The Salem Witch Trials

N. Carr    G. Elliott    B. Forletta    D. Mark

11th December 2016

Abstract

The Salem Witch Trials were a series of trials and executions which took place in the Puritan town of Salem, Massachusetts between 1692 and 1693. These trials were based on accusations of witchcraft, a crime punishable by death. Twenty-five people, including two infants, were executed or left to die in jail. By exploring Puritan beliefs, causes of the witch hunts, significant figures, flaws in the legal system, as well as how these affected the overall timeline of events, we are able to discover more about the effects of this hysteria in colonial America.

Figure 0.1: “Mary Walcott.” (J. W. Ehninger, Mary Walcott, illustration by John W. Ehninger, 1902, Public Domain, accessed December 3, 2016, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:MaryWalcott_Longfelloww-Corey.jpg)
Contents

1 Causes 1
  1.1 Ergotism ........................................... 1
  1.2 Socio-Political Causes ............................. 4

2 Timeline 7
  2.1 Pre-Trials: Events leading to Trials .............. 7
  2.2 The Trials: June–September, 1692 ............... 10
  2.3 The Outcome of the Trials ......................... 12

3 People of Salem 15

4 Puritanism and Witchcraft 23
  4.1 The Development of Puritanism ................... 23
  4.2 Puritan Beliefs .................................... 23
  4.3 Witchcraft ....................................... 24

5 Legal System 27
  5.1 Witchcraft ....................................... 27
  5.2 The Trials ....................................... 28
  5.3 The Witch Tests .................................. 28

6 About Us 31

Bibliography 33
1. Causes

While the causes of the Salem Witch Trials cannot be definitively proven, two theories currently prevail.

It has been theorized that the symptoms of the girls afflicted during the trials resulted from ergotism, the result of ingesting the hallucinogenic fungus, ergot. As ergot frequently develops on rye grown in a wet climate after cold conditions, the cold winters of Salem may have left their crops infected.

The other prevalent notion is that the Trials were caused by socio-political factors dividing the people of the town, as the demands of Samuel Parris as new town reverend left many of the townspeople embittered.

1.1 Ergotism

One prevalent theory which could explain the illnesses experienced by the individuals believed to have been bewitched during the Salem Witch Trials is that the afflicted were suffering from convulsive ergotism.

Ergotism and Its Effects

Ergot, a fungal parasite, often infects grasses, wheat, and rye grown in warm, wet climates after cold winters. While there are many forms of ergot, two in particular have proven unusually dangerous for humans. These forms are Claviceps purpurea and Claviceps fusiformis. Ergotism has also been documented with noteworthy frequency amongst cattle.¹

Ergotism (ergot poisoning) is the result of ingesting infected rye or wheat. Ergotism comes in three main forms: convulsive ergotism, gangrenous ergotism, and enterocergic ergotism, each of which have unique symptoms,

---

1. Causes

all of which can lead to death.\(^2\) The form postulated to be present in Salem is convulsive ergotism.

Symptoms of convulsive ergotism include convulsions, hallucinations, fevers, temporary paralysis, and imagined sensations on the skin. Those struck by ergotism often suffer long-term health complications, including weakness and eyesight problems.\(^3\)

As they tend to both eat more per body mass and have lower body mass overall, compared to adults, adolescents tend to be the primary sufferers of ergotism.\(^4\)

**Relation to Salem Witch Trials**

As rye was a staple food of colonial America during the Salem Witch Trials, it is undoubted that the people of Salem farmed and ate rye. Ergot already existed in America at the time, so an infected harvest from the summer of 1691 would have lasted into the winter and spring of the following year. Since the winter of 1691–1692 was cooler than average, it is likely that the ergot would have returned to plague the crops the following summer.\(^5\)

In regards to the symptoms, those problems experienced by the girls and young women afflicted by witches tended to follow

---

\(^2\) Belser-Ehrlich et al., ‘Human and cattle ergotism since 1900,’ 307–308; Eadie, ‘Convulsive ergotism,’ 432.

\(^3\) Belser-Ehrlich et al., ‘Human and cattle ergotism since 1900,’ 309; Eadie, ‘Convulsive ergotism,’ 431–432.


1.1. Ergotism

the traditional symptoms of individuals suffering from ergotism. The first (and thus least likely to have been caused by social factors) case of ‘be-witchment’ to fall on the residents of Salem was the mysterious illness of Betty Parris and Abagail Williams. This illness caused fevers, spasms, and miscellaneous pains, which are all symptoms of ergotism. Many of the other accusers who came forward claimed to be haunted by the spirits of their tormentors and see them in different forms, which could be best explained as hallucinations. Others complained of being pinched and pricked by witches, which could also be explained as symptoms of ergotism. Convulsions were common to the afflicted, as well.\(^6\)

It is also noteworthy that the primary demographic afflicted during the Salem Witch Trials consisted mainly of young girls and women, which is consistent with other confirmed epidemics of ergotism in terms of age bracket.\(^7\)

**Criticism of the Ergotism Theory**

Critics of the ergotism explanation have noted that, while the ages of the afflicted match other cases of ergotism in terms of age bracket (that being, adolescent), the ages of those afflicted are still unusually high for an outbreak of ergotism. Rather than the post-pubescent youths ill during the Salem Witch Trials, ergotism would have likely affected pre-pubescent youths more frequently and strongly. No explanation can be given, either, for the overwhelming discrepancy between male and female affliction rates. None of the core group of accusers were male, however the typical gender ratio in epidemics of ergotism is closer to equal.\(^8\)

In addition, while children and teenagers are more strongly affected by ergotism, most outbreaks of ergotism affect whole families. The level of ergot poisoning required to present the strong symptoms shown by the

---


\(^7\)Peraica, Richter, and Rašić, ‘Mycotoxicoses in children.’

afflicted would require amounts of ergot strong enough to affect adults.\textsuperscript{9} Critics have also identified that none of the afflicted presented the full array of symptoms associated with ergotism, the majority displaying only one or two, at most, and none of the afflicted retained any long-term health complications.\textsuperscript{10} In addition, these symptoms could be turned on and off at will, depending on the audience and circumstance, which would be impossible in the case of ergot poisoning.\textsuperscript{11} Furthermore, several of the alleged spectres were envisioned at nighttime, while the afflicted was in bed, which could be explained as nothing more than a dream.\textsuperscript{12}

1.2 Socio-Political Causes

While ergotism may explain the physical symptoms experienced by some of the accusers, it is unlikely that the entirety of the Witch Trials can be explained solely by ergot poisoning. Rather, it is essential to regard the socio-political climate of Salem at the time in order to understand the factors which lead to the accusation of certain individuals over others.

Contention Against Parris

The appointment of Samuel Parris as the reverend of Salem in 1689 created great animosity between Parris and his congregation, as he demanded a comparatively high salary as well as permanent


\textsuperscript{10}Spanos, ‘Ergotism and the Salem witch panic,’ 363.

\textsuperscript{11}Spanos and Gottlieb, ‘Ergotism and the Salem Village Witch Trials,’ 1391–1392; Woolf, ‘Witchcraft or mycotoxin?’, 460.

\textsuperscript{12}Spanos and Gottlieb, ‘Ergotism and the Salem Village Witch Trials,’ 1393.
ownership of the rectory. After some deliberation, the congregation managed to lower his salary and provisions to a more reasonable level, going so far as to deny him the firewood allowance typically afforded to the resident reverend.\textsuperscript{13}

This contention, along with his inability to draw churchgoers, let alone convince them to pay his salary, likely served as motivation for Parris to exploit his daughter, niece, and other afflicted girls to increase his wealth and status by providing the townspeople answers and direction in matters of witchcraft.\textsuperscript{14}

**East vs. West Salem Village**

As a point of clarification, Salem was a combination of the an eastern commercial town and its western village outskirts, which were largely inhabited by farmers.

Those farmers living in the east of Salem Village had certain inherent advantages over the farmers in the west, including better, flatter farmland and closer access to Salem Town’s markets. The geographical differences between east and west Salem Village would lead to their social and political polarization, leaving the west side embittered by the east and the east side aligned with Salem Town. This division was only further agitated by the western villagers’ desire to become politically and religiously independent from Salem Town, aligning themselves with Reverend Parris more strongly than the eastern villagers.\textsuperscript{15}

This polarization is demonstrated by the geographical disparity of the typical ”accuser” and ”accused” archetypes, with western villagers representing approximately 94% of the accusers, yet only 14% of the accused.\textsuperscript{16}


\textsuperscript{14}Mixon, ‘Homo Economicus and the Salem Witch Trials,’ 182.


1. Causes

![A map of Salem Village in 1692 (Salem Town to the East)](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/6/6c/Map_of_Salem_Village.jpg/800px-Map_of_Salem_Village.jpg)

Figure 1.3: A map of Salem Village in 1692 (Salem Town to the East) *(800px-Map_of_Salem_Village.jpg (JPEG Image, 800 × 565 pixels) - Scaled (0%), Public Domain, accessed December 3, 2016, https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/6/6c/Map_of_Salem_Village.jpg/800px-Map_of_Salem_Village.jpg).*

Benefits for the Afflicted

While those girls who took on the role of victim likely did not do so entirely to further the political agendas of their parents, it is clear that being afflicted by witches during the Salem Witch Trials provided a unique opportunity for those with little to no political or social power to gain attention and authority overnight. One must simply act the part of a victim, pose accusations against others, and reap the benefits. As these benefits were attractive and plainly visible, it is no wonder that so many young women and girls became involved in the Trials.\(^\text{17}\)

\(^{17}\)Spanos, ‘Ergotism and the Salem witch panic,’ 365.
2. Timeline

The following is a list of significant events that occurred during the Salem Witch Hunts, along with brief information for each:

2.1 Pre-Trials: Events leading to Trials

- The witch craze in Salem, Massachusetts started near the end of the European witch craze in 1682.¹

---


Figure 2.1: “A Modest Enquiry into the Nature of Witchcraft”. (J. Hale, A Modest Enquiry Into the Nature of Witchcraft, accessed December 10, 2016, https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/eb/ModestEnquiry.jpg)
• In 1688, John Putnam, an influential Salem villager, invited Samuel Parris to be Salem’s new minister and he accepted.\textsuperscript{2}

  – Parris brought with him his wife Elizabeth, six-year-old daughter Betty, niece Abigail Williams, and slave Tituba.\textsuperscript{3}

• Puritan beliefs ran strong in Salem; they fully believed in the Devil and demons. Events out of the ordinary were automatically assumed to be the work of the Devil.

• When Reverend Samuel Parris was ordained in 1689, it created conflict in the town, as many considered him greedy disliked like his rigid disposition.\textsuperscript{4}

  – The Puritan villagers saw all the fighting as the work of the devil. Parris in a sermon once said, ”The Devil is around, but this soon will change.”\textsuperscript{5}

• In 1689 many people moved into the Massachusetts Bay Colony, specifically Salem Village (now Danvers) and Salem Town (now Salem).\textsuperscript{6}

  – This sudden rise in population created an insufficient amount of resources and food for the town’s population. The pre-existing conflict between families only increased with the struggle of wealth.\textsuperscript{7}

• Salem Village was, at that time, changing. There were varying opinions about whether or not Salem Village should be independent from Salem Town, the larger trade city.\textsuperscript{8}


\textsuperscript{3}Ibid.


\textsuperscript{5}Ibid.


\textsuperscript{7}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{8}Ibid.
2.1. Pre-Trials: Events leading to Trials

- In February, 1692, Reverend Parris’ daughter, Betty Parris and niece Abigail became struck with an inexplicable illness.\(^9\)
  - They had a fever, acted unexpectedly (darting about for no apparent reason), and had various pains. They began to experience "fits", which consisted of them screaming, throwing objects, making odd noises, bending themselves unnaturally, convulsions, delusions and gibberish outbursts.\(^10\)

- A series of accusations occurred when Elizabeth Parris (Betty) and Abigail Williams fell ill.\(^11\)

- Soon Ann Putnam, Mercy Lewis, and Mary Walcott began suffering from similar problems.\(^12\)

- William Griggs, a doctor who was called in to examine the girls, brought the idea that something supernatural was affecting the girls after his remedies failed.\(^13\)

- Another woman in the town, Mary Sibley, convinced Tituba to feed a dog bread that the girls had urinated on, as witches were believed to use dogs as helpers in their magic.\(^14\)
  - This made Tituba more of a scapegoat than she already was, as she had been known to tell the girls stories about voodoo and witchcraft from India.\(^15\)

- More girls continued to get sick including Elizabeth Hubbard, Susannah Sheldon, and Mary Warren, who would contort, faint, and feel strange pain.\(^16\)

\(^10\) Linder, ‘The Witchcraft Trials.’
\(^11\) Ibid.
\(^12\) Azam, ‘Language In India.’
\(^13\) Linder, ‘The Witchcraft Trials.’
\(^14\) Ibid.
\(^15\) Ibid.
\(^16\) Azam, ‘Language In India.’
2. Timeline

Figure 2.2: People being accused during the Salem Witch Hunt. (The Witch Trials, accessed December 10, 2016, https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/d/da/TheWitch-no3.jpg)

- Between February 25th and February 29th, Betty Parris and Abigail Williams accused Tituba, Sarah Good, and Sarah Osborne of witchcraft.\(^\text{17}\)

2.2 The Trials: June–September, 1692

- The Court of Oyer and Terminer was created to handle the accusations of witchcraft.\(^\text{18}\)

- Tituba, Sarah Good, and Sarah Osborne’s examinations were scheduled for March 1st, 1692 by magistrates Jonathan Corwin and John Hathorne. Hundreds attended the trial.\(^\text{19}\)
  - Each time one of the accused witches came before the afflicted girls, they would contort and claim the women to be hurting them.\(^\text{20}\)
  - Other neighbours claimed their completely unrelated problems to have originated from these women.\(^\text{21}\)
  - The trials could have potentially ended with some doubt from the magistrates had Tituba not voiced that she had met with


\(^{18}\) Blumberg, ‘Histroy of the Salme Witch Trials.’

\(^{19}\) Linder, ‘The Witchcraft Trials.’

\(^{20}\) Ibid.

\(^{21}\) Ibid.
2.2. The Trials: June–September, 1692

the devil and written her name in his book of witches, agreeing to do his work, along with Sarah Good and Sarah Osborne.  

- The first woman to be formally tried was Bridget Bishop, a local tavern owner whose business was open on the Sabbath (which was considered a great sin at that time). She was hanged on June 10th, 1692, based on the claims of many of the girls and two confessed witches, Deliverance Hobbs and Mary Warren.

- Soon, other women were accused by the girls, including Martha Corey, Rebecca Nurse, Sarah Cloyce, and Mary Easty.

- On March 20th, 1692, during a church service, Ann Putnam claimed Sarah Cloyce to be sitting upon the church rafters.

- Dorcas Good, the four-year-old daughter of Sarah Good, was the first child to be accused of witchcraft by three of the girls. She was kept in jail for months, even after her mother was taken to be executed.

- The accused began to confess to save themselves from being hanged. Deliverance Hobbs was the second to confess.

- By the summer of 1692, even highly-regarded people in the community, such as Rebecca Nurse, were being executed.

- Once Governor Phips returned from England and found Salem in this state, he created a form of trial which required the witch to touch a convulsing victim: the touching test. The suspected witch had to touch their convulsing victim. If the victim stopped, the accused was a witch.

---

22Ibid.
23Ibid.
24Azam, ‘Language In India.’
25jenrette, ‘Teaching the Salem Witch Trials through place and time.’
26S. Cragin, ‘Salem witches exoneratedd,’ Gale InfoTrac, May 20, 2014, accessed December 11, 2016, http://go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CA83032374&v=2.1&amp;m=mss&amp;u=mlin_n_readingmh&amp;it=r&amp;p=GPS&amp;sw=ukasid=94beb3736a73c9c6a222519f8bf609d&amp;digest=0ec226b1fcc33f9278de06b7e219d961&amp;rss=rss#.VMlz7q8JXEG.email.
27Ibid.
28Brooks, ‘Timeline of the Salem Witch Trials.’
29jenrette, ‘Teaching the Salem Witch Trials through place and time.’
2. **Timeline**

- John Proctor, a tavern owner, claimed the girls to be lying and was hanged. His accused wife Elizabeth was spared until the end of the trials due to her pregnancy.

- One of the village’s former ministers, George Burroughs, was accused of being the leader of the Salem witches. Mercy Lewis, one of the girls, claimed that he had promised her kingdoms if she would join his group. Although the crowd was infuriated at his execution, he was hanged.\(^{30}\)

- Giles Corey refused trial and, after five months in jail, he was pressed to death with stone.\(^{31}\)

### 2.3 The Outcome of the Trials

- 14 women and 6 men were executed (excluding the deaths of those awaiting trial).\(^{32}\)

- By the autumn of 1692, there were massive doubts of witchcraft circulating Salem, as many well-respected people had been executed.\(^{33}\)
  
  - Author Increase Mather and Boston minister Samuel Willard published two works which encouraged Governor Phips to stop the touching test and only use true evidence. He accepted and in May of 1693, Phips released all remaining prisoners.\(^{34}\)

- By the end of the witch trial, nineteen people were hanged, somewhere between four and thirteen died in prison, and one was pressed to death.\(^{35}\)
  
  - Several of those responsible for the imprisonments and executions apologized, but others, including Parris, shifted blame.\(^{36}\)

---

\(^{30}\)jenrette, ‘Teaching the Salem Witch Trials through place and time.’

\(^{31}\)Brooks, ‘Timeline of the Salem Witch Trials.’

\(^{32}\)Cragin, ‘American History.’

\(^{33}\)Ibid.


\(^{35}\)Cragin, ‘American History.’

\(^{36}\)Ibid.
2.3. The Outcome of the Trials

- John Hathorne was the only judge of the trials who never repented for his involvement in the Trials.

- In 1702, the court acknowledged the trials as unlawful.
3. People of Salem

The following is an alphabetical list of significant people during the Salem Witch Hunts, along with brief comments on each:

**Alden, John**  
Accused of witchcraft, but not executed.¹

**Bibber, Sarah**  
One of the accusers.²

**Bishop, Bridget**  
First woman hanged for witchcraft.³

**Booth, Elizabeth**  
One of the accusers.⁴

**Burroughs, George, Rev.**  
Former reverend of Salem. The community largely considered him to be a righteous man and protested his execution; however, he was hanged, largely due to influence from Cotton Mather.⁵

**Carrier, Martha**  
Hanged for witchcraft.⁶

**Churchill, Sarah**  
Age twenty-five at start of trials. One of the accusers. Accused of witchcraft,

---

²Ibid.  
⁴Ray, ‘Salem Witch Trials Notable Persons.’  
3. People of Salem

but not executed.\textsuperscript{7}

\textbf{Cloyce, Sarah}
Accused of witchcraft, but not executed.\textsuperscript{8}

\textbf{Corey, Giles}
Husband of Martha Corey. Pressed to death with stone for witchcraft (an illegal practice, even at the time).\textsuperscript{9}

\textbf{Corey, Martha}
Wife of Giles Corey. The final victim hanged for witchcraft.\textsuperscript{10}

\textbf{Dastin, Lydia}
Accused of witchcraft and died in prison.\textsuperscript{11}

\textbf{Dolliver, Ann}
Accused of witchcraft, but not executed.\textsuperscript{12}

\textbf{Easty, Mary}
Hanged for witchcraft.\textsuperscript{13}

\textbf{English, Philip}
Accused of witchcraft, but not executed.\textsuperscript{14}

\textbf{Faulkner, Abigail}
Accused of witchcraft, but not executed.\textsuperscript{15}

\textbf{Foster, Ann}
Accused of witchcraft and died in prison.\textsuperscript{16}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{7}Caporael, ‘Ergotism,’ 24; Ray, ‘Salem Witch Trials Notable Persons.’
\item \textsuperscript{8}Linder, ‘An account of the Salem witchcraft investigations, trials, and aftermath.’
\item \textsuperscript{9}Linder, ‘An account of the Salem witchcraft investigations, trials, and aftermath.’; ‘Salem Witch Museum.’
\item \textsuperscript{10}Linder, ‘An account of the Salem witchcraft investigations, trials, and aftermath.’; ‘Salem Witch Museum.’
\item \textsuperscript{11}Ray, ‘Salem Witch Trials Notable Persons.’
\item \textsuperscript{12}Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{13}Linder, ‘An account of the Salem witchcraft investigations, trials, and aftermath.’; ‘Salem Witch Museum.’
\item \textsuperscript{14}Franklin G. Mixon, Jr. and Len J. Treviño, ‘The allocation of death in the Salem witch trials,’ 935; Ray, ‘Salem Witch Trials Notable Persons.’
\item \textsuperscript{15}Ray, ‘Salem Witch Trials Notable Persons.’
\item \textsuperscript{16}Ibid.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Good, Dorcas
Age four at start of trials. Daughter of Sarah Good. Accused of witchcraft and died in prison.\textsuperscript{17}

Good, Sarah
Mother of Dorcas Good. One of the first women accused of and hanged for witchcraft. A poor widow who was disrespected by society.\textsuperscript{18}

Griggs, William, Dr.
The doctor brought into Salem to cure Betty Parris. Suggested supernatural causes when he found no medical problems.\textsuperscript{19}

Hobbs, Deliverance
Accused of witchcraft. Confessed to save herself.\textsuperscript{20}

How, Elizabeth
Hanged for witchcraft.\textsuperscript{21}

Hubbard, Elizabeth
An orphan living with her great-uncle William Griggs. Age seventeen at start of trials. One of the accusers.\textsuperscript{22}

Ireson, Mary
Accused of witchcraft, but not executed.\textsuperscript{23}

Jacobs, George, Sr.
Hanged for witchcraft. The first man hanged for witchcraft.\textsuperscript{24}

\textsuperscript{17}Linder, ‘An account of the Salem witchcraft investigations, trials, and aftermath.’; Ray, ‘Salem Witch Trials Notable Persons.’
\textsuperscript{18}Linder, ‘An account of the Salem witchcraft investigations, trials, and aftermath.’; ‘Salem Witch Museum.’
\textsuperscript{19}Caporael, ‘Ergotism,’ 24; Linder, ‘An account of the Salem witchcraft investigations, trials, and aftermath.’
\textsuperscript{20}Linder, ‘An account of the Salem witchcraft investigations, trials, and aftermath.’
\textsuperscript{21}Ray, ‘Salem Witch Trials Notable Persons’; ‘Salem Witch Museum.’
\textsuperscript{22}Caporael, ‘Ergotism,’ 24; Linder, ‘An account of the Salem witchcraft investigations, trials, and aftermath.’
\textsuperscript{23}Ray, ‘Salem Witch Trials Notable Persons.’
\textsuperscript{24}Ray, ‘Salem Witch Trials Notable Persons’; ‘Salem Witch Museum.’
3. People of Salem

Jacobs, Margaret
Accused of witchcraft, but not executed.25

Lewis, Mercy
Between the ages of seventeen and nineteen at start of trials. One of the accusers.26

Martin, Susannah
Hanged for witchcraft.27

Mather, Cotton
A Boston minister whose book, *Memoral Providences*, on an Irish ‘witch’ in Boston contributed to the superstition in Salem due to the similarities between the victim in the book and Betty Parris. Convinced the court to accept spectral evidence (an accusation alone) as evidence of guilt. Son of Increase Mather.28

Mather, Increase
A Boston minister who encouraged Governor Phips to stop the executions. Father of Cotton Mather.29

Nurse, Rebecca
A well-respected elder in society. Hanged for witchcraft.30

Osborne, Sarah
Accused of witchcraft and died in prison.31

30 Linder, ‘An account of the Salem witchcraft investigations, trials, and aftermath.’; ‘Salem Witch Museum.’
31 Linder, ‘An account of the Salem witchcraft investigations, trials, and aftermath.’;
Parker, Alice
Hanged for witchcraft.32

Parker, Mary
Hanged for witchcraft.33

Parris, Elizabeth, Jr. (Betty Parris)
Age nine at start of trials. Daughter of Samuel Parris and Elizabeth Parris Sr. One of the accusers.34

Parris, Elizabeth, Sr.
Wife of Samuel Parris.35

Parris, Samuel, Rev.
A former businessman and Salem’s recently-appointed minister, invited by Thomas Putnam. Brought to Salem his wife Elizabeth Parris Sr., daughter Betty Parris, niece Abigail Williams, and slave Tituba.36

Phips, William, Gov.
The governor of Massachusetts during the trials. Ended the trials after encouragement from Increase Mathers and Samuel Willard, along with his wife’s indictment as a witch.37

Proctor, Elizabeth
Wife of John Proctor, Sr. Accused and convicted of witchcraft, but was spared her life by her pregnancy. The trials ended before she was set to be hanged.38

Proctor, John, Sr.
Husband of Elizabeth Proctor. A farmer who openly doubted the trials,

Ray, ‘Salem Witch Trials Notable Persons.’
35Linder, ‘An account of the Salem witchcraft investigations, trials, and aftermath.’;
Ray, ‘Salem Witch Trials Notable Persons.’
38Caporael, ‘Ergotism,’ 24; Linder, ‘An account of the Salem witchcraft investigations, trials, and aftermath.’
making him a target for accusations. Hanged for witchcraft.\textsuperscript{39}

\textbf{Pudeator, Ann}

Hanged for witchcraft.\textsuperscript{40}

\textbf{Putnam, Ann, Jr.}

Age twelve at start of trials. Daughter of Thomas Putnam and Ann Putnam Sr. First girl to be afflicted by witches. One of the accusers.\textsuperscript{41}

\textbf{Putnam, Thomas}

An influential man of Salem Village and the closest neighbour to Samuel Parris. Father of Ann Putnam Jr.\textsuperscript{42}

\textbf{Putnam, John}

The influential Salem resident largely responsible for bringing Reverend Samuel Parris to Salem.\textsuperscript{43}

\textbf{Redd, Wilmont}

Hanged for witchcraft.\textsuperscript{44}

\textbf{Scott, Margaret}

Hanged for witchcraft.\textsuperscript{45}

\textbf{Sheldon, Susanna}

One of the accusers.\textsuperscript{46}

\textbf{Sibley, Mary}

Suggested feeding witch cakes to a dog to

\textsuperscript{39}Caporael, ‘Ergotism,’ 24; ‘Salem Witch Museum.’
\textsuperscript{40}Ray, ‘Salem Witch Trials Notable Persons’; ‘Salem Witch Museum.’
\textsuperscript{41}Caporael, ‘Ergotism,’ 24; Mixon, ‘Homo Economicus and the Salem Witch Trials.,’ 180.
\textsuperscript{42}Caporael, ‘Ergotism,’ 24; Ray, ‘Salem Witch Trials Notable Persons.’
\textsuperscript{43}Linder, ‘An account of the Salem witchcraft investigations, trials, and aftermath.’
\textsuperscript{44}Ray, ‘Salem Witch Trials Notable Persons’; ‘Salem Witch Museum.’
\textsuperscript{45}Ray, ‘Salem Witch Trials Notable Persons’; ‘Salem Witch Museum.’
\textsuperscript{46}Linder, ‘An account of the Salem witchcraft investigations, trials, and aftermath.’; Ray, ‘Salem Witch Trials Notable Persons.’
Tituba as a counter-spell.\textsuperscript{47}

\textbf{Stoughton, William}\n
The Chief Justice of the court. The man responsible for signing the death warrants of those convicted of witchcraft who refused to confess and repent.\textsuperscript{48}

\textbf{Tituba}\n
Samuel Parris’ Indian slave. She had a history of telling the town girls tales of voodoo and black magic from Barbados. One of the first women accused of witchcraft and the first woman to confess to witchcraft. Set in motion the witch hunt by her indictment of Sarah Good and Sarah Osborne.\textsuperscript{49}

\textbf{Toothaker, Roger}\n
Accused of witchcraft and died in prison.\textsuperscript{50}

\textbf{Walcott, Mary}\n
Age eighteen at start of trials. One of the accusers.\textsuperscript{51}

\textbf{Wardwell, Samuel}\n
Hanged for witchcraft.\textsuperscript{52}

\textbf{Warren, Mary}\n
Servant of John Proctor and Elizabeth Proctor. Age 20 at start of trials. One of the accusers. Accused of witchcraft, but not executed.\textsuperscript{53}

\textbf{Wilds, Sarah}\n
Hanged for witchcraft.\textsuperscript{54}

\textsuperscript{47}Caporael, ‘Ergotism,’ 25; Linder, ‘An account of the Salem witchcraft investigations, trials, and aftermath.’\
\textsuperscript{48}Linder, ‘An account of the Salem witchcraft investigations, trials, and aftermath.’; Ray, ‘Salem Witch Trials Notable Persons.’\
\textsuperscript{49}Caporael, ‘Ergotism,’ 22; Mixon, ‘Homo Economicus and the Salem Witch Trials,’ 180.\
\textsuperscript{50}Ray, ‘Salem Witch Trials Notable Persons.’\
\textsuperscript{51}Mixon, ‘Homo Economicus and the Salem Witch Trials,’ 180; Linder, ‘An account of the Salem witchcraft investigations, trials, and aftermath.’\
\textsuperscript{52}Ray, ‘Salem Witch Trials Notable Persons’; ‘Salem Witch Museum.’\
\textsuperscript{53}Caporael, ‘Ergotism,’ 24; Linder, ‘An account of the Salem witchcraft investigations, trials, and aftermath.’\
\textsuperscript{54}Ray, ‘Salem Witch Trials Notable Persons’; ‘Salem Witch Museum.’
3. People of Salem

Willard, John
Hanged for witchcraft.\textsuperscript{55}

Willard, Samuel
A Boston minister who encouraged Governor Phips to stop the executions.\textsuperscript{56}

Williams, Abigail
Lived with her uncle Samuel Parris for unknown reasons. Second girl afflicted by witches. Age eleven or twelve at start of trials. One of the accusers.\textsuperscript{57}

\textsuperscript{55}Ray, ‘Salem Witch Trials Notable Persons’; ‘Salem Witch Museum.’
\textsuperscript{56}Linder, ‘An account of the Salem witchcraft investigations, trials, and aftermath.’; Ray, ‘Salem Witch Trials Notable Persons.’
\textsuperscript{57}Caporael, ‘Ergotism,’ 21; Mixon, ‘Homo Economicus and the Salem Witch Trials.‘, 179.
4. Puritanism and Witchcraft

4.1 The Development of Puritanism

In 17th century Massachusetts, Puritanism was a central part to the lives of countless New Englanders.

Puritanism was created in the 16th century, when the people of the Anglican Church in England felt that the structure and lifestyle imposed by the church needed to be reformed. They believed that their church needed to be purged of Catholic influence (as they were a Christian faith), and that their religious lifestyle should be "purified" of sin. A few of the wealthiest Puritan supporters gathered enough money to immigrate Puritans to America. Many of these believers consisted of entire families, unlike typical American settlement, which was usually comprised of young, single men. They eventually colonized in modern-day Massachusetts, where the Salem Witch Trials would later occur.

4.2 Puritan Beliefs

The Puritans believed that God would guarantee a select few admission to heaven, and this decision was made based on one's actions. However, they also believed that whether or not one would be admitted to heaven was already decided by God. This belief is known as theological determinism, and states that one's life has already been planned out by God, leaving free choice as an illusion.

Although theological determinism is still a relatively common belief held in certain denominations within modern Christianity, Puritans took this

---

3C. Hansen, Witchcraft at Salem (George Braziller, 1969).
4. Puritanism and Witchcraft


belief to an extreme. The Puritan belief system led a strict and rigid way of living, with little to no tolerance for individuality. Church attendance, dress code, and social class were closely regulated, and any deviation from this regulation was met with swift and harsh punishment. Puritans believed that God would guarantee a select few admission to heaven, and this verdict would only occur if they lived their lives free of sin and were an official member of the Puritan church. However, they also believed that God would severely punish those who were disobedient.4

4.3 Witchcraft

Under this society, being "disobedient" without repentance meant that you were a follower of Satan, and therefore your actions reflected the devil's will. Puritans believed that Satan was equally present in the world as God

was, meaning that those who committed sins were likely to be witches, as they were devil worshipers. Under Puritan law, witchcraft was a crime punishable by death. Although the Salem Witch Trials may have stemmed from the Puritan belief of witchcraft, the sheer number of accusations and trials of witches in Salem cannot easily be explained as Puritans simply following their theology. The Salem Witch Trials were a unique and isolated incident of which the causes are further explored earlier in this document.

---

Figure 4.2: An image depicting burning a witch at the stake. (Burning-at-the-stake-621x1024.png (PNG Image, 621 × 1024 pixels) - Scaled (44%), Public Domain, accessed December 10, 2016, https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/2/2e/Witch_Burning.jpg)

---

5. Legal System

Beginning in January of 1692, hundreds of men and women were accused of witchcraft in Salem, Massachusetts and its surrounding areas over the course of a six-month period. In total nineteen were pronounced guilty and sentenced to be hanged. One of the accused, Giles Corey, failed to plead guilty and was unlawfully tortured and pressed to death under heavy stones.\textsuperscript{1} As many as thirteen others died in prison awaiting trial.\textsuperscript{2}

5.1 Witchcraft

A major factor contributing to the death of these people was the province’s legal system. The law governing Salem in the 1690’s was a combination of colonial law and biblical passages. It gave authority to biblical passages, such as Leviticus 20:27, which states that “a man also or woman that hath a familiar spirit, or that is a wizard, shall surely be put to death: they shall stone them with stones: their blood shall be upon them.”\textsuperscript{3}

\end{footnote}

\end{footnote}

\end{footnote}
5. Legal System

5.2 The Trials

Another important factor to note is the attitudes within the trials way they were conducted. John Hathorne was the local magistrate in Salem at the time and was chosen to be a judge in the trials. During these trials, Hathorne acted more as a prosecutor than a judge. In his court, if one was put on trial it was assumed that the individual was guilty unless their good character could be proven.\(^4\) The questioning tactics used by Hathorne correspond with this view as he always seemed to take the side of the accusers from the beginning. He tried to get the accused to name other possible witches in order to exponenitate the number of accusations made. There were three main types of statements presented in the courts during the trials: testimonies, confessions, and spectral evidence. Spectral evidence was what the victims would claim to have seen during their attacks, such as apparitions of their attacker. However, no one was ever convicted the solely through the use of spectral evidence, as it had to be accompanied by some other form of evidence.\(^5\)

5.3 The Witch Tests

The courts subjected the accused to many different tests to prove whether or not they were a witch. the ”touching test” is performed when an affected person begins throwing fits, if, when touched by the accused the fit stops the accused is proven to be a witch, as it is believed that the ”evil toxins” that originally tormented the afflicted soul returned back to its host.\(^6\) Torture was also common when those under suspicion did not admit to being a

\(^5\)Lyonette, ’The Salem Witch Trials: A legal bibliography.’
\(^6\)R. Thomas, 10 Tests For Guilt at the Salem Witch Trials, July 27, 2012, \url{http://listverse.com/2012/07/27/10-tests-for-guilt-used-at-the-salem-witch-
witch. The courts could not convict a person through confession obtained by torture, so the confession had to be re-stated afterward if the accused withdrew their confession they were tortured again until another confession was made. one method used was dunking, where the accused was dunked underwater repeatedly until they finally admitted.\footnote{Lyonette, ‘The Salem Witch Trials: A legal bibliography.’}
6. About Us

N. Carr
N. Carr is a first-year computer science major at Wilfrid Laurier University. N. Carr has been responsible for writing about the causes and noteworthy individuals of the Salem Witch Trials, as well as the site design and documentation.

G. Elliott
G. Elliott is a first-year student at Wilfrid Laurier University. G. Elliott has been responsible for writing about the legal system during the Salem Witch Trials.

B. Forletta
B. Forletta is a first-year student at Wilfrid Laurier University. B. Forletta has been responsible for writing about the timeline of events during the Salem Witch Trials.

D. Mark
D. Mark is a first-year Business student at Wilfrid Laurier University. D. Mark has been responsible for writing about the Puritan belief system in regards to witchcraft.


Bibliography


unknown. *Salem witch trials.*

Unknown. *Witchcraft Salem Court Room.* https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/7/7e/Witchcraft_at_Salem_Village.jpg.
