

## HORSESHOES: NOT JUST FOR THROWING

Have you ever wondered why there's often a horseshoe above the doors in both a blacksmith shop and a cooperage? The short answer is, because of superstition. Superstition says that horseshoes bring good luck.



**A lucky horseshoe above the  
Fultz House Museum Blacksmith Shop entry.**

Horseshoes became associated with bad luck mainly because of an old story about how the devil approached a blacksmith, asking him if he could get new shoes put on. The blacksmith agreed, knowing whom he was dealing with. He applied the horseshoes in a way that would be immensely painful to the recipient. The devil paid the blacksmith. After the devil left, the blacksmith threw the money in the fire, knowing that it would bring him bad luck if he kept it. As the devil walked a great distance, he began feeling pain so intense that after a while, he tore the shoes off and ran away. Horseshoes are said to be a sign of good luck because the devil would never go near something that caused him great pain.





Why is a horseshoe considered good luck? The simple version is that the Bible describes the devil as having hooves, not unlike a horse. You would put horseshoes on a horse - the final step in taming the creature. If you put horseshoes on the devil, you are also attempting to tame him. As a result, the horseshoe became a sign of controlling or stopping evil, and that meant you would be good, not evil, and have good luck.

Somewhere along the way horseshoes became associated with witches. Witches are associated with devils in most texts, but trapping the devil became associated with trapping witches, sometimes quite literally. It is believed in some places that horseshoes helped trap the witches, as long as the horseshoe is oriented the right way.

Most people think that having the horseshoe with the heel up is the way to position a horseshow above a door, as to “trap” the luck. However, it is also a common belief that if a horseshoe is positioned with the heels down over a door, it flows good luck on anyone that walks underneath it. Also, the number of nails in a horseshoe was a measure of how much luck the horseshoe would pass on to an individual, although **three** was considered to be the best number of nails for luck.