



Customs and traditions

The Definitions

How often has each of us seen something happen while with another person and much to our disappointment we each come away from the event with a different recollection? The cumulative effect of our life experiences creates in each of us a lens through which we observe what goes on around us. This lens focuses our attention on particular aspects of what we see. Society passes principles and values to future generations through Customs, Traditions and Rituals that mold this lens through which we view our lives and shape our opinions. Throughout history, cultures have passed their Family Values to future generations by these means.

Americans have many Customs and Traditions rooted in the cultures of our forefathers who were either Native Americans or who settled this great land after journeying long distances from other nations in search of "The American Dream". Very often the display of an object or symbol that is meaningful to a family or to society can become a Custom, Tradition or Ritual. Family Values are reflected in the Customs and Traditions practiced.

Although tedious we must consider the definitions from the dictionary:

Habit: A behavior pattern acquired by frequent repetition or physiologic exposure that shows itself in regularity or increased facility of performance. An acquired mode of behavior that has become nearly or completely involuntary.

Custom: A usage or practice common to many or to a particular place or class, or habitual with an individual. Long established practice considered as unwritten law. Repeated practice. The whole body of usages, practices, or conventions that regulate social life.

Tradition: An inherited, established, or customary pattern of thought, action, or behavior (as a religious practice or social custom). The handing down of information, beliefs, and customs by word of mouth or by example from one generation to another without written instruction. Cultural continuity in social attitudes, customs, and institutions. Characteristic manner, method, or style.

Ritual: The established form for a ceremony; the order of words prescribed for a religious ceremony. Ritual observance: system of rites, a ceremonial act or action or a customarily repeated often formal act or series of acts.