



## Halloween in the United States

Halloween, the last day of October, has a special significance for children, who dress in funny or ghostly costumes and knock on neighborhood doors shouting "Trick or Treat!" Pirates and princesses, ghosts and witches all hold bags open to catch the candy or other goodies that the neighbors drop in.

Since the 800's, November 1st is a religious holiday known as All Saints' Day. The Mass that was said on this day was called Allhallowmas. The evening before became known as All Hallow e'en, or Halloween. Like some other American celebrations, its origins lie in both pre-Christian and Christian customs.

Today school dances and neighborhood parties called "block parties" are popular among young and old alike. More and more adults celebrate Halloween. They dress up as historical or political figures and go to masquerade parties. In larger cities, costumed children and their parents gather at shopping malls early in the evening. Stores and businesses give parties with games and treats for the children. Teenagers enjoy costume dances at their schools and the more outrageous the costume the better! Certain pranks such as soaping car windows and tipping over garbage cans are expected. But partying and pranks are not the only things that Halloweeners enjoy doing. Some collect money to buy food and medicine for needy children around the world.

### Symbols of Halloween

Halloween originated as a celebration connected with evil spirits. Witches flying on broomsticks with black cats, ghosts, goblins and skeletons have all evolved as symbols of Halloween. They are popular trick-or-treat costumes and decorations for greeting cards and windows. Black is one of the traditional Halloween colors, probably because Halloween festivals and traditions took place at night. In the weeks before October 31, Americans decorate windows of houses and schools with silhouettes of witches and black cats.



Pumpkins are also a symbol of Halloween. The pumpkin is an orange-colored squash, and orange has become the other traditional Halloween color. Carving pumpkins into jack-o'-lanterns is a Halloween custom also dating back to Ireland. A legend grew up about a man named Jack who was so stingy that he was not allowed into heaven when he died, because he was a miser. He couldn't enter hell either because he had played jokes on the devil. As a result, Jack had to walk the earth with his lantern until Judgment Day. The Irish people carved scary faces out of turnips, beets or potatoes representing "Jack of the Lantern," or jack-o'-lantern. When the Irish

brought their customs to the United States, they carved faces on pumpkins because in the autumn they were more plentiful than turnips. Today jack-o'-lanterns in the windows of a house on Halloween night let costumed children know that there are goodies waiting if they knock and say "Trick or Treat!"

## Citizens Panicked by "War of the Worlds"

*The War of the Worlds*, was Orson Welles' radio adaptation based upon H. G. Wells' classic novel. It was performed by Mercury Theatre on the Air as a Halloween special on October 30, 1938. The live broadcast reportedly frightened many listeners into believing that an actual Martian invasion was in progress.

Welles's adaptation is possibly the most successful radio dramatic production in history. It was one of the Radio Project's first studies.

The programme, broadcast from the 20th floor at 485 Madison Avenue (in New York City), started with an introduction and a short introduction to the intentions of the aliens, and noted that the adaptation was set in 1939. The program continued as an apparently ordinary music show, only occasionally interrupted by news flashes. Initially, the news is of strange explosions sighted on Mars. The news reports grew more frequent and increasingly ominous after a "meteorite"—later revealed as a Martian rocket capsule—lands in New Jersey. A crowd gathers at the landing site, and the events are related by reporter "Carl Philips" until the Martians incinerate curious onlookers with their "Heat-Rays." (Later surveys indicate that many listeners heard only this portion of the show before contacting neighbours or family to inquire about the broadcast. Many of these people contacted others, in turn; leading to rumours and later confusion.)

More Martian ships land, and then proceed to wreak havoc throughout the United States, destroying bridges and railroads, and spraying a poison gas into the air. An unnamed Secretary of the Interior advises the nation on the growing conflict. (The "secretary" was originally intended to be a portrayal of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, then President, but CBS insisted this detail, among others, be changed. The "secretary" did, however, sound very much like

Roosevelt as the result of directions given to actor Kenny Delmar by Welles.)

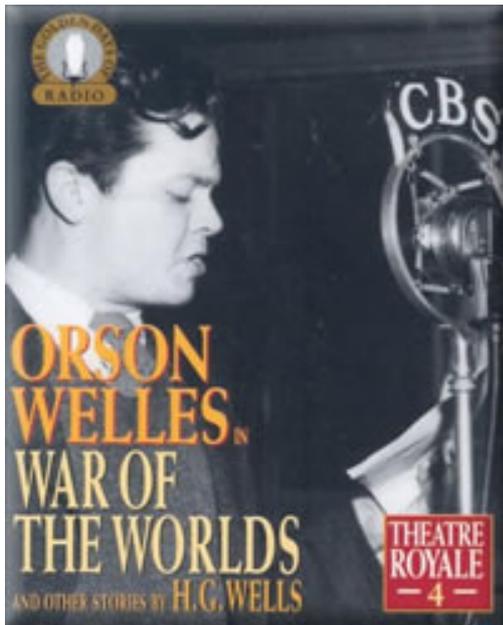
Military forces attack the Martians, but are unable to fight them off. People flee or gather in churches to pray as the Martian machines head towards New York City, spraying poison gas in the air.



This section ends famously: a news reporter (played by Ray Collins) broadcasts atop the CBS building, reports the Martians invading New York City, then he too collapses from the poison gas, and a radio operator is heard desperately calling out "2X2L calling CQ ... Isn't there anyone on the air? Isn't there anyone on the air? Isn't there ... anyone?"

The last portion of the broadcast was a monologue and dialogue featuring Welles, portraying "noted astronomer" Professor Richard Peirson, who had earlier commented on the strange Martian explosions. The story ends as does the novel, with the Martians falling victim to earthly germs and bacteria. After the play ends, Welles breaks character to remind listeners that the broadcast was only a Halloween concoction, the equivalent of dressing up in a sheet and saying "Boo" like a ghost. An urban legend claims this "disclaimer"

was added to the broadcast at the insistence of CBS executives as they became aware of the panic inspired by the program; in actuality, it appears in Howard Koch's working script for the radio play as presented in his 1968 book *The Panic Broadcast*.



This famous broadcast is said to have had an impact around the world. It is sometimes said that the news of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor was first received in skepticism by the American public, as a consequence of the radio performance.

Amazingly enough, the drama has been rewritten to apply to other locations and rebroadcast, with similar results:

- A 1944 broadcast in Santiago, Chile caused panic, including mobilization of troops by the governor.
- A February 12, 1949 broadcast in Quito, Ecuador panicked tens of thousands

Some listeners, enraged at the deception, set fire to the radio station and the offices of *E/ Comercio*, the capital's leading newspaper, killing twenty people. The property damage was estimated at \$350,000. Three officials charged with responsibility for the broadcast were arrested.

Because of the panic in the 1930s and 1940s associated with this radio play, U.S. TV networks have deemed it necessary to post bulletins to their viewing audience to inform them some TV stories were in fact fictional drama, and not really happening. Disclaimers of this sort were shown during broadcasts of the 1983 television movie *Special Bulletin* and again during the 1994 telefilm, *Without Warning*, both of which were dramas disguised as realistic news broadcasts (*Without Warning*, presenting an alien attack on Earth, acknowledged that it was a tribute to *War of the Worlds* and was broadcast on CBS TV on the 56th anniversary of the radio broadcast). NBC placed disclaimers in an October 1999 TV movie dramatizing the possible disastrous effects of the Y2K bug even though it was obviously drama and was unlikely to be confused with reality.

If you would like to read more about this and other related stories, please visit the following websites:

- [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_War\\_of\\_the\\_Worlds\\_%28radio%29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_War_of_the_Worlds_%28radio%29)
- [ufo.whipnet.org/xdocs/orson.welles/](http://ufo.whipnet.org/xdocs/orson.welles/)
- [history1900s.about.com/od/1930s/a/warofworlds.htm](http://history1900s.about.com/od/1930s/a/warofworlds.htm)
- [www.waroftheworlds.org/Broadcast/tabid/54/Default.aspx](http://www.waroftheworlds.org/Broadcast/tabid/54/Default.aspx)

## Prohibition

Prohibition in the United States was the period 1920-1933 when the entire country outlawed the manufacture, transportation, import, export, and sale of alcoholic beverages—that is, liquor, wine or beer. It also includes the prohibition of alcohol by state action at different times, and the social-political movement to secure prohibition. At no time was possession or drinking liquor, wine or beer illegal.

The prohibition or "dry" movement began in the 1840s, spearheaded by pietistic religious denominations, especially the Methodists. After some success in the 1850s the movement lost strength. It revived in the 1880s, with the Woman's Christian Temperance Union and the Prohibition Party. After 1900 many states, especially in the South, enacted prohibition, along with many counties. Hostility to saloons and their political influence was characteristic of the Progressive Era. Supported by the anti-German mood of World War I, the Anti-Saloon League, working with both major parties, pushed a Constitutional amendment through Congress and the states, taking effect in 1920.

Prohibition was an important force in state and local politics from the 1840s through the 1930s. Prohibition was demanded by the "dries"—primarily pietistic Protestant denominations, especially the Methodists, Northern Baptists, Southern Baptists, Presbyterians, Disciples, Congregationalists, Quakers, and Scandinavian Lutherans. They identified saloons as politically corrupt, and drinking as a personal sin. They were opposed by the "wets"—primarily liturgical Protestants (Episcopalians, German Lutherans) and Roman Catholics, who denounced the idea that the government should define morality. Even though the commercial sale of alcohol was illegal, owning liquor was not illegal and drinking was not illegal. Illegal alcoholic drinks were available at "speakeasies" in cities and some

rural areas. Large quantities of alcohol were smuggled in from Canada and the Caribbean.

Prohibition also presented lucrative opportunities for organized crime to take over the importation ("bootlegging"), manufacture, and distribution of alcoholic beverages. Al Capone, one of the most infamous bootleggers of them all, built his criminal empire largely on profits from illegal alcohol.

With alcohol production largely in the hands of criminals and unregulated clandestine home manufacturers, the quality of the product varied widely. There were many cases of people going blind or suffering from brain damage after drinking "bathtub gin" made with industrial alcohol or various poisonous chemicals. One particularly notorious incident involved the patent medicine Jamaica ginger, known by its users as "Jake." It had a very high alcohol content and was known to be consumed by those desiring to circumvent the ban on alcohol.

When repeal of prohibition occurred in 1933, following passage of the Twenty-first Amendment, organized crime lost nearly all of its black market alcohol profits, due to competition with low-priced alcohol sales at legal liquor stores. Organized crime later adjusted by selling illegal drugs instead. The black market thrives on the sale of any illegal product. On such points as these, the modern "War on Drugs" has been compared to Prohibition, but there is disagreement on the validity of this comparison.

To read more on this topic, visit these sites:

- [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prohibition\\_in\\_the\\_United\\_States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prohibition_in_the_United_States)
- [prohibition.osu.edu](http://prohibition.osu.edu)

## This Month in U.S. History

**October 1, 1908** - Henry Ford's Model T, a "universal car" designed for the masses, went on sale for the first time.

**October 1, 1979** - After 70 years of American control, the Panama Canal Zone was formally handed over to Panama.

**October 2, 1968** - California's Redwood National Park was established. Redwoods are the tallest of all trees, growing up to 400 feet (120 meters) during a lifetime that can span 2,000 years.

**October 3, 1995** - The O.J. Simpson double-murder trial ended with the former American football star acquitted of the murders. In June of 1994, Simpson had been arrested and charged in the stabbing deaths of his ex-wife Nicole Brown Simpson and her male friend.

**October 4, 1965** - Pope Paul VI became the first Pope to visit the U.S. And address the United Nations.

**October 4, 1970** - Rock singer Janis Joplin was found dead from a drug overdose.

**October 6, 1927** - The first "talkie" opened in New York. *The Jazz Singer* starring Al Jolson was the first full-length feature film using spoken dialogue.

**Birthday** - Engineer and inventor George Westinghouse (1846-1914) was born in Central Bridge, New York. He developed air brakes for trains and was later responsible for the adoption of alternating current (AC) systems for electric power transmission in the U.S. He was also the first employer to give his employees paid vacations.

**October 8, 1871** - The Great Fire of Chicago broke out. According to legend, it started when Mrs. O'Leary's cow kicked over a lantern in her barn on DeKoven Street. Over 300 persons were killed and 90,000 were left homeless as the fire leveled 3.5 square miles, destroying 17,450 buildings. Financial losses totaled over \$200 million.

**October 11, 1939** - Albert Einstein warned President Franklin D. Roosevelt that his theories could lead to Nazi Germany's development of an atomic bomb. Einstein suggested the U.S. develop its

own bomb. This resulted in the top secret "Manhattan Project."

**Birthday** - Eleanor Roosevelt (1884-1962) was born in New York City. She was the wife of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, 32nd U.S. President. As First Lady, she led an unprecedented independent life, striving to improve the lives of people all over the world. In 1933, she became the first wife of a president to give her own news conference in the White House. She traveled extensively on her own and was affectionately called "First Lady of the world." She served as a U.S. delegate to the United Nations for many years and helped write the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

**October 13, 1792** - The cornerstone of the White House was laid by George Washington. The building, located at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, is three stories tall with over 100 rooms, and was designed by James Hoban. The building was first known as the "Presidential Palace," but acquired the name "White House" about 10 years after its completion. It was burned by British troops in 1814, then reconstructed, refurbished and reoccupied in 1817.

**October 14, 1912** - Former President Theodore Roosevelt was shot by a fanatic while campaigning in Milwaukee. Roosevelt was saved by his thick overcoat, a glasses case and a folded speech in his breast pocket, all of which slowed the bullet. Although wounded, he insisted on making the speech with the bullet lodged in his chest and did not go to the hospital until the meeting ended. Roosevelt, a rugged outdoorsman, fully recovered in two weeks.

**October 14, 1947** - U.S. Air Force Captain Chuck Yeager became the first man to break the sound barrier, flying in a rocket-powered research aircraft.

**October 14, 1964** - Civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr. became the youngest recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize. He donated the \$54,000 in prize money to the civil rights movement.

**October 16, 1859** - Fanatical abolitionist John Brown seized the Federal Arsenal at Harpers Ferry with about 20 followers. Three days later, Brown was captured and the insurrection was put down by U.S. Marines under the command of Col. Robert E. Lee. Brown was convicted by the Commonwealth of



Virginia of treason, murder, and inciting slaves to rebellion, and was hanged on December 2, 1859.

**October 16, 1916** - The first birth control clinic in America was opened in Brooklyn, New York, by Margaret Sanger, a nurse who worked among the poor on the Lower East Side of New York City.

**Birthday** - American teacher and journalist Noah Webster (1758-1843) was born in West Hartford, Connecticut. His name became synonymous with "dictionary" after he compiled the first American dictionaries of the English language.

**October 19, 1960** - The U.S. embargo of Cuba began as the State Department prohibited shipment of all goods except medicine and food.

**October 20, 1818** - The U.S. And Britain agreed to set the U.S.- Canada border at the 49th parallel.

**October 21, 1879** - Thomas Edison successfully tested an electric incandescent lamp with a carbonized filament at his laboratory in Menlo Park, New Jersey, keeping it lit for over 13 hours.

**October 21, 1915** - The first transatlantic radio voice message was made by the American Telephone and Telegraph Company from Virginia to Paris.

**October 21, 1967** - Thousands of anti-war protesters stormed the Pentagon during a rally against the Vietnam War in Washington, DC About 250 were arrested. No shots were fired, but demonstrators were struck with nightsticks and rifle butts.

**October 21, 1917** - Jazz great Dizzy Gillespie (1917-1993) was born in Cheraw, South Carolina (as John Birks Gillespie). He was a trumpet player, composer, band leader and one of the founding fathers of modern jazz, known for his trademark puffed cheeks and bent trumpet.

**October 24, 1931** - Chicago gangster "Scarface" Al Capone was sentenced to 11 years in jail for federal income tax evasion. In 1934, he was transferred to Alcatraz prison near San Francisco. He was paroled in 1939, suffering from syphilis. He retired to his mansion in Miami Beach where he died in 1947.

**October 26, 1881** - The shoot-out at the O.K. Corral in Tombstone, Arizona, occurred between the feuding Clanton and Earp families. Wyatt Earp, two

of his brothers and "Doc" Holliday gunned down two Clantons and two others.

**October 27, 1904** - The New York City subway began operating, running from City Hall to West 145th Street, the first underground and underwater rail system in the world.

**October 27, 1858** - Theodore Roosevelt (1858-1919) the 26th U.S. President was born in New York City. He succeeded to the presidency following the assassination of President William McKinley. Roosevelt served from September 14, 1901 to March 3, 1909. Best remembered for stating, "Speak softly and carry a big stick."

**October 28, 1636** - Harvard University, the oldest institution of higher learning in America, was founded in Cambridge, Mass. It was named after John Harvard, a Puritan who donated his library and half his estate. Distinguished alumni include; Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Henry James, and NAACP founder W.E.B. Du Bois.

**October 28, 1886** - The Statue of Liberty was dedicated on Bedloe's Island in New York Harbor. The statue was a gift from the people of France commemorating the French-American alliance during the American Revolutionary War. The entire structure stands 300 feet (92.9 meters) tall. The pedestal contains the words, "...Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

**October 28, 1955** - Microsoft founder Bill Gates was born in Seattle, Washington, October 28, 1955. In 1975, he co-founded Microsoft with Paul Allen, designing software for IBM computers.

**October 29, 1929** - The stock market crashed as over 16 million shares were dumped amid tumbling prices. The Great Depression followed and spread worldwide, lasting until the outbreak of World War II.

**October 31, 1941** - Mount Rushmore National Memorial was completed after 14 years of work. The memorial contains 60 foot tall sculptures of the heads of Presidents George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln and Theodore Roosevelt.



## Book of the Month

**Movie-Made America: A Cultural History of American Movies**

By Robert Sklar

"...Film has had a revolutionary impact on American Society, transforming culture from the bottom up, radically revising attitudes toward pleasure and sexuality, and, at the same time, cementing the myth of the American Dream. No book has measured film's impact more clearly or comprehensively than Movie-Made America."

## Important Dates to Remember

October 2, 2006  
World Habitat Day

October 10, 2006  
Columbus Day

October 31, 2006  
Halloween

## Current American Corner Activities

The staff of the American Corner appreciates your patience as we attempt to assemble a new and improved program. We are currently planning several activities which will be available soon. In the meantime, we are offering a English conversation hour every Wednesday from 16:30 - 17:30. Or if you have your own group and would like to practice in the AC, contact us and we can make space for your group.

American Corner Staff

## American Corner Hours

Monday, Tuesday Wednesday, Friday:  
10:00- 13:00  
and  
15:00 - 18:00

Thursday:  
No morning hours  
and  
15:00 - 18:00

Contact US!!

Email: [americancorner@uta.cl](mailto:americancorner@uta.cl)

Telephone: 205929

Or Come See Us on the Second of El Anexo del Biblioteca, Campus Saucache.

## Sources

### Halloween

- [usinfo.state.gov/usa/infousa](http://usinfo.state.gov/usa/infousa)

### War of the Worlds

- [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_War\\_of\\_the\\_Worlds\\_%28radio%29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_War_of_the_Worlds_%28radio%29)
- [ufo.whipnet.org/xdocs/orson.welles/](http://ufo.whipnet.org/xdocs/orson.welles/)

### Prohibition

- [prohibition.osu.edu/content/WhyProhibition.htm](http://prohibition.osu.edu/content/WhyProhibition.htm)
- [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prohibition\\_in\\_the\\_United\\_States](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prohibition_in_the_United_States)

### This Month in U.S. History

- [www.historyplace.com/specials/calendar/index.html](http://www.historyplace.com/specials/calendar/index.html)