to
select from

- Jack-O Lanterns
- Candles
- Masks
- Tick-Tacks
- Caps
- Cut-Outs
- Place Cards
- Hallowe'en Dolls
- Pea Shooters
- etc., at the

RECORD BOOK STORE
 Waterbury Vermont

“Hallowee’n Carnival” included “Indians” among the suggested costumes.¹⁰¹ Marion Porter won a prize in Williston in 1927 for blackface.¹⁰² Ross-Huntress Co. of Rutland promised readers costumes that included “Spanish girl,” “G---y girl,” and “Chinaman” in a 1931 ad.¹⁰³

White supremacist ideology appeared as well. In 1925, Lida LaBelle won first place at an Essex Junction fete dressed as “Ghost of the South.”¹⁰⁴ Presumably a Southern belle, the costume drew on the romanticized image of the South under slavery, an image promoted by White supremacist organizations like the Ku Klux Klan. The KKK, exiting its Southern strongholds in this period, appealed to White people in Vermont and elsewhere in the East, Midwest, and West by expanding its traditional objection to Black people to include hostility toward Jews, Roman Catholics, and foreigners. By 1924, the KKK had established a chapter in Chittenden County and burned crosses on the Burlington Bay breakwater. Peaking between 1922 and 1927, the KKK declined in Vermont after monetary mismanagement and growing public realization of the national organization’s corruption and violence.¹⁰⁵ LaBelle’s costume, however, suggested that the KKK’s nativism appealed to Vermonters because some shared those sentiments, though perhaps to a less extreme degree.

Indicative of a growing gap between rich and poor, the “hobo party” proved a favorite theme at Halloween and throughout the year. The hobo party overlapped with the “poverty party,” popular since the 1890s, where rich or middle-class people dressed in ragged, stained clothes and pretended to be poor. At a hobo party, guests imitated the migrant workers, usually men, who traveled the continental US by hitching rides on the rails; a 1923 book of party ideas suggested that guests could dress in rags, sit around an outdoor fire, and elude “cops,” who would appear at the end to break up the event.¹⁰⁶ Hoboes increased in numbers after 1900, reaching a high during the Great Depression. This category of laborers was likely on people’s minds in 1928 when Putney members of the Christian Endeavor held a Halloween “hobo convention.” Everyone dressed in rags and received “hand outs” in a paper bag for refreshment.¹⁰⁷

Other theme parties cropped up as well, some glorifying a sense of urban sophistication as well as new technology. The UVM Agricultural School achieved “true rural style” at its 1922 party, with corn shocks and baled hay decorating the venue. Attendees wore overalls and straw hats.¹⁰⁸ The “rural style” was in this case not a way of life for many Vermonters but rather a diversion that participants, who imagined themselves sophisticated and urban, could discard at will. A 1924 Brattleboro

car-themed party included “an automobile polo game” and refreshment booths done up as gas stations.¹⁰⁹ Here guests implicitly celebrated the other side of “true rural style”: the novelty of an urban automobile culture along with the wealth needed to purchase cars. Attending parties with “hobo,” “rural,” or automobile themes, Vermonters seemed eager to embrace modernity and divorce themselves from the popular view of Vermont as a rural, agricultural backwater.

International death and violence filtered into Vermonters’ Halloweens too. In 1915, as the US tried to stay out of World War I, a St. Albans boy embodied the paradoxical stance of armed isolationism by dressing up as a huge firecracker inscribed “Armed Neutrality.”¹¹⁰ Additionally, chambers of horrors exploded in popularity after 1900. Sometimes these functioned, like today’s haunted house tours, as gruesome scenes for visitors to witness or rooms in which they were harassed by ghosts. The most evocative horror chambers let blindfolded visitors’ imaginations run wild. “The things they didn’t see, but felt by hand and feet, were indescribable,” wrote a reporter of such a horror chamber in Newport in 1922.¹¹¹ Even though these novelties sometimes occurred before 1917, the appearance of an “indescribable” horror chamber after the unprecedented casualties of the 1918–1920 global flu pandemic and World War I suggested that international events had altered Halloween festivities.

Interestingly, Vermonters’ Halloween observances at this time conspicuously avoided portraying suffragists. No one dressed up as women agitating for national universal suffrage, as far as I can tell. In 1912, the *Rutland Daily Herald* reported that “some budding suffragettes appeared in masculine garments” and played tricks on Halloween,¹¹² but we do not know if the identity of suffragettes was assigned by the girls themselves or by the news reporter. Associated with militancy and wearing men’s clothes, the stock figure of the suffragette excited ridicule, revulsion, and apparently too much divisive sentiment for consideration as a Halloween costume.

Of all Vermonters’ Halloween observances, parties perhaps experienced the greatest changes during the early twentieth century. Small celebrations where people dressed up in antique clothes and snacked on homemade food gave way to lavish gatherings with many attendees. Mass production and commercialization swept up Halloween as they had other holidays, creating a high number of affordable seasonal novelties and the consumers willing to buy them. Green Mountain Halloween costumes and party activities showed an engagement with national trends. Some theme parties implied that Vermonters wished to shed their image of a rural farming state and join technologically advanced, urban society.

Traditions adapt with the times, and Vermonters' Halloween observances between 1870 and 1940 exemplified such adaptation. Pranks, fortune telling, and parties all changed in this period in ways that reflected industrialization, urbanization, commercialization, and the disruptions posed by the Great War. The introduction of trick-or-treating around 1940¹¹³ and the beginning of World War II no doubt marked turning points for Halloween traditions as well, but those topics must be left for future research.

NOTES

¹ "Orwell," *Orwell Citizen*, 2 November 1922, 4.

² Thank you to Michael Sherman, former *Vermont History* editor, Alan Berolzheimer, interim editor, and the anonymous reviewers whose criticisms greatly improved this paper. Thank you as well to Andy Kolovos, archivist and associate director of Vermont Folklife, who provided transcripts of Vermont Folklife interviews mentioning Halloween. Finally, thank you to Peg Allen, who inspired this research and who always supported my pursuit of family and local history.

³ My account of Halloween's Celtic origins draws from David J. Skal, *Death Makes a Holiday: A Cultural History of Halloween* (London: Bloomsbury, 2002), 20–21; Nicholas Rogers, *Halloween: From Pagan Ritual to Party Night* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 11–21; Lisa Morton, *Trick or Treat: A History of Halloween* (London: Reaktion Books, 2012), 12–16; and Bruce David Forbes, "Halloween," in *America's Favorite Holidays: Candid Histories* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015), 115–20.

⁴ "There is no hard evidence that Samhain was specifically devoted to the dead or to ancestor worship," Rogers, *Halloween*, 19.

⁵ Victor Turner, *Drama, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1974).

⁶ Rogers, *Halloween*, 22–27; Skal, *Death*, 21–22; Morton, *Trick or Treat*, 17–25.

⁷ Rogers, *Halloween*, 24–31; Skal, *Death*, 23–26; Morton, *Trick or Treat*, 30–37.

⁸ Morton, *Trick or Treat*, 24–27.

⁹ Rogers, *Halloween*, 39–43.

¹⁰ Communities with strong Scottish presence existed in Vermont, particularly in Caledonia County, from the late eighteenth century onward, and presumably some members of these communities practiced Scottish Halloween traditions. If they did, however, their observances did not make Vermont newspapers, which were my major source for Halloween trends in Vermont.

¹¹ See, for example, "Hallowe'en at Balmoral Castle," *Leeds Mercury* (UK), 3 November 1869, 3. Unless otherwise noted, all locations and newspapers cited in this article are from Vermont. Locations of newspapers are only given if not indicated in the title or outside of Vermont.

¹² "A Montreal Story," *St. Albans Daily Messenger* (hereafter *SADM*), 27 December 1883, 2.

¹³ Skal, *Death*, 31–33. See, for example, an 1870 reprint of Oliver Wendell Holmes's poem inveighing against homeopathy, in which homeopathic cures were portrayed as a "Jack o'lantern" that "led [the protagonist] from his way." Oliver Wendell Holmes, "Rip Van Winkle, M.D. An After-Dinner Prescription," *Vermont Christian Messenger* (Montpelier), 30 June 1870, 4.

¹⁴ Forbes, *America's Favorite Holidays*, 128–29.

¹⁵ "Brattleboro," *Vermont Record and Farmer* (Brattleboro), 28 September 1867, 5.

¹⁶ Eva Edgerton Ames, "School Bell Echoes VI," *Vermont Tribune* (Ludlow), 30 September 1915, 7.

¹⁷ "'Hollow-een' in Middlebury," *Burlington Free Press* (hereafter *BFP*), 8 November 1872, 3.

¹⁸ *SADM*, 5 November 1887, 4.

¹⁹ "Halloween Pranks of Students in Middlebury College," *Rutland Daily Herald* (hereafter *RDH*), 2 November 1889, 2.

²⁰ "Montpelier Mere Mention," *Montpelier Argus and Patriot* (hereafter *MAP*), 4 November 1891, 3.

²¹ "St. Johnsbury," *Vermont Union* (Lyndon, hereafter *VU*), 9 November 1894, 3.

²² "Town Topics," *Essex County Herald* (hereafter *ECH*), 4 November 1898, 3.

- 23 "Halloween 'Sport,'" *RDH*, 5 November 1888, 3.
- 24 "Beyond the Fun Limit," *BFP*, 8 November 1902, 4.
- 25 "They Want Their Fun," *RDH*, 29 October 1890, 4.
- 26 Hal Marsh, "Halloween Memories," *Brattleboro Reformer* (hereafter *BR*), 1 November 1968, 4.
- 27 "Enosburgh Falls," *SADM*, 2 November 1895, 1.
- 28 Dorothea Clark, interview with Greg Sharrow, 8 October 1998, conducted in Pawlet, VT, Vermont Folklife Archive VFC1978-003, TC98-2047.
- 29 The 1920 US census showed Asa Thorton (thirty, "hired man") and Hazel Thorton (twenty-four, presumably Asa's relation and also a servant) residing with the Shepherdsons, including sixteen-year-old Thelma, in Fairfax. US Census Bureau, 1920 United States Census, Fairfax, Franklin County, Vermont, supervisor's district 1, enumeration district 76, sheet 8B, s.v. "Sheperson, Herbert D.," digital image, ancestry.com.
- 30 Postcard from Hazel Thorton to Thelma Shepherdson, postmarked 31 October 1921, Burlington, VT.
- 31 Katharine Flint DuClos and Perkins "Perk" Flint ("Episode 8: The Perks of Being a Storyteller"), interviews with each other, *VT Untapped*, Vermont Folklife, podcast audio, 28 June 2019, <https://www.vtfolklife.org/untapped-blog/episode-8-the-perks-of-being-a-storyteller>.
- 32 "Pranks and Parties of Halloween in the City," *Burlington Daily News*, 2 November 1918, 3.
- 33 "Vergennes," *BFP*, 2 November 1927, 18.
- 34 "Firemen Called out Four Times," *St. Johnsbury Caledonian-Record* (hereafter *CR*), 1 November 1928, 1.
- 35 "City News," *BFP*, 1 November 1904, 8.
- 36 "Motor Accidents," *Montpelier Evening Argus* (hereafter *MEA*), 3 November 1920, 2.
- 37 "Boy May Lose Sight of Eye," *BFP*, 3 November 1927, 3.
- 38 "A Halloween Prank," *BR*, 5 November 1936, 4.
- 39 "Eugene W. Cooney Shot," *BFP*, 2 November 1896, 6.
- 40 "Hallowe'en Enthusiast Given Jail Sentence," *BFP*, 19 November 1919, 2.
- 41 "Four Boys Shot," *Burlington Clipper* (hereafter *BC*), 9 November 1922, 1.
- 42 "Hallowe'en Prank Ends in Shooting," *CR*, 2 November 1925, 1.
- 43 William J. Wilgus, "Twentieth Century Transportation," in *The Role of Transportation in the Development of Vermont* (Montpelier: Vermont Historical Society, 1945), 85. The share of the state's population residing in the five largest towns increased from 14.4 percent in 1890 to 21.7 percent in 1940. Automobiles were not strictly an urban phenomenon: in 1920, one out of four farm families owned a car or truck, a ratio that increased to two out of three in 1930. The greater concentration of cars in more densely settled urban areas probably accounted for them being particular targets of vandalism in towns and cities. See Michael Sherman, Gene Sessions, and P. Jeffrey Potash, *Freedom and Unity: A History of Vermont* (Barre: Vermont Historical Society, 2004), 386, 627–28.
- 44 One of the earliest recorded car-related pranks occurred in Montpelier in 1907 when young women dressed as ghosts swarmed a driver in his electric car, spooking him, and then fled before they could be apprehended. "Hallowe'en Pranks. Automobile Chases 'Ghosts' on Sidewalk," *MEA*, 1 November 1907, 4. This same group of young women also apparently invaded a parked car and blew the horn so much that a police officer had to disperse them. "Montpelier Girls Worried the Police. Score or More, Robed in White, Went Up and Down the Streets Last Night and Celebrated Hallowe'en," *Barre Daily Times* (hereafter *BDT*), 1 November 1907, 1.
- 45 "Early in the evening an automobile was driven rapidly through the streets, attached to which was a sleigh, the bells jingling as merrily as though it were January," according to reports from Rutland in 1912. "News of the City. Rutland Briefs," *RDH*, 29 October 1914, 10.
- 46 In 1918, for example, the Copelands of West Brattleboro had their car moved by pranksters, who left it running after causing enough damage that it had to be towed. "Hallowe'en Pranks Costly," *SADM*, 4 November 1918, 3.
- 47 Three young Craftsbury men removed parts from a car on Halloween night in 1931. When a police officer arrived on the scene, the car's spare tire, radiator cap, and other "things detachable" had been left behind while the young men rode away. They were ultimately caught, arrested, and sentenced to at least a month in county jail. "Three Craftsbury Boys in Trouble. Hallowe'en Pranks Send Young Men to County Jail for Month or More," *Orleans County Monitor* (Barton, hereafter *OCM*), 11 November 1931, 1.
- 48 "Urges No Damage to Cars on Halloween," *BFP*, 30 October 1934, 2.

- ⁴⁹ "Students Fired on by Officers," *Vermont Cynic* (Burlington) 52, no. 14 (3 November 1933): 1–2.
- ⁵⁰ Daniel P. Jones, "From Military to Civilian Technology: The Introduction of Tear Gas for Civil Riot Control," *Technology and Culture* 19, no. 2 (April 1978): 151–68.
- ⁵¹ "White River Junction," *BDT*, 1 November 1932, 3.
- ⁵² *RDH*, 3 November 1921, 4.
- ⁵³ Morton, *Trick or Treat*, 77.
- ⁵⁴ "Boys Were Too Noisy," *BFP*, 4 March 1910, 2.
- ⁵⁵ Georgia White, "Randolph. Pranks and Parties," *Randolph Herald and News* (hereafter *RHN*), 2 November 1905, 10.
- ⁵⁶ Morton, *Trick or Treat*, 37–44.
- ⁵⁷ "Solemn Warning," *Windsor Federal Gazette*, 12 April 1803, 4.
- ⁵⁸ "Local Notices," *Vermont Gazette* (Bennington), 7 November 1879, 3.
- ⁵⁹ *BC*, 5 November 1885, 3.
- ⁶⁰ "Halloween Parties," *RHN*, 7 November 1895, 9.
- ⁶¹ Lady [Jane] Wilde, *Ancient Legends, Mystic Charms, and Superstitions of Ireland: With Sketches of the Irish Past* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1902), 110.
- ⁶² Daisy Turner, interview with Jane C. Beck, 1 November 1983, conducted in Grafton, VT, Vermont Folklife Archive VFC1983-0001, Turner Family Collection TC1983-0029. Interview excerpt available at <https://www.vtfolklife.org/fieldnotes/visions-of-the-future-halloween-in-the-vt-folklife-archive-2024>.
- ⁶³ "Hallowe'en Party," *Saint Johnsbury Republican*, 2 November 1898, 1.
- ⁶⁴ *BR*, 1 November 1895, 10.
- ⁶⁵ "Randolph Continued," *Bethel Courier* (hereafter *BC*), 29 October 1903, 10.
- ⁶⁶ "Halloween at Helen's," *Bennington Banner*, 4 December 1911, 1.
- ⁶⁷ "Mystery All Around. Sombre Decorations and White-Robed Figures at Hallowe'en Celebration," *BDT*, 1 November 1907, 1.
- ⁶⁸ "North Springfield. Delightful Halloween Party," *Springfield Reporter* (hereafter *SR*), 10 November 1911, 3.
- ⁶⁹ "Norwich," *Valley Sun* (White River Junction), 6 November 1885, 1.
- ⁷⁰ "Local and General Notes," *ECH*, 17 October 1884, 3.
- ⁷¹ "Brattleboro," *Vermont Phoenix* (hereafter *VP*), 7 November 1890, 2.
- ⁷² "Bennington," *BFP*, 25 October 1895, 7.
- ⁷³ "Morrisville Minutes," *MAP*, 6 November 1895, 2.
- ⁷⁴ *VP*, 6 November 1896, 7.
- ⁷⁵ "Sparks from Granite City," *Barre Evening Telegram*, 29 October 1898, 4.
- ⁷⁶ "University Notes. Hallowe'en Party in the Gymnasium. Initiation of Delta Psi Fraternity," *BFP*, 1 November 1902, 5.
- ⁷⁷ "North Springfield. Delightful Halloween Party," *SR*, 10 November 1911, 3.
- ⁷⁸ "News of the Town. Ever Onward Unity Club Has Halloween Party at Residence of Hon. and Mrs. James Hartness," *SR*, 8 November 1917, 3.
- ⁷⁹ "Had a Ghostly Experience. Methodist Young People Enjoy Thrills of Hallowe'en," *Newport Express and Standard* (hereafter *NES*), 3 November 1922, 1.
- ⁸⁰ "Rotary Club Plans Hallowe'en Party. Will Entertain at Least Two Hundred Boys. Interesting and Varied Program Arranged For," *Middlebury Register and Addison County Journal*, 30 October 1930, 1.
- ⁸¹ "News of the City. Rutland Briefs," *RDH*, 29 October 1914, 10.
- ⁸² "Hallowe'en Dance," *BFP*, 30 October 1917, 6.
- ⁸³ *BFP*, 31 October 1928, 8.
- ⁸⁴ Vicki Howard, "The Palace of Consumption," in *From Main Street to Mall: The Rise and Fall of the American Department Store* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 11–29.
- ⁸⁵ "Geo. W. Hilliard. Great Reduction [advertisement]," *RDH*, 4 February 1881, 1.
- ⁸⁶ "Get Up and Run to the Globe Department Store [advertisement]," *Barre Enterprise*, 27 September 1887, 5.
- ⁸⁷ "Department Store [advertisement]," *VU*, 17 May 1895, 2.
- ⁸⁸ Leigh Eric Schmidt, "The Commercialization of the Calendar: American Holidays and the Culture of Consumption, 1870–1930," *Journal of American History* 78, no. 3 (December 1991): 887–916.

⁸⁹ Walter W. Ristow, "Worlds of Christmas Greetings," *Quarterly Journal of the Library of Congress* 35, no. 4 (October 1978): 234–41.

⁹⁰ Daniel Gifford, *American Holiday Postcards, 1905–1915: Imagery and Context* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, 2015).

⁹¹ George Earle, "Garment Makers as Specialists! [advertisement]," *Morrisville News and Citizen*, 17 October 1900, 8.

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⁹³ "Halloween Day NOVELTIES [advertisement]," *Orleans County Monitor* (Barton), 22 October 1913, 5.

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