

Hallowe'en, Masquerade, and Fancy-Dress Costumes of the Model A Era

By Laurie Elliott, Santa Clara Valley Chapter

"The costume's the thing that strikes terror to the heart and gives zest to the party, so make it original," claimed *Fashion Service Magazine*, October, 1927.

Masquerade and fancy-dress parties, as they're known in Europe, have been around for centuries. Hallowe'en, as it was spelled then, has a very round-a-bout history and became part of popular culture in the United States by the early 20th Century, according to Wikipedia. As you can see by the colorized example from the same issue of *Fashion Service*, at right, these costumes might fit into all three categories of costume parties.

Hallowe'en parties for adults or children became very popular in the 1920's, possibly to corral the wild hooliganism that had occurred in earlier decades. Magazines such as *Delineator*, *Needlecraft*, *Liberty*, and *Pictorial Review* offered suggestions for costumes, decorations, menus and party entertainment. Specialty publications such as Dennison's *Bogie Book* did the same but with much more detail. Fortune telling, as well as a meal followed by



a Bridge tournament, inventive skits, and traditional games such as bobbing for apples were put forward. Possibly, not all wild hooliganism was corralled as shown on this cover of *Liberty Magazine*, October 29, 1927. Too bad we cannot clearly see his costume!



Costumes to Buy Ready Made



Quality Cloth Suits		
Mexican	Jiggs Suit	Maggie, Jiggs' Wife
The most popular suit made. Real snappy. Dark blue hat, jacket, pants with imitation gold fringe, yellow sash.	Black coat and trousers, red vest, fancy tie, white spats and black hat with white band. Irish mask.	Jaunty hat with feather, striking brown dress with gaudy ruffled trimming. Good material. Irish mask.
49N4534	49N4541	49N4540
\$2.39	\$2.39	\$2.39

"Jiggs" was a popular comic strip at the time. Notice the costumes of Jiggs and Jiggs' Wife come with "Irish" masks. From Sears, Roebuck and Co. Fall/Winter 1928-1929 catalog.

This full-page ad is credited as Butterick, 1929. I wonder if detailed instructions for the hats of the "Spanish" and "French Peasant" costumes were included. Era patterns are notorious for often lacking construction specifics. These are spectacular costumes, nonetheless.

6421

1659

3326

6174

Hallowe'en costumes

6421—Rose costume. For 32 (14 to 16 years), 1½ yards 35-inch cambric; 2¼ yards 50-inch tarlatan. For 24 to 37 (6 to 20 years). Pattern, 45 Cts.

3326—For 34 (17-18 yrs.), 4¾ yds. 27-in. paper muslin (incl. hat); 2⅞ yds. 36-in. net; ⅝ yd. 36-in. contrast. 24 to 34 (6 to 18 yrs.); 36, 38. 50 Cts.

6174—A mouse made of fur cloth. For 25 (8 years), 1½ yards of 50-inch fur cloth. Designed for 23 to 29 (4 to 12 years). Pattern Price, 35 Cts.

1659—A French peasant costume with its elaborate and very attractive provincial hat. Designed for 32 to 35 (15 to 18 years) and 36 to 40. Pattern, 50 Cts.

2822—Spanish costume. For 34 (size 16), 2⅞ yds. 35-in. sateen; 5½ yds. 10-inch edging; 1¼ yds. 35-in. lawn. 26 to 34 (sizes 8 to 16); 36, 38. 45 Cts.

4006—For 36, 8¾ yds. 27-inch paper muslin; 2⅞ yds. 27-in. contrast and ½ yd. 50-in. tarlatan for ruff. 22 to 32 (2 to 16 yrs.) and 36, 40, 44. 40 Cts.

2822

4006

Prices of Butterick Patterns in Sterling will be found on back cover

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Costumes to Make

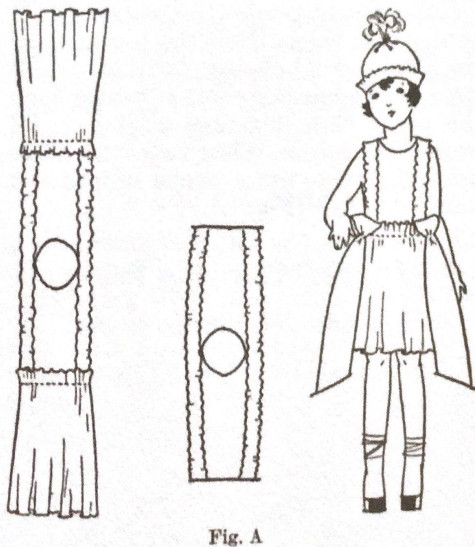
"You're not yourself on Hallowe'en - When you masquerade in crepe paper, you are a witch, a ghost, a cat, or perhaps a sprite," *Parties Magazine*, 1929. You read that correctly - costumes to make out of crepe paper. Not the only maker of crepe paper, but probably the most well-known, Dennison's Co. of Framingham Mass. manufactured crepe paper in 20" wide x 10' pieces in twenty-five colors. They also made colorful seals and cut-outs which one could use to make party invitations and decorations which were artfully described in a multitude of "How-To" books. Those same cut-outs were sometimes integrated into the costumes themselves.

Due to its low cost, colorful crepe paper was a viable option to fabric. However, paper costumes were not durable.



"How to Make Crepe Paper Costumes," 1930, uses two basic methods of construction: "the costume is made over a muslin foundation [or slip] to which the crepe paper is sewn or pasted, and the "slip-over" model that is made apron style without a foundation and worn over a regular frock or suit," reads the directions.

No. 5. Slip-Over Costumes



The drawing at left is from the basic instructions.

The two costumes at right are "slip-over" examples with more detail.





While the crepe paper #63 Hallowe'en Costume, as Dennison's identifies it, looks adorable, I cannot imagine actually wearing it while riding in a car or maneuvering around the buffet table without smashing the pumpkins.

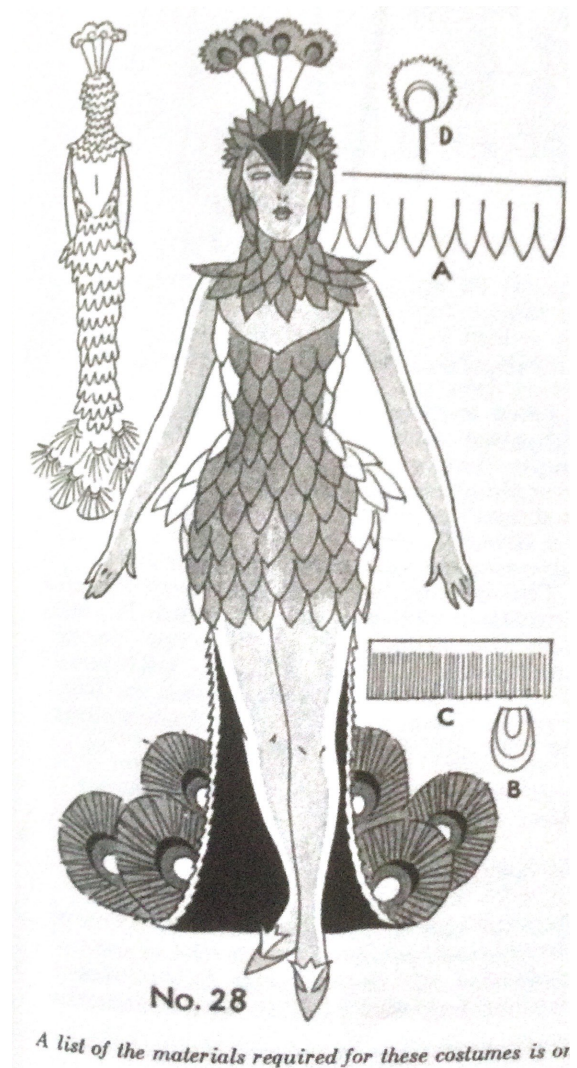
The pumpkins, "... are made on cardboard foundations, padded with cotton batting and covered with crepe paper." In general, the directions run about that level of detail and are not for the easily frustrated.

The Peacock Costume, at right and from the same 1930 booklet, gets my vote for "most likely to be shedding pieces before arriving at the party." It's a stunner!

How to Recreate a Crepe Paper Costume, A Couple of Tips:

Is 20" wide crepe paper available today? Surprisingly, I found many different colors of the 20" wide crepe paper online and in a local, independent craft/party goods store. As it comes in different length rolls, use an educated guess when purchasing. Originally, Butterfly Extra Fine Crepe Paper, a competitor of Dennison's, shows their "packages" as measuring 10 ft. lengths and 20 inches wide. The Dennison's booklet tells how many "folds" you need of each color, not how many packages. Choose wisely.

One more piece of advice – medical exam paper, available at medical supply shops, is reasonably priced and excellent for duplicating paper patterns and creating your own patterns.



A list of the materials required for these costumes is on



You've seen rather elaborate costumes, but now I have to share a very simple one to help inspire you. This is the Dolly Dingle paper doll page from *The Delineator Magazine*, October, 1927. She has a simple dress decorated with black cats, and her own paper doll also has a Hallowe'en dress.

You may have noticed that I didn't cover the topic of masks in this article. That topic could be an entire article on its own, so I left it for another possible author.

See the resources below to plan your next Model A Era Halloween themed party. Grab your Fuld's Ouija Board (95 cents in M. Wards, Fall/Winter 1929-30), pop some corn, heat a cauldron of cider, and have a spooky good time!

Resources

The Best Halloween Book, 1931, by Beckley-Cardy Company. [free download]

The Bogie Book, 1926, by Dennison, copyright 2011 by Bramcost Publications.

Butterick Patterns Catalogue, 1929.

The Delineator Magazine, October, 1927.

Fashion Service, October, 1927.

Fashion Service, October, 1928.

The Hallowe'en Book, originally pub. 1933, copyright 2009, by Bramcost Publications.

How to Make Crepe Paper Costumes, originally pub. 1930, copyright 2009 by Bramcost Publications.

*MAFCA Pattern Catalogue, [Clown costume pattern] check revivaldesignedshop.net for availability.

Montgomery Ward & Co. Fall & Winter 1929-30.

Needlecraft, the Magazine of Home Arts, October, 1931.

New Butterick Fashions pamphlet, October, 1928, Butterick Publishing Co. U.S.A. and Great Britain.

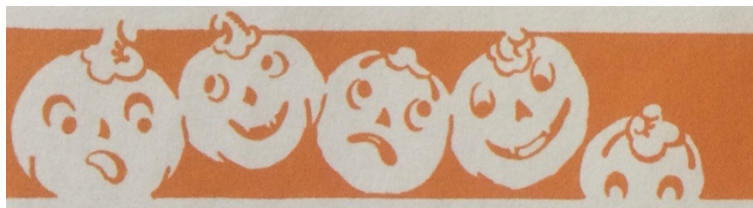
Parties Magazine, 1929.

Pictorial Review Fashion Book, Quarterly Winter 1931.

Sears, Roebuck and Co. Catalogue Fall/Winter 1928-1929.

Sears, Roebuck and Co. Catalogue Supplement 1928.

Wikipedia



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