

Jack-O-Lanterns

Jack-o'-Lanterns are hollowed out pumpkins with a face cut into one side. Most jack-o'-lanterns contain a candle or some other light. People in Scotland and Ireland once carved out large beets or turnips to use as lanterns on Halloween. After this custom reached America, pumpkins began to be used. The jack-o'-lantern originally represented spirits present in the dark, or souls released from Christian purgatory.

According to an Irish legend, jack-o'-lanterns were named for a character named Jack, who could not enter heaven because he was a miserly, bad-tempered man. He could not enter hell either, because he had tricked the devil several times. As a result, Jack had to walk the earth forever with only a coal from hell to light his lantern.