

Haunted Happenings

By Shanna Smith

October comes with many excitements, such as leaves falling from trees, cold weather, and, of course, Halloween. Every resident of Marblehead knows what Halloween means: Haunted Happenings.

There are many ups and downs to Salem's Haunted Happenings that persist throughout the month of October. One of the main causes of these mixed feelings is the endless traffic. Despite Salem's popularity, this month irritates many Marbleheaders, especially those who commute through Salem. As someone who drives through Salem four days each week, I understand why every parent dreads the October festivities in Salem. A few days ago, I sat in an unmoving car for fifteen minutes due to a gridlock at a main intersection.

However, even with the ceaseless traffic and parents' complaints, I am always excited for Haunted Happenings. Salem is one of the only places where anyone can walk around in a ridiculous costume two weeks before Halloween and no one will say anything negative. Ever since I was younger, I have always loved driving through Salem and deciding which costumes were the scariest or the most over-the-top.

Another source of excitement is the festivities themselves. One of my favorite things to do in October is walk around Salem. The uniqueness of the city is the most prominent around Halloween and what solely gets me in the Halloween mood. Everything about Salem is intriguing: the costumes, the haunted houses, and the dark history. People come to Salem from all over the world just to see Haunted Happenings. Some of us might find this odd, since we take it for granted that the town bordering ours has such festivities. However, this shows that Haunted Happenings is important to people throughout the country, and living near it decreases the small-town feel of Marblehead.

Haunted houses are my absolute favorite part of the festivities. Like many other Americans, haunted houses are essential to my celebration of Halloween. This year especially, I thought they were extremely well done. One thing that is admirable about Haunted Happenings is that there is a range of haunted houses from mild exhibits for small children, to terrifying displays, such as Frankenstein's Castle. These haunted houses have relatively fair prices (\$10 estimate per haunted house), and although the lines that fill the streets seem long, I have never waited for more than an hour.

Haunted Happenings also exposes history to us in a fun, exciting way. Every day in October, people take guided tours around Salem to learn about its distinctive history. Most people, including me, are fascinated by the stories of the Salem Witchcraft Trials because they give a tangible feel to history since the trials occurred in a place so close to home. In addition, there are museums and historic homes available to learn more. As someone who generally finds

history boring, I was ecstatic to discover that throughout my childhood, I had unknowingly been learning about history.

Even though I find the crowding of Salem in October irritating at times, I recommend that you immediately overlook this problem. Instead, plan ahead and visit Haunted Happenings for the experiences that you can gain, for they are just another reminder that we live near a town with such historical significance.

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