

The "Pumpkin Riots" in New Hampshire: Students Clash over Halloween Celebrations

By Melkisedeck Leon Shine · July 3, 2023

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October 31, 1991 - Keene, New Hampshire

In the quiet town of Keene, New Hampshire, where autumn colors painted the landscape and the crisp air signaled the arrival of Halloween, a fierce battle would soon ignite over a centuries-old tradition: pumpkin smashing. Little did anyone know that this innocent act of mischief would escalate into what would forever be known as the "Pumpkin Riots."

As dusk settled on that fateful Halloween night in 1991, students from Keene State College, fueled with excitement and a mischievous spirit, gathered in the heart of the town's central square. Armed with buckets of candy and devilish grins, they set their eyes on a colossal display of jack-o'-lanterns that adorned the square, each carved with intricate designs and glowing with an eerie luminescence.

However, a rival group from nearby Franklin Pierce College had other plans. These rebels, dressed in costumes ranging from wicked witches to menacing monsters, stormed into the square, wielding water balloons and rolls of toilet paper. The stage was set for an epic showdown.

The clash began innocently enough, with students from both colleges exchanging playful banter and launching candy at one another. But as the night wore on, the situation spiraled out of control. ??

The Franklin Pierce College students, feeling provoked, launched a barrage of water balloons, drenching their opponents. In retaliation, the Keene State College students unleashed their stockpile of candy, transforming the square into a colorful, sugary battlefield. ??

As the chaos intensified, the students' only goal became to outdo one another in a battle of Halloween pranks. The once pristine jack-o'-lanterns were now reduced to mere pulp, victims of both the flying projectiles and the students' mischievous hands. ??

News of the "Pumpkin Riots" spread like wildfire, attracting curious onlookers from surrounding towns. The local police were overwhelmed, attempting to restore order amidst the chaos. With the moon casting an eerie glow on the scene, the town of Keene became a battleground of candy-armed warriors, their laughter echoing through the night. ??

Eventually, the unruly students were brought back to their senses. As the adrenaline subsided, they realized the extent of the damage caused by their wild revelry. The once-picturesque square now resembled a war zone, with remnants of smashed pumpkins strewn across the ground. ??

In the days that followed, the Pumpkin Riots became a cautionary tale, forever etched in the history of Keene, New Hampshire. The incident led to stricter regulations on Halloween celebrations, emphasizing safety and respect for public property. ??

Today, the Pumpkin Riots are remembered as a wild and unforeseen clash between college students, a testament to the power of youthful exuberance and the unexpected consequences it can bring. Keene, New Hampshire, now celebrates Halloween with a renewed sense of responsibility, ensuring that future generations can revel in the holiday's spirit without unleashing the chaos of the past. ??

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