

In the Spotlight

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LIVING HISTORY



by Gene
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An autumn celebration: The Great Pumpkin Carve 2021

If you're over the age of 50, you likely remember the television special, "It's the Great Pumpkin, Charlie Brown" that was broadcast on Oct. 27, 1966.

There were whimsical scenes of kids carving pumpkins accompanied by the superb soundtrack by Vince Guaraldi, with the popular tune "Linus and Lucy." The show captured the hearts of millions around the country and was quickly linked with Halloween. It has become a symbol of the season, along with crimson-leafed maples and rustic farm stands on back country roads. The Chadds Ford Historical Society welcomes this time of year with a joyous celebration, The Great Pumpkin Carve.

Who would ever believe that an orange, strange-looking type of squash would generate an unofficial holiday and a multi-billion dollar industry? The word pumpkin derives from the Greek "pepon," meaning "large melon." Pumpkin carving originated in England in the 1600s. The term Jack O'Lantern came into use to describe light flickering over peat bogs, a phenomenon sometimes termed "Will O the Wisp." It was also linked with the 19th century practice of people in Ireland and

Scotland, who often carved strange images on turnips and other vegetables to represent spirits coming to life around the time of the Fall harvest. Poet John Greenleaf Whittier wrote "The Pumpkin": "...When wild, ugly faces we carved in its skin... Glaring out through the dark with a candle within!"

Why the scary faces and flickering lights? An Irish folk tale mentions a farmer named Jack who had a terrifying encounter with the devil, Jack later wandering the Earth for a place to rest while he carried a hollowed-out turnip with a glowing ember inside. Superstitious people tried to protect their homes with Jack O'Lanterns to ward off evil spirits and vampires. The stranger the image, the better they served to scare off unwanted entities. Pumpkin carving around the Chadds Ford area started to attract public attention when artist Andrew Wyeth began displaying his own carvings at the Chadds Ford Inn (now Brandywine Prime) in the 1970s. Wyeth's creations became so well liked, they attracted large crowds. The event later moved up Creek Road to the Chadds Ford Historical Society, where it has been pleasing visitors of all ages for almost three decades.



Children carving a pumpkin at The Great Pumpkin Carve.

The Great Pumpkin Carve 2021 will be held on the grounds of the Historical Society at 1736 Creek Road in Chadds Ford for three days: Thursday, Oct. 14 and Friday, Oct. 15 from 4 to 9 p.m. and on Saturday, Oct. 16 from 3 to 9 p.m. More than 70 giant pumpkins will be carved by talented artists, and displayed in an open-air setting. See the pumpkins

"come to life" as these creative illustrators decorate them with a huge variety of captivating images and light them with candles for everyone to enjoy. All three nights will offer live music, the ever-popular, kid-friendly Haunted Trail, raffle prizes, local craft beers and wines, as well as plenty of food. Admission is \$15 for adults 18 and older, \$5 for those age 7

to 17. It is free for children 6 and under and to all Historical Society members. Membership is offered at the gate. All tickets need to be purchased the nights of the event (no pre-event sales). If you have questions, please visit www.greatpumpkin carve.com.

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turer based in Kennett Square. He has written ten books which focus mostly on American history. His latest book is "Forgotten Founding Fathers: Pennsylvania and Delaware in the American Revolution." His books are available on his website at www.GenePisasale.com and on www.Amazon.com. He can be reached at Gene@GenePisasale.com.



A very spooky pumpkin at the Great Pumpkin Carve.



The Haunted Trail.



One of many intricately carved pumpkins at The Great Pumpkin Carve.



Shrek image on carved pumpkin.



Haunted house scene on a carved pumpkin.