



Research Brief

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Halloween in Pennsylvania - October 31, 2007

MIDDLETOWN, Pa – The observance of Halloween, which dates back to Celtic rituals thousands of years ago, has long been associated with thoughts of witches, ghosts, devils and hobgoblins. In the United States, the first recorded instance of a Halloween celebration occurred in Anoka, Minnesota in 1921, but Allentown, Pennsylvania claims one of the nation's oldest Halloween parades, dating to 1905. Over the years, the customs and rituals associated with All-Hallows Eve have changed dramatically, and Halloween has become the darling of American holidays. This one-night event is “out-earned” only by Christmas and “out-partied” only by New Year's Eve and Super Bowl Sunday.

“Trick or Treat!”

An estimated 1.5 million Pennsylvanians -ages 5 to 14 years- were potential “trick-or-treaters” last year, down 144,250 since census 2000. The highest proportion of this age group was located in Lancaster County (13.8 percent), while the lowest was in Forest County (7.2 percent). The commonwealth ranks 42nd among the states in proportion of elementary and middle school-age children to the total population (12.4 percent), though the state compares favorably to the national percentage (13.5 percent).

Mothers and fathers often escort their children around the neighborhood on Halloween night, but more grandparents may be joining them. In 2006, an estimated 194,771 Pennsylvania grandparents had children ages 18 or younger living in their households, and 39.2 percent of them were responsible for the children. More than 1.3 million Pennsylvania families have children under 18 living with them.

Famous Graves

For those who need more of a scare than trick-or-treating can provide, Pennsylvania is the final resting place of several famous historical figures. U.S. Army Major-General and Commander-in-Chief “Mad Anthony” Wayne who led American armed forces in 1794 to win the Northwest Territory is one of those fortunate souls. Although he survived the war, Wayne became terribly sick while traveling across Lake Erie. After arriving at Presque Isle, Erie, he died and was buried there. Thirteen years later, his son Isaac requested the body to be retrieved and buried at the family cemetery in Chester County. When the General was exhumed, his body was remarkably preserved. Wanting to keep the General's grave in Erie, Dr. Wallace, who was an army surgeon and Wayne's friend, boiled the remains until the bones separated from the flesh. The doctor gave the bones to Wayne's family and placed the rest back into the coffin for reburial at Erie. His bones traveled across the state along now U.S. Route 322, and they lie to this day in Chester County at Old Saint David's Church. Legend has it that some of the bones fell out of the wagon along the

way, and every New Year's morning -- Wayne's birthday -- his ghost rises from the grave in search of his bones.

Pumpkins Galore

Pennsylvanians don't have to worry about searching for pumpkins for carving their jack-o'-lanterns. Pennsylvania is one of the top 5 pumpkin-growing states in the nation and produced more than 116 million pounds of pumpkins in 2006. The value of Pennsylvania's pumpkin crop was second only to Ohio (22.3 million dollars), at 19.4 million dollars (Table 1). Other states in the top 5 for value of pumpkin production in 2006 were New York (18.8 million dollars), Illinois (18.2 million dollars) and California (13.1 million dollars).

Candy and Costumes

Americans consumed about 26 pounds of candy per capita in 2006, and it is believed that children consume much of this around Halloween.

In Pennsylvania, the production of chocolate, cocoa, and other candy products is an important part of the manufacturing industry. In 2005, the commonwealth was second in the nation in number of chocolate and cocoa product manufacturing establishments (121). These businesses employed 8,818 people. An additional 31 establishments employed 1,700 workers in the manufacture of nonchocolate confectionary products. Overall, Pennsylvania's sugar and confectionary industry shipped 4.9 billion dollars worth of goods in 2005.

Costume shops can also look forward to a boost in business around Halloween. In 2005, 99 formal wear and costume rental establishments in Pennsylvania employed 579 people.

Table 1: Value of Pumpkin Production for 2006

Pumpkins (For Util & Usage of All) Value of production for 2006		
State Rank	State	Value of production
1	Ohio	22,378 thousand dollars
2	Pennsylvania	19,389 thousand dollars
3	New York	18,833 thousand dollars
4	Illinois	18,185 thousand dollars
5	California	13,110 thousand dollars

Table source: United States Department of Agriculture, National Agricultural Statistics Service

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006 Population Estimates, 2006 American Community Survey, 2005 County Business Patterns, 2005 Annual Survey of Manufacturers, U.S. Department of Agriculture, www.visitpa.com/hauntedpa/, www.AmericanHeritage.com

The Pennsylvania State Data Center is the commonwealth's official source for population and economic statistics. It is based at Penn State Harrisburg's Institute of State and Regional Affairs. The Pennsylvania State Data Center is part of the U.S. Census Bureau's National State Data Center Program.

Editors: For additional data, contact the Pennsylvania State Data Center's State Capital Office at 717.772.2710 or for faculty comment on this topic, contact Penn State Harrisburg's Public Information Office at 717.948.6029.