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Resurrecting a Witch: An Intimate Look at the Roles Faith and Politics Played During the Salem Witchcraft Trials of 1692

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RESURRECTING A WITCH: AN INTIMATE LOOK AT THE ROLES FAITH AND
POLITICS PLAYED DURING THE SALEM WITCHCRAFT TRIALS OF 1692

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BY
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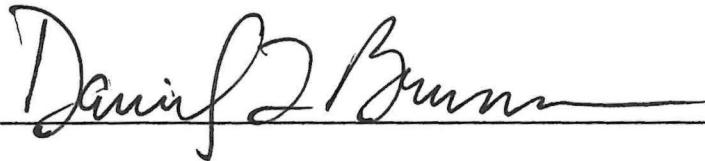
THESIS ACCEPTANCE CERTIFICATE

Title: **RESURRECTING A WITCH: AN INTIMATE LOOK AT THE
ROLES FAITH AND POLITICS PLAYED DURING THE
SALEM WITCHCRAFT TRIALS OF 1692**

Presented by: **TERESA M. MARBUT**

Date: **March 26, 2008**

We, the undersigned, certify that we have read this thesis and approve it as adequate in scope and quality for the degree of Master of Arts in Theological Studies.



(Daniel L. Brunner)



(Carole D. Spencer)

This work is lovingly dedicated to my children – Annaliesa, Kaylynn, and Triston – who each had to sacrifice so much of their “mommy time” so that I could write it.

*We wander but in the end there is always a certain peace in being what one is,
in being that completely. The condemned man has that joy.*
– Ugo Betti, Italian dramatist and poet (1892-1953)

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ABSTRACT

This work deals with the roles faith and politics played in the hearts and minds of those people who were caught up in the mass hysteria of the Salem Witchcraft Trials of 1692. It examines the trials through the colored lenses of several of Salem's accused, their accusers, and the men who served as their judges. It focuses on the mishandling of the accused witches at both their hearings and trials, and how the purported "visions" seen by their accusers were often used as the sole evidence to indict, try, sentence, and hang many of the accused. *Resurrecting a Witch* does not claim to explain why Salem happened, rather it gives us a unique insight into the motivations behind the accusations of several of Salem's accused witches. Furthermore, it intimately details the aftermath of Salem on the lives of two individuals who played key roles in the trials, and how that experience reshaped their hearts and brought them to regret their role in Salem's injustices. Yet, the work does not end there, it also brings to the forefront a lesson for people today on what havoc can be wrought when misguided fear is paired with selfish desire. For Salem, this mixture of fear and desire would result in persons of faith who were willing to blindly accuse their neighbors of crimes they did not commit rather than to see themselves faced with that same fate. *Resurrecting a Witch* opens our eyes to the darker side of the human psyche, one that protects itself at all cost, even if the cost paid is the life of friend or even a member of our own family.

INTRODUCTION

From a young age, we are taught to follow the leader, and that to get ahead in the world we must become leaders ourselves. However, as history can so aptly illustrate, honorable men and women sometimes fall prey to the wiles of a leader whose path will lead them to a place of insurmountable regret. One of the great tragedies of Early American History is the Salem Witchcraft Trials and the nineteen executions that followed them in 1692. No one walked away from Salem Village unscathed; each man, woman, and child would forever hold the events of that year close to their hearts. Each of them followed their leaders and did what they thought was best without questioning the intentions of those who led them. The mass hysteria of Salem would spiral out so dramatically that it would lead to over hundred accused people being drug off to jail and screaming out accusations against others in order to save their own souls. Witchcraft was one of the most heinous of all crimes in seventeenth century America, not because the accused witches or wizards were put to death, but because of the eternal implications that the sentence caused them. If you were declared a witch, you were publicly excommunicated from the church, your family was disinherited of their land and money, and you received nothing more but a pauper's grave outside of the consecrated grounds of the church thus insuring your eternal damnation in the fiery pits of hell.

The Salem Witchcraft Trials and the hysteria that surrounded them are well documented. Writings about Salem started in 1693 with Cotton Mather's *Wonders of the Invisible World: Being an Account of the Trials of Several Witches Lately Executed in New England*. The material to be found on the trials have progressed to hundreds of volumes, with scholars in every century delving into the social and political milieu of

how it happened, who the accused really were, whether they were guilty or not, and answering the question, “Why did this happen?” In modern scholarship you will find scholars such as Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, who want to take us back to Salem and look at the documents ourselves in order to form our own conclusions of why and how it happened.¹ Yet, they too will ask us to view Salem through a web of intrigue surrounding Salem’s minister, Samuel Parris, and his self-serving take on Puritan theology.² Another scholar, Mary Beth Norton, renowned in the field of women’s history holds the belief – piggybacking on the scholarship of years past – that the “fits” of the accused were not from satanic origins, but rather that they were made up in the minds of the accused that had been traumatized from the Indian attacks they witnessed years earlier.³

Other scholars such as Carol F. Karlsen and Marion L. Starkey, will view the events in Salem as they relate to the women accused and will bring sex and politics into play when dealing with who was accused and why. Still other scholars, such as Laurie Winn Carlson, Francis Hill, Bernard Rosenthal, and Peter Hoffer, who will all be mentioned in this work, will turn to Salem with their own inclinations on where Salem belongs in the narrative framework of American History. For example, Laurie Winn Carlson will look at the events of Salem and the “afflictions” of the girls and see it as

¹ Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, *Salem-Village Witchcraft: A Documentary Record of Local Conflict in Colonial New England* (Boston: Northeastern University, 1993).

² Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed; the Social Origins of Witchcraft* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 2003).

³ Mary Beth Norton, *In the Devil's Snare: The Salem Witchcraft Crisis of 1692* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003).

case of an encephalitis outbreak.⁴ While Bernard Rosenthal will catalogue Salem in his work *Salem Story* by the dates the accused were executed and what events were documented about the trials in order to give a student of Salem a detailed map of how Salem began and how it ended.⁵ Nevertheless, for this piece, delving into the political and spiritual ramifications of some of the accused and the motivations behind the young afflicted girls who would become their accusers is where its scholarship lies; for it is their stories that lend us a richer insight into soul of the seventeenth century Puritan.

Nonetheless, *Resurrecting a Witch* does not claim to explain why Salem happened, rather it gives us a unique insight into the motivations behind the accusations of seven of Salem's accused witches, Bridget Bishop, Sarah Good, Rebecca Nurse, John Proctor, John Willard, Giles Corey, and George Burroughs. Furthermore, it teaches us about how easy it was for a devil-fearing and superstitious community to be caught up in a tidal wave a mass hysteria. *Resurrecting a Witch* also intimately details the aftermath of Salem on the life of Ann Putnam Jr., one of Salem's most notorious "afflicted girls," on the life of one of its judges, Samuel Sewall, and how that experience reshaped their hearts and brought them to regret their role in Salem's injustices.

Another major component for the understanding of this work is the realization that no one left Salem without feeling that they had been marked by God in some way, as we shall see in the cases of Ann Putnam Jr., and Judge Samuel Sewall. Yet, they will not be alone, many of Salem's leaders would later beg for forgiveness for their rash actions, sordid leadership, and political assignations that led to imprisonment, torture, and death.

⁴ Laurie Winn Carlson, *A Fever in Salem: A New Interpretation of the New England Witch Trials* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2000).

⁵ Bernard Rosenthal, *Salem Story: Reading the Witch Trials of 1692* (Cambridge England: Cambridge University, 1998).

The Salem Witchcraft Trials have more to teach us about the human condition during a time of mass hysteria and political intrigue than almost any other time in American History. The aftermath of the trials and the stories that were woven in its wake give us insight into the faithful soul and what happens to it when remorse forces us to condemn our sin and open our hearts up to be led by God rather than by our own desires. We could say that the story of Salem and its supposed witches can teach us when to play “follow the leader” and when to walk away.

CHAPTER ONE
Stirrings: Witches on the Mind

*“There is no dark place, no deep shadow,
where evildoers can hide.”*

-Job 34:22 (NIV)

If there were one definitive statement about Puritan village life in Colonial America, it would be that life was entirely insular with everything spiritual, physical, social, and political revolving around the dictates of the Puritan church and its leaders. One-step out of bounds could very well cost you everything. A simple *faux pas* could mean being shunned by every man, woman, and child for as long as the elders of the church deemed necessary – even if your sentence was for life. And, although you were shunned, you would still have to exist within the confines of community life. In a small village, where family and friends were watched closely for the slightest sign of ungodly behavior, no one could afford to slip up. Into this day-to-day insular lifestyle, the witch hysteria that had swept Europe since the fifteenth century would take root and cling deceptively to everyone who had ever failed to live “just-so” in Salem and the surrounding areas of Essex County. The Witchcraft Trials conducted in Salem beginning in the winter of 1692 would reshape the souls of many who lived to survive the inquest, and for the generation that came after Salem. The trials would serve as a reminder for all of what atrocities the human psyche is capable of committing when faced with the fear that the devil is in their midst.

In order to understand properly the events that unfolded in Salem in 1692, one has to examine the history of witch-hunts and witch hysteria in other parts of the world since those tales played key roles in America’s own witch-hunts. Secondly, Salem Village as a

part of colonial and puritan life with its rigorous dictates for what behaviors constituted a proper Christian must be scrutinized. Lastly, before one can begin to delve into the effects this devastating moment in history had on Salem and her people, a detailed accounting of the witch hysteria and writings circulating Salem in the late seventeenth century must be given over for assessment. All these elements serve as the unique backdrop of genuine fear and social and political turmoil that would culminate into accusations, the trials, and the many deaths that would ravage Salem Village and the rest of Essex County for a little less than a year. Nonetheless, when set upon a larger scale, Salem can only take a small place on history's timeline of witchcraft trials and mass hysteria, for Salem is only one of many such events that had swept the world over for centuries. Yet, the uniqueness of Salem and our great interest in it comes in the fact that it was the world's last great attempt to rid itself of the perceived devil within, and thus with that knowledge our story begins.

A Brief History of Witchcraft

Witchcraft and the belief that the devil could take over the body of an innocent soul were not concepts invented by the overactive imagination of the medieval people, but very precisely honed assertions dating back to biblical times. In the Old Testament we find in Exodus 22:18 the admonition, "Do not allow a sorceress to live" (NIV). The wording of this passage found in the King James Version, the text used in the Colonial era, states, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." The phraseology of both of these readings bodes well to the reality that the largest majority of those condemned and killed for dabbling in the black arts during the height of the witch-hunt era were of the female gender. Moreover, several times in the New Testament we find Jesus casting out the devil

from the poor soul of either a man or a woman who had succumbed to the devil's exploitation.

From the first century onward, the debate would rage between the likelihood of demon possession and the testimony others gave against the probability of it. It was not until the thirteenth century that a more definitive stance was taken by the church through the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas that would turn the tide away from disinterest in witchcraft to the rampant fear of it. St. Thomas Aquinas would put forth in his *Summa Theologica* the belief that demons existed and were searching for human souls.¹ Yet, it is to the later middle ages that we find the most literature on witches and witchcraft. The years between 1484 and 1682, which was the year when the last witches, Temperance Lloyd, Mary Trembles, and Susanna Edwards were executed in England, would become known as the era of Europe's witch hysteria.²

One classical work on witches from medieval times is the *Malleus Maleficarum*, or translated the *Witches' Hammer*. It was first published in Germany in 1486.³ Written by Heinrich Kramer and Jakob Springer, two Dominican monks, it dealt with all things that concerned witches and witchcraft, including how to conduct a proper trial. The *Malleus Maleficarum* came on the heels of Pope Innocent VIII's 1484 *Summis desiderantes affectibus*, his papal bull insuring that witchcraft and the creatures that delved in it were not myths but rather a gruesome reality that must be squelched. From that point onward, the hunt for witches became a much sought after medieval pursuit; but

¹ First Part, Question 64, *The Punishment of the Demons*. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, "St. Thomas Aquinas' Summa Theologica" <http://www.op.org/summa/letter/summa-lq64.pdf> (accessed November 6, 2007).

² Montague Summers, *The Geography of Witchcraft* (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger, 2003), 149.

³ Catherine Orenstein, *Little Red Riding Hood Uncloaked: Sex, Morality, and the Evolution of a Fairy Tale* (New York: Basic Books, 2003), 256.

contrary to popular belief, it was for the most part a strictly secular endeavor. Although the *Malleus Maleficarum* would see several printings from the late fifteenth century through the end of the seventeenth, it was not sanctioned by the church, but rather condemned in 1490, and we do not have any knowledge of printings between 1521 and 1526.⁴

Almost no European country was without the mark of at least one witchcraft trial and consequently its usual aftermath of sanctioned executions, which included torture, being burnt alive, and hanging. During the height of Europe's four-hundred year witch hysteria between one hundred thousand and possibly up to nine million condemned witches were executed in Switzerland, France, Italy, England, Scotland, Germany, and a few in Ireland, and the majority of the accused were women. The reason for this large disparity in the numbers is due in part that the greater majority of deaths were never properly recorded.⁵ There are varying reasons as to why women were more often accused than men, but one of the prime assertions is that since the majority of accusers throughout history were men, most of the accused were women, with rare exception. Salem's witch crisis itself is one of those rare exceptions since its primary accusers were women, and specifically, young women.⁶ The female was believed in the Middle Ages to have a weak and easily ruined constitution. The *Malleus Maleficarum* makes a direct case for this ideology when it states that women are more prone to witchcraft because, "they are more given to anger and more vengeful and since they have less power with which to avenge

⁴ Gary K. Waite, *Heresy, Magic, and Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 134.

⁵ Anne Llewellyn Barstow, *Witchcraze: A New History of the European Witch Hunts* (San Francisco, CA: Harper Collins, 1995), 21-23. See also, Carlson, 68.

⁶ This element of Salem's Witchcraft Trials will be discussed more fully in chapter three.

themselves against those persons with whom they are angry, they seek and obtain favor and revenge from the devil.”⁷ Thus, we find women targeted more often as being the devil’s consort. New England’s witch crisis and the literature surrounding it, such as Cotton Mather’s *Memorable Providence: Relating to Witchcrafts and Possessions*, will pose much the same arguments about women and their susceptibility to witchcraft. But before we begin a discussion on Mather’s diatribe, we first have to look at Salem Village and the rigors of puritan life.

The History of Salem and Puritan Life in New England

Salem Town, now known as the city of Salem, is located on the Northeastern coast of Massachusetts, and was incorporated in 1626. Salem Village would not be an official settlement until four years later. Salem Village, present day Danvers, should not be confused with the city of Salem; it is located a little farther up from Salem on Massachusetts’ Northeastern edge. Both of these places played key roles in the trials of 1692, and both will be referred to often in the text.

The witchcraft hysteria that swept Massachusetts did not affect just one area. All of what was known as Essex County was afflicted with the witch fever. Though quite a large majority of those accused came from either Salem Town or Salem Village, others came from the surrounding towns of Andover, Lynn, Gloucester, Topsfield, and others.⁸ Prior to the witchcraft trials, Essex County was a place of quaint settlements that would

⁷ Heinrich Kramer, Jakob Sprenger, and Montague Summers, *The Malleus Maleficarum* (New York: Dover, 1971), 45-46.

⁸ Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem-Village*, 376.

normally be abuzz with the activity of the sea-faring trades. Salem was second only to the Port of Boston.⁹

Salem Village had much the same day-to-day existence of other puritan settlements. Each member of the family had their assigned tasks to complete. Every family was responsible for storing up enough food for winter and brewing ale to drink. They also needed to make all of their own clothing, candles, and other household needs. The majority of the household work fell upon the women and their daughters. Daily activities would include cooking, cleaning, sewing, spinning, and doing the family's wash. A woman's worth was wrapped up into the type of wife she was, and women of ordinary means were often called "Goodwife" or the shortened version of "Goody." Men of ordinary means also took the title of "Goodman," as in Goodman Evers. The tasks of the men fell outside the confines of the home and often boys were reared from an early age to be apprentices and to earn money for their family's upkeep.

In the colder months, the family spent the majority of their time indoors, sitting around the hearth to keep warm. What leisure life there was consisted mainly of prayer, Bible-reading, and other activities of a religious nature. The church was the center of puritan life and the Sabbath was rigorously observed with harsh punishments meted out if in some way the Sabbath was profaned. A very common form of punishment was to be put on display in front of the whole town in the stocks. When a sinner was placed in the stocks, they stood slightly stooped at the shoulders with their head and both hands locked into the wooden stocks for a period of hours, and, on rare occasions, a few days.¹⁰

⁹ See Appendix A - Map of Salem and Essex County

¹⁰ Peter Charles Hoffer, *The Devil's Disciples: Makers of the Salem Witchcraft Trials* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1996), 176.

Besides the Sabbath service, there were also services on Thursdays or other times during the week. The rest of Sunday was strictly to be used for prayer, recitation, religious reading, and other religious activities. Along with the governing laws of the settlements, and the exacting church mandates, the Puritans also had a heady fear of the supernatural and anything that could possibly be misconstrued as being of an ungodly nature. All people, young and old, were diligently taught to fear for the safety of their souls and to keep pure in all aspects of their life. If one slipped even the tiniest bit and it was not remedied at once by some form of punishment, then it was perceived as an open invitation for the devil and witchcraft to play havoc with their souls.¹¹ The puritan life was designed to be a supreme testament to God of a pure and ever-repentant soul; those staunch principles and a few choice events would clash together in the winter of 1692 with the fear that Satan had finally found a place among them.

Believing in Witchcraft: New England's Fear of the Unknown

Since the fear of witches and other sorcery disrupted the solitude of the well-ordered puritan life, there was serious weight given to any rationale that could be used to keep the devil at bay. Several key pieces of literature were in circulation in America against witchcraft, idolatry, and other satanic pursuits, and not all of them were from abroad. The Reverend Cotton Mather illustriously spoke out against witchcraft from the pulpit and was undoubtedly the most prolific of the puritan writers. One of the most influential works against the black arts that was produced in America on a large scale prior to the trials was Mather's 1689 tract, *Memorable Providences, Relating to*

¹¹ For more on the above issues related to puritan life, see chapter one titled, *Samuel Parris* in *Ibid.*, 17-38.

Witchcrafts and Possessions. Since people were fascinated by and taught to be weary of any activity that could mean that witches might dwell amongst them, Mather's invective furthered their fear. Although Mather was not the presiding minister of either Salem Town or Salem Village, he was the assistant minister of the North Church of Boston, and anything to do with witchcraft in the area was given over to him for his consideration.¹² We can quite easily map out how everything came together and exploded into the worst witch-hunt in American History by following the progression of fear and overbearing authority that permeated Salem. The minister of Salem, Reverend Samuel Parris, in whose home the conflict began, and later the judges that presided over the trials in order to see that justice was served and witches destroyed, were all connected to Mather and to the puritan belief that the devil was rampant in his pursuit of wayward souls.¹³ Mather may not have made the first accusation, but the foundation that led to the trials was set down by his hand, and the first book ever written about the trials, *Wonders of the Invisible World: Being and Account of the Trials of Several Witches Lately Executed in New England*, bore his name. Ironically, it would be Cotton Mather's father, Reverend Increase Mather, who would have the last word and help to usher in the long awaited end to Salem's inquisition.¹⁴

Increase Mather and many others clerics at the time did not share all the same views as Cotton Mather when it came to the condemning of witches, but the existence of witches was rarely disputed. Several cases involving witchcraft were written up as a means of proving that the devil's debauchery existed, and Increase Mather was also one

¹² Carlson, 50-51. Cotton Mather father, Increase, was the head minister of Boston's South Church.

¹³ Rosenthal, 70-71.

¹⁴ Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, 9-11.

of those writers. In 1684, Increase Mather wrote *An Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences*, which dealt with the outbreak of “fits” in Ann Cole and John Stiles, and also contained a lengthy discourse on the possession of a sixteen year-old girl by the name of Elizabeth Knapp.¹⁵ Cotton Mather’s *Memorable Providences* will also discuss demon possession, and although it does not express the majority of puritan thought about witchcraft, it does give us a good point of reference on the trials of Salem and the discrepancies between the witchcraft seen at Salem and the demon possession referenced in both Increase and Cotton Mather’s works. It is interesting to note that in neither work by the Mather’s is the possessed individual put on trial or condemned to die for their sorcery.¹⁶

From the introduction of *Memorable Providences*, we can garner much insight into why witchcraft and the proving of its existence was such a feature in the puritan life. Mather writes, “Go tell Mankind, that there are Devils and Witches; and that tho those night-birds least appear where the Day-light of the Gospel comes, yet New-Engl. has had Exemples of their Existence and Operation... yet venture That, and in this way seek a just Revenge on Them for the Disturbance they have given to such as have called on the Name of God.”¹⁷ The compiling of cases on witchcraft in New England was not a game; it was a way to see the healing power of God’s mercy on the souls that had fallen prey to the Devil. In almost every instance prior to Salem in New England, the afflicted were given sympathy and helped as much as possible to be healed from their suffering. Salem

¹⁵ Norton, 34.

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ Douglas O. Linder, "Cotton Mather's Memorable Providences, Relating to Witchcrafts and Possessions: A Faithful Account of Many Wonderful and Surprising Things, That Have Befallen Several Bewitched and Possessed Persons in New-England."
http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/salem/ASA_MATH.HTM (accessed October 15, 2007).

would change all that. Nineteen people were to be executed at Salem, nearly a hundred and fifty were accused of witchcraft, and Cotton Mather, who once felt sorry for those possessed, would later rather see them hung. Salem is a fitting end to the medieval era's great witch-hunts, for after Salem apologies would flow in from those men and women sorry that they ever allowed its fever to control their actions. As if in a foreshadow of this aftermath, Cotton Mather wrote in *Memorable Providences* that he had been told by a possessed girl that what he wrote on witchcraft would one day come to disgrace him, as it inevitably did for almost all who were connected to it.¹⁸ The religious and political assignations of those men, including the Mather's, who were connected to Salem and survived to find remorse in its tragedy is the subject of the following chapter.

¹⁸ Ibid., Sect. XXVII.

CHAPTER TWO

The Road to Witchcraft – Brick by Brick

*“When a land falls into the hands of the wicked, he blindfolds its judges.
If it is not he, then who is it?”*

-Job 9:24 (NIV)

With every trial or conspiracy theory comes a family or a group of individuals who by their very nature will serve as fuels to the flame of controversy surrounding it. With the Salem Witchcraft Trials, three families emerge, the Parris, Putnam, and Mather families, and each family becomes so embroiled within Salem that to talk about it without mentioning them would be an injustice. However, this chapter, which is principally concerned with the political, religious, and social milieu of the trials and Salem Village itself in 1692, will primarily deal with Reverend Increase Mather and his son, Cotton. Along with the Mathers, this section will also delve into the motivations behind three men who sat on the Court of Oyer and Terminer, which means to “hear and determine.” Two of the most influential members of this six-judge panel included Chief Justice William Stoughton and John Hathorne.¹ The governor of Massachusetts; Sir William Phips, and the constable of Salem Village, who was also another of Salem’s judges; Jonathon Corwin will be discussed in this chapter. The story of Samuel Parris and the Putnam family will be woven in throughout this narrative for their political and economic desires, associations with the accusers and the accused, and their fervor within the trials is foundational to continuity of this narrative, yet because of these very reasons it is best to

¹ Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, 7. Samuel Sewall is another prominent judge who sat on the Court of Oyer and Terminer, but a discussion of him has been reserved for Chapter Six since Judge Sewall made a very adamant apology for his role in the trials.

view the Parris and Putnam households through the stories of those people they affected, rather than by themselves.²

The Prolific Mathers: Increase and Cotton

If one could say that there was one definitive family that held the most authority on all things pertaining to witchcraft in the late sixteen hundreds, then it would be the Mather family. The Mathers were one of the most prominent families in Massachusetts, and within their writings emerges a unique background of puritan life and its theology of witchcraft prior to the Salem Witchcraft Trials, which is often distinguished by controversy. Both Mathers wrote about the effects of Indian captivity (especially on how it related to the mental state of women), demon possession, and witchcraft – including what they both deemed as “proof of its existence.”³ Cotton Mather also wrote on spectral knowledge, which was an accuser’s testimony that they saw an apparition of the accused harming them or someone else.⁴ Cotton wrote extensively on spectral evidence before the trials, as well as in his *The Wonders of the Invisible World: Being an Account of the Trials of Several Witches, Lately Executed in New England*, which documents the 1692 trials and his thoughts on them. Yet, even with a firm foundation set against spectral

² There is new scholarship that is coming out on both the Putnam and Parris families, yet it is not available to the author at the time of this writing. What that new scholarship looks into will be discussed later on in pertinent sections of the text.

³ See Cotton Mather’s work, *Memorable Providences: Relating to Witchcraft and Possessions* (1689) or Increase Mather’s, *Remarkable Providences: An Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences* (1684). Both works pose decisive arguments outlining the fact that the things they are discussing in them contain very clear evidence that witches indeed exist.

⁴ Spectral knowledge or evidence had its problems, especially at Salem, since to disprove it is nearly impossible. It brought with it a continual debate over the validity of specters (demons), and whether they could or could not take the shape of an innocent person. Mather wrote against the use of it, and the misuse of it would be the undoing of the witchcraft trials themselves, and yet Mather saw it being used repeatedly during the trials and did not try to stop it. For example – an accuser could say that he/she knew that the accused had had a dream about the devil, and since the accused could not disprove it, it was allowed in court as evidence, and termed of a spectral nature.

evidence as grounds for an indictment, it would still play a dangerous role within the trials.⁵

With the acknowledgement that the prolific nature of both the Mathers influenced puritan life in New England comes with a great deal of pandemonium. Cotton and his father often found themselves embroiled in a fight to legitimize the existence of witches, and because of that battle, we have discussions on witchcraft, works on the evidence for witches, and witches themselves becoming quite prevalent in the New England area. That being said, we could surmise that this type of open and seeking admission of witchcraft made the path to Salem and its trials easier to tread, for something is eventually bound to happen when everyone is crying “Witch, Witch!”

Increase Mather was a native of Massachusetts. He was born in Dorchester in 1639 to the Reverend Richard Mather and his wife Katherine Holt; he later attended Trinity College in Ireland and became an ordained minister.⁶ What first triggered Increase’s fascination with witchcraft is unknown. However, there were random hangings of accused witches, mostly women of dubious distinction prior to 1656 in the New England area, yet it would not be until the witchcraft outbreak in Hartford, Connecticut in 1662-63 that he would be prompted to write about any of the accused witches. In 1684, some seven years before Salem, Increase would publish his work *Remarkable Providences: An Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences* that dealt with Ann Cole, a witch accused in the Hartford outbreak and several other isolated incidents of

⁵ For a more detailed account of the horrors of spectral evidence on the lives of the accused see Chapter Three.

⁶ For a full Biography of Increase Mather see: Michael G. Hall, *The Last American Puritan: The Life of Increase Mather, 1639- 1723* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1988).

witchcraft on the Eastern seaboard.⁷ Increase Mather, a notable minister, served as Harvard College's sixth president, obtained Massachusetts' charter from England along with bringing over Sir William Phips as governor, and still maintained his position as the parish head of Boston's Old North Church.⁸ Nonetheless, his belief in the existence of witches along with his case study would become one of the chief assertions used in any discussion of the problem of the devil, which continually plagued the minds of the other members of the clergy in New England. During this time period, a dialogue on how the devil and his wiles, if left unchecked, could ruin the souls of the innocent peppered many a sermon. Increase Mather's preoccupation with the spectral world was second only to that of his son's.

Cotton Mather, Increase's eldest son, followed his father's example and entered the ministry, working alongside his father in Boston's North Church. Even though his father was often taken away by duties at Harvard College, it was not until Increase's death in 1723 that he assumed sole responsibility for the parish. Cotton Mather wrote extensively in his adult life publishing more than 450 pamphlets, books, and other tracts.⁹ Most of his works were not on witchcraft, yet it is his writings on witchcraft that have given him the most notoriety. One of the more prominent of Cotton's works deals with the possession and torment of the four Goodwin children, which he described in his work, *Memorable Providences* in 1689. This book, as was mentioned earlier, was in circulation around the Salem area prior to the winter of 1692, and was likely read by Samuel Parris

⁷ Carol F. Karlsen, *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman: Witchcraft in Colonial New England* (New York: Norton, 1987), 2.

⁸ Marion L. Starkey, *The Devil in Massachusetts: A Modern Enquiry into the Salem Witch Trials* (New York: Anchor Books, 1989), 129.

⁹ Thomas J. Holmes, *Cotton Mather and His Writings on Witchcraft* (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger, 2003), 35.

and the judges who would later make up the court of Oyer and Terminer. *Memorable Providences* marks a point of distinction between what Cotton deemed real and noteworthy about demon possessions and witchcraft from the beliefs of his father, who was more conservative in nature and more forgiving of those who were entrapped by the devil. In *Memorable Providences* Cotton's dealings with the accused witch, Goody Glover, show a decidedly reproachful and pity-filled tone that suggests that the devil would do everything in his power to have the soul of a condemned witch without the witch ever having the capability of finding any solace in God. Mather wrote:

I Sett before her the Necessity and Equity of her breaking her Covenant with Hell, and giving her self to the Lord Jesus Christ, by an everlasting Covenant; To which her Answer was, that I spoke a very Reasonable thing, but she could not do it. I asked her whether she would consent or desire to be pray'd for; To that she said, If Prayer would do her any good, shee could pray for her self. And when it was again propounded, she said, She could not unless her spirits (or angels) would give her leave. However, against her will I pray'd with her, which if it were a Fault it was in excess of Pitty. When I had done, shee thank'd me with many good Words; but I was no sooner out of her sight, than she took a stone, a long and slender stone, and with her Finger and Spittle fell to tormenting it; though whom or what she meant, I had the mercy never to understand.¹⁰

The lack of remorse Mather found in Goody Glover and her inability to call on the name of God to save her from the hangman's noose shows a switch from tolerance and patience with the accused to that of a more condemning and less charitable demeanor. This key ideological shift from what the condemned man or woman could do in order to prove their innocence and save their souls to a more radically condemning and judgmental nature will be developed further during the trials themselves, where we will see people hung even if they can prove their innocence by calling on the name of God

¹⁰ Linder, (accessed October, 31, 2007), Sect X

and saying the Lord's Prayer perfectly, as in the case of George Burroughs.¹¹ Besides Increase and Cotton Mather's writings on witchcraft, there is one more place where their presence would help to pave the way for how the witchcraft trials were to be accomplished, and that influence is most evident in the appointments of two of the most prominent judges who helped to make up Salem's Court of Oyer and Terminer. Yet, it would be Increase who would become a voice of temperance in regards to how these men would conduct the trials.¹²

The Chief Justice: William Stoughton

One of the most controversial of Salem's judges was the Lieutenant Governor, William Stoughton, who would consistently be a voice of power and corruption throughout the trials themselves and in later years one of the few people who came out of Salem unscathed in either mind or heart.¹³ Salem scholar, Marion Starkey, would note that Stoughton was a "man of granite, (who) confessed no error, (or) made no personal suit of forgiveness."¹⁴ Stoughton's longstanding friendship with the Mather family also contributed to his position as Lieutenant Governor and as the Chief Justice of the Court of Oyer and Terminer, even though he was from Dorchester and not affiliated directly with either Salem Village or Salem Town.¹⁵

¹¹ During the trials of 1692, it was assumed that a justly accused witch would not have the ability to say the Lord's Prayer with perfect accuracy, and therefore any mistakes in the recitation of it was used as adamant proof for the presence of witchcraft. See the story of George Burroughs in Chapter Five for more on this.

¹² Rosenthal, 30. See also: Karlsen, 41. Increase's famous sermon speaking out against the trials was aptly titled, *Cases of Conscience*.

¹³ Ibid. For a more thorough discussion of William Stoughton's political career after Salem, see Chapter Six of this work.

¹⁴ Starkey, 262-263.

¹⁵ Frances Hill, *A Delusion of Satan: The Full Story of the Salem Witch Trials* (New York: Da Capo, 2002), 155.

Scholars such as Marion Starkey and Mary Beth Norton have noted that some of Chief Justice Stoughton's methods of inducing a confession were not typical of the judicial system of the time, yet they were allowed to be used by the members of Salem's specially appointed court. One such instance of this happened at the trial of Rebecca Nurse, where Stoughton, upon seeing that the verdict against Nurse would not go "his" way, reminded the jury that Rebecca Nurse had disclosed a bit of information that he had determined was an outright confession. The words were, "What, do these persons give in Evidence against me now, they used to come among us," this was said by Rebecca Nurse about Abigail and Deliverance Hobbs who both had testified against Nurse.¹⁶ By no means is the phrase a definitive statement of confession; rather it is one discussing the fact that the women frequently met up socially. Yet, it is just one in a long line of other simple remarks used in the condemnation of several witches, who were brought before the judges either because of their social status or their religious indiscretions.

Another example of this tactic of Stoughton's can be seen in the trial of George Jacobs, its use of spectral evidence, and Stoughton's position on apparitions. Jacobs argued against his accusers and the court, restating the long-held puritan belief that the devil could take any shape for his purposes that he wanted to and that the court should therefore not believe the young misses, Abigail Williams and Mary Walcott, that he himself had afflicted Abigail, but rather that the devil in the form of Jacobs, if at all real, had been what the girls saw. Stoughton's take on Jacobs' argument was to go against the popular consensus. He stated that the devil could only take the form of a human being with that person's consent. This new position of Stoughton's would leave the door wide

¹⁶ Norton, 255.

open as to who could be accused, and by what means, for he was stating that if one person saw the devil in the shape of any person, then it could only be true that the person in question was inhabited by the devil and in all cases consented to by that person.¹⁷ Stoughton would not be the only proponent for this new wave of theology and of how the devil worked within the bodies of his witches and wizards. John Hathorne from the onset of the investigations would push for the use of spectral evidence and the manifestations of the young girls as all the proof that was needed to insure a witch/wizard had been rightly sought out and captured.¹⁸

The Railroader: John Hathorne

John Hathorne's political position in the early stages of the outbreak was as magistrate and pre-trial investigator. After the Court of Oyer and Terminer was established, he served on it as judge.¹⁹ Even within the legal practices of the day, a future judge would never undertake the roles of investigator and magistrate in the arraignment of an accused individual, but in the person of John Hathorne, Salem would again prove itself contrary to popular conduct. Furthermore, it is his underhanded dealings with those people who came before him, and Jonathon Corwin as the magistrates of Salem Town,

¹⁷ Rosenthal, 120.

¹⁸ According to Marion Starkey, "...the most important principle accepted by the magistrates (Hathorne and Corwin) was the premises that the devil cannot assume the 'shape' of an innocent person... Thanks to this arrangement, hallucinations, dreams, and mere fancies would be accepted in court as factual proof not of the psychological condition of the accuser but of the behavior of the accused." Starkey, 54.

¹⁹ Rosenthal, 225-226. The original judges appointed to the Court of Oyer and Terminer were Bartholomew Gedney, Samuel Sewall, John Richards, Peter/William Sergeant, Wait Winthrop, Nathaniel Saltonstall, and William Stoughton. Yet, an earlier account by Thomas Hutchinson (1870) found in Rosenthal's work would note that the court at its inception also included John Hathorne and Jonathon Corwin.

that would form the basis of people's low opinion of him.²⁰ The other villagers dislike of Hathorne was do in part to the fact that he allowed the accused to endure the presence of Salem's "afflicted girls" and their outlandish antics during their pre-trial hearings as proof of their witchery. In addition, this low opinion of his roles in the Salem Witchcraft Trials would cause his grandson, the author Nathaniel Hawthorne, to change the spelling of his last name in order to distance himself from his impetuous grandfather.²¹

From the onset of the girls' "fits" in late January of 1692, Hathorne would aid the hunt for witches with his peculiar brand of questioning – hoping for a confession – that could be termed as a type of religiously or politically maneuvered railroading. For instance, in the cases of the very first accused witches, Tituba, Sarah Good, and Sarah Osborne, Hathorne showed his prowess for leading an accused down a track that they might not have considered for themselves. Hathorne's first question to Sarah Good was "What evil spirit have you familiarity with (?)" which at the onset assumes her guilt.²² Sarah's hearing would continue after she denied hurting any of the afflicted girls, yet the girls' courtroom antics would only stop once she accused Sarah Osborne of harming them. The widespread use of the girls as permanent fixtures in the courtroom and the acceptance of the validity of their fits would begin with Hathorne and continue throughout the trials.²³ Bernard Rosenthal also notes that when it came time for the team

²⁰ Hill, 155.

²¹ Frances Hill, *The Salem Witch Trials Reader* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo, 2000), 210.

²² Rosenthal, 15.

²³ *Ibid.*, 15-16. His source for this assertion comes from Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, *The Salem Witchcraft Papers: Verbatim Transcripts of the Legal Documents of the Salem Witchcraft Outbreak of 1692* (New York, NY: Da Capo, 1977). This will be from hereon abbreviated as *SWP*. This particular citation comes from (*SWP* II: 356). Throughout the rest of this document, where applicable, the author will cite from the *SWP* the place where a particular scholar obtained their information from in support of their claims.

of Hathorne and Corwin to question Sarah Osborne because of Sarah Good's accusations, "(their) mind-set...was evident enough: They had chosen witchcraft as the only plausible alternative..."²⁴

Later on in the spring with the hearings of several other accused witches, we can see that Hathorne's *modus operandi* will not be swayed. He would continue to have the afflicted girls sitting in the first few rows of benches while he examined one of the accused. And as the girls carried on with their antics, he would simply query of the woman or man before him why they had afflicted the girls, as he did in the case of Martha Corey, reported in Starkey's *The Devil in Massachusetts*. Starkey writes of the morning Martha Corey was questioned that, "(Hathorne) did not even ask for a plea; what with the girls yelping on the front of the benches, such a query was superfluous. He simply asked her why she afflicted them."²⁵ In contrast to Hathorne's more pronounced demeanor was Jonathon Corwin, who was said to be calmer than his counterpart in the examination of the accused witches and wizards.²⁶ Along with Corwin's quiet, yet just as determined character, was the steadying – albeit absent – presence of Sir William Phips, the newly appointed Governor of Massachusetts.

The Governor and the Unlikely Jailer:
Sir William Phips and Jonathon Corwin

There were never two more opposite men both socially and politically at Salem Village in 1692 than Massachusetts governor Sir William Phips and the magistrate,

²⁴ Rosenthal, 20.

²⁵ Starkey, 72.

²⁶ Norton, 24. Hathorne conducted the majority of the investigations, and what evidence we have for Corwin's participation comes from court records he wrote about the proceedings. See also, Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem-Village*.

Jonathon Corwin. Each man saw Salem in his own light, and each fought a battle in the midst of the mayhem. One man was on the inside looking out, Jonathon Corwin, and he fought to keep the war going for whatever reason, and the other, Governor Phips, sat on the outside looking in, and only hoped to see it ended when its chaos struck too close to home.

Sir William Phips was born in Maine but would later be knighted in England by King James II in 1687 after finding and salvaging a Spanish Vessel in the Bahamas. However, quite soon after that, he was no longer able to make a living in England, so he returned to Massachusetts in 1689 and joined the North Church. He would again go back to England on diplomatic business accompanied by Increase Mather. He would be appointed in the early months of 1692 as the new Governor of Massachusetts, sailing home to Boston's Harbor with Increase and would instantly be swept up into the height of Salem's witch hysteria.²⁷

Phips kept guarded about the trials, and yet he appointed the judges to an official court upon his return in early May. Nevertheless, throughout the summer of 1692, the new governor would find himself with a quite hectic schedule, and would later write in a letter to the Earl of Nottingham in 1693 that he kept away from the trials because of his work and thought that everything was left well in the hands of the capable Chief Justice William Stoughton.²⁸ Nonetheless, Phips would abolish the Court of Oyer and Terminer on October 29, 1692 when he came home to find that his wife had been accused, by the usually inadmissible spectral evidence, of witchcraft. The supposed evidence against her was that she must indeed be a witch, since she signed a form requesting the release of an

²⁷ Starkey, 132-135.

²⁸ Rosenthal, 194.

accused prisoner, and spectral evidence would indicate that no one above reproach could be about the devil's business.²⁹ This kind of spectral evidence, even though Cotton Mather wrote against its use earlier in the summer, was being used quite often to point the finger at some notable person that an accuser often wanted to see portrayed as a pawn of the devil.³⁰ On the other hand, Jonathon Corwin, one of the magistrates at Salem Village, was not against spectral evidence, and was only too keen to follow the others desperate for a witch-hunt.

From the beginning of the outbreak of witch hysteria, Jonathon Corwin would find himself in the thick of it. Early on, he was present with Jonathon Hathorne as the justices of the peace sent to weed through the evidence against Tituba, Sarah Good, and Sarah Osborne, the first women to be brought before the magistrates for dabbling in witchcraft and harming children. He allowed Hathorne's revelry to sweep him up into a one-way whirlwind intent on its hunt for witches. Corwin would also join Hathorne in introducing the strategically consistent line of questioning that focused solely on promoting the guilt of an accused witch rather than the presumption of their innocence. Furthermore, when it came time to set up the Court of Oyer and Terminer, Corwin was there to hold the job of magistrate and jailer along with Hathorne and Bartholomew Gedney.³¹ Yet, Corwin too must have felt the need to see the court dissolved when his mother-in-law, the wealthy Margaret Thatcher, was also accused of being a witch.³² Even mass hysteria has to run its course sometime, and in this case, spectral evidence was there

²⁹ Karlsen, 279.

³⁰ Starkey, 219-220.

³¹ Rosenthal, 27-30.

³² Karlsen, 41.

to see an attempt at accusing Corwin's mother-in-law thwarted, even though it had been used against more lowly individuals as damning enough evidence in the past.³³

If Corwin can teach us anything, it is the proof that a good man can go right along with the flow if the undertow of mass hysteria is there to draw him in.³⁴ Of course, no one could be drawn into a witch-hunt if there were not people around just waiting to name someone a witch. Our story now continues with the Parris family, their slave Tituba, the Putnam family, and the passel of young girls who would make up Salem's wayward cluster of unlikely accusers. This group of young women and the religious and political motivations of those people who surrounded them will be the focus of not only the next chapter, but also the rest of this text, for it is to them and to their "antics" that Salem owes its place in history. Their situation in the trials is quite unique for Puritan times and its uniqueness will sit center stage throughout this ordeal.³⁵

³³ See Chapter Five, especially the trial of Giles Corey.

³⁴ Starkey, 158. Because Judge Nathaniel Saltonstall could not abide by the use of spectral evidence and the outlandish antics of the afflicted girls he stepped down on June 28, 1692, and as Starkey notes the eager Corwin took his place.

³⁵ Boyer and Nissenbaum will note in their work *Salem Possessed*, that "Whatever was troubling the girls and those who encouraged them, was something deeper than the kind of chronic, petty squabbles between neighbors which seem to have been at the root of earlier and far less severe witchcraft episodes in New England." Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, 33 and 35.

CHAPTER THREE
A Winter for Making Witches

*I loathe my very life; therefore I will give free rein to my complaint
and speak out in the bitterness of my soul.*

-Job 10:1 (NIV)

In the dark kitchen of Rev. Samuel Parris' home in the dead of winter, Tituba, a slave from the Caribbean Isles, would rock her little charge Betty by the fire. She would tell her stories about the sea and the wild land of Barbados that she loved and had missed terribly since Rev. Parris had purchased her and brought her up to the cold north of Salem Village. In any good puritan family, affection was given in miniscule amounts, since for a puritan, obtaining a heady fear of God was more important to breed into a child than the need or the desire for love. It was no different in the home of Salem Village's minister, Samuel Parris. Nevertheless, a simple young slave and a tiny girl were allowed free reign to talk together, to play games, and to cuddle up together by the fire in the middle of a cold January day when the other members of the family were out tending to their respective duties. Mrs. Parris would be out on rounds, taking care of the poor, seeing food dispersed among the needy, while Rev. Parris spent his days at the meetinghouse or the homes of church members. Abigail Williams, the pre-adolescent niece of the Parris' who lived with them, would often be about her own activities, or her and several other girls from the village would all gather in the Parris' family kitchen to be regaled by Tituba's tales or to see her practice a little magic.¹

It was that magic that would get Tituba sent to prison and would see the town of Salem Village embark on a massive witch-hunt that would leave no household without

¹ Starkey, 29-33.

the stain of witchcraft. Of course, any good story has to have two sides, and this story is no exception. It was not just Tituba's unorthodox relationship with the girls alone that would bring the trials upon Salem. It also took the malice and hatred of a few bored little adolescent girls to unleash the terror in the minds of Salem's superstitious folks that Satan had finally found a place among them. This is not to say that the girls themselves were in any way evil; it is just that within the height of winter's long drudgery these unmarried girls set about a series of activities and outlandish "fits" within the community alleviating their boredom, yet setting the course for a terror that they could never have predicted. No one person is to blame for all of the terror wrought by the witchcraft trials, yet Tituba and the girls irrevocably started the tidal wave that would become Salem's internal battle against the devil.² Their story, which is set against the backdrop of Puritan life, is unique for its time and place, and has always taken center stage in both scholarly works and many fictitious bestsellers, such as Maryse Condé's *I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem*, and Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*, which has also been made into two critically acclaimed movies.

Tituba

Tituba Indian, or Tituba, as she is most commonly referred to, was likely born on the Island of Barbados. Many scholars believe that Tituba was half Carib Indian³ and half-African. Tituba came to Salem with the Parris family after Rev. Parris had failed as a merchant in both Barbados and later in Boston.⁴ It was rare for a puritan family to have

² Ibid., 34-35.

³ Carib Indian is a non-standard term used to describe a person born of mixed ancestry from the Caribbean Islands. The word can mean from any Caribbean Islands, but we get our knowledge of Tituba coming from Barbados specifically in several key texts.

⁴ Norton, 17.

either an African or an Indian servant, and Rev. Parris employed both Tituba and her husband John Indian, about whom very little is known, except for the fact that he too participated with the girls in the accusations of some of Salem's elite.⁵ Puritan life for women was rarely infused with much joy or merriment, especially in the harsh Massachusetts winters. Men often would go out to hunt or to meet together out of their respective homes, and often their young sons would be in attendance to learn the proper skills needed to be an upright male within the society. Women were taught to stay at home, to tend to their chores, and to be in constant vigil against evil, for it was believed that women, with their lack of sufficient sensibilities, were a prime mark for the devil if left to their own pursuits.⁶

Into this cloistered community on the forested outskirts of Salem Town and its busy harbor walked an Indian woman, who with her very nature as a dark-skinned foreigner would lead others to assume some kind of power enveloped her. Tituba with her native stories, her ability to whip up potions from herbs – a common practice in her native land – coupled with the girls' outlandish fits would serve as fuel to ignite the fires of Salem Village's already fearsome souls.⁷ Tituba, being a foreigner to both this country and to the puritan ways, acted and spoke like the Indian woman that she was. The difference with how Tituba acted once the trials began stood in stark contrast to that of the other two women, Sarah Good and Sarah Osborne, who had been accused with her, for Tituba would confess to the crime of witchcraft and all its heresies with ardor; thus

⁵ Hoffer, 124.

⁶ For a full description of what makes a "Goodwife" and the inner-workings of a proper New England home see: Laurel Ulrich, *Good Wives: Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England, 1650-1750* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991).

⁷ Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, 1-3.

beginning the spiral of accusations. Her confession would usher in the use of the “devil’s book,” the man in black, and the little yellow bird.⁸ She also went one-step further and stoked the fires of doubt and fear even more when she announced that she and the two Sarahs were not the only witches within the confines of Salem. Tituba would claim that, like herself, many other women had written their names in blood in the Devil’s book, yet she could not tell the magistrates any of these other names.⁹ This led the already fearful town of Salem to begin to suspect each other. Any little slip up from the daily rigors of puritan life could be, and often was, cause enough to be accused of sorcery by the young girls who were clamoring for the town’s attention with their trial antics.

Among the girls who would sit in the Parris kitchen, engrossed by the tales and little magic tricks of Tituba, were Betty and Abigail, along with several of their friends. The other girls lived close to the Parris’ home and included Mary Walcott (16), Ann Putnam (12), Elizabeth Booth (16), Susanna Sheldon (18), and later Elizabeth Hubbard (17), Sarah Churchill (20) and the maidservant Mary Warren (20) who worked for John and Elizabeth Proctor.¹⁰ These young girls would be initiated into Tituba’s little society in the Parris kitchen, and later they would serve as the accusers of several citizens based solely on the acknowledgement that the man or woman attempting to defend themselves at trial had sent their specter to attack the girls in that very courtroom. These “fits” were what was recorded as the damning spectral evidence, and would often cease when the accused witch/wizard fully confessed to the crime of witchcraft and/or named other

⁸ Tituba will be discussed at length in Norton, 15-44. This is her chapter titled, *Under and Evil Hand*. For trial transcripts of Tituba See: *SWP* I: 358 and *SWP* III: 745-49, 750-53, and 756-757.

⁹ Rosenthal, 22-23.

¹⁰ Starkey, 34-36.

witches.¹¹ For instance, during the trial of Sarah Good, young Ann Putnam, Jr.¹² testimony reads, “on the 25th of February, 1691/92, I saw the apparition of Sarah Good, which did torture me most grievously. But I did not know her name until the 27th of February...”¹³ Not knowing the name of the accused until later is another well-known staple in the girls’ testimony, which has led some scholars such as Boyer and Nissenbaum to assume that the girls were being “fed” the names of people to accuse.¹⁴

During the pre-trials of March and April and the formal trials in Salem Town conducted by the Court of Oyer and Terminer, the girl’s antics within the courtroom would become more and more ostentatious. This would lead scholars such as Marion L. Starkey to believe that these girls were merely pretending to be inflicted by Satan as a means of appeasing their own hunger for adventure.¹⁵ Also within the background of several cases at the time, it appears as if several of those whom these young girls accused often coincided nicely with a person their respective families, or others within the community, simply wished to be rid of, especially with regards to the Parris and Putnam families.¹⁶ Again, as it did with the judges and the magistrates, political aspirations and

¹¹ For a wide array of the girls’ testimonies see: Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem-Village*.

¹² The “Jr.” distinguishes her from her mother Ann Carr Putnam or often referred to as Ann, Sr., who was also a prime accuser during the trials.

¹³ Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem-Village*, 3.

¹⁴ Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, 33.

¹⁵ Starkey, 47.

¹⁶ A complete discussion of this topic is not available at the time of this writing, although Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum do a nice job of introducing these issues in their work, *Salem Possessed* and particularly in their chapter titled, “Witchcraft, and Social identity” (179-216). Also, during an email discussion February 22, 2008 on this topic with Dr. Mary Beth Norton of Cornell University, a notable Salem scholar, had this to say on this issue: “Given your interests it’s too bad the articles that are in press (for the Wm & Mary Quarterly) are not yet published. I’m not certain when they are scheduled for publication; perhaps it’s the July or October issue. But they focus on Parris, not the Putnams so on second thought they might not be as helpful as you need. Are you aware that the editors of the new compilation of the court records have concluded that Putnam wrote many of the depositions of the afflicted people? (they have identified his handwriting). That book too is in press and I don’t know when it’s appearing but it

the desires of those intimately involved with the trials would have a hand in dictating its course, and the most damning of evidence for this is seen within the girls' themselves who were all in some way aligned with either the Parris family, the Putnam family, or both.

The Girls of Salem Village

Nine adolescent girls ranging from nine to twenty would take refuge in Tituba's kitchen to wile away the long winter days. Scholars such as Marion Starkey and Bernard Rosenthal would claim that the interlude between Tituba and the girls started out innocently enough.¹⁷ However, Tituba's voodoo had to have taken its toll on these young girls whose puritan beliefs were deeply rooted in the fear of the devil and the black arts.¹⁸ It is believed that the backlash to these girls' "temptation by the devil," as they saw it, first began in the Parris household with little nine-year-old Betty and her cousin, Abigail. It was in the early part of January 1692, that Betty became ill. Her outbursts, disrespect for evening prayers, and blatant disregard for her staunch puritan family very quickly sent Abigail into fits as well whenever God was mentioned, prayers said, or hymns sung.¹⁹ Each of these girls was quite impressionable, and it is easy to see how Tituba's stories could affect them so terribly, since as puritan children they had been raised from birth to believe that the devil can easily take hold of the soul who is not constantly vigilant and

should be before the end of the year. In my opinion, the Putnams' past conflicts with Sarah Osborne and the Towne (ie Nurse-Easty-Cloyce) clan are contributing factors to Ann Jr's & Ann Sr's accusations but they by no means explain everything."

¹⁷ For Marian Starkey's discussion of Tituba and the young girls see: *The Devil in Massachusetts*, 29-35. Bernard Rosenthal's position is examined in the chapter titled, "Dark Eve" in his work *Salem Story*, 10-14.

¹⁸ Voodoo is the common form of magic that is associated with Tituba for Salem scholars. See: Rosenthal, 11-14.

¹⁹ Starkey, 39-40.

immersed within God's work. The Puritans believed that their fate was already predetermined by God and that each man, woman, and child had to be watchful for any signs that they or someone else in their circle was acting in any way that could be construed of as evil. Into this already superstitious society, these nine girls would find comfort in Tituba's stories, yet none of them would realize until it was too late that their dalliance from their rigorous life would cost nineteen people their lives, and over a hundred more their good names.

These girls did not have homes and responsibilities of their own since, although some of them were of marriageable age, none of them had left the confines of their parent's household. In the case of Mary Warren, maidservant of the Proctors, and the person who would later go on to confess herself as a witch and to accuse John Proctor, her benefactor, of wizardry, little is known of how or why she entered this close-knit group. She, along with Sarah Churchill, also a servant, would denounce the entire family in whose employ they were, as witches, yet Sarah Churchill remained unmarked by the stigma of being a witch. Sarah Churchill, who came from a wealthy Maine family, accused her master, elderly George Jacobs, of wizardry after he referred to her as a "bitch witch," since her lazy antics of a girl possessed caused her to be a less than desirable servant.²⁰ Mr. Jacobs was taken to jail along with his wife, Margaret, on May 10, 1692. His son, George Jacobs Jr., and his granddaughter, Rebecca, would be taken into custody as well four days later.²¹ Just as in the Proctor household, only the possessed girl's masters would be put to death. This is one of the prime examples of how this bevy of

²⁰ Karlsen, 242-243.

²¹ Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem-Village*, 375.

young girls would come to accuse those people they most desired to see harmed by the stigma of witchcraft.

When the preliminary trials began in March of 1692, Mary Warren and Sarah Churchill, along with the seven younger girls, would begin a pattern of outlandish antics in the courtroom, which would only get more dramatic as the trials wore on. The girls would often scream and claim during an accused witch's testimony that that witches specter, which only the girls themselves could see and hear, was attacking them. They often claimed that the specter was biting or pinching them, and these outbursts often proved the only means by which the accused was tried and sentenced.²² In the past, spectral evidence was not condoned as concrete proof of a person's sorcery, simply because it could only be seen by the accuser. Yet, for whatever reason in Salem Village from the very beginning, this "evidence" was by far the most exploited, yet universally held as of the utmost proof in the pretrial months of March through early May. Spectral evidence, or rather the "fits" would grow in intensity as June approached and the trials began in Salem Town. The girls' antics would begin their dangerous course taking center stage in the pretrial and trial testimonies of Bridget Bishop, Sarah Good, and Rebecca Nurse, and these three cases will be the focus of the following chapter. However, before we continue it is important to note that scholarship is still expanding in its address of the adults who were in charge of these young girls. Benjamin Ray, who is a professor and the webmaster of the Salem Witch Trials Documentary Archive is coming out soon with a

²² See Rebecca Nurse's story in Chapter Four.

new article looking at the subject of these girls in light of the Parris and Putnam families, to which the majority of them belonged.²³

²³ Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*. Two of the girls lived in the Parris household and three more were associated or living within the Putnam families domain, 199. Dr. Mary Beth Norton in an email message to the author on February 21, 2008 noted that there are “new articles that change (Boyer and Nissenbaum’s) interpretations, by Benjamin Ray and Richard Latner. Unfortunately, for your purposes, 2 of these articles, which I have seen in MSS, have not yet been published, but both have recently published articles that reinterpret what was happening within Salem Village.” The article that Dr. Norton may be referring to in the case of Richard Latner may be the following: Richard Latner, “Here Are No Newtters’: Witchcraft and Religious Discord in Salem Village and Andover,” *New England Quarterly* 79, no. 1 (2006).

CHAPTER FOUR

The Women of Gallows Hill

*"But I desire to speak to the Almighty and to argue my case with God.
You, however, smear me with lies; you are worthless physicians, all of you!
If only you would be altogether silent! For you, that would be wisdom."*
-Job 13:3-5 (NIV)

Frequently in the study of the Salem Witchcraft Trials a set of ingenious correlations between the accused and their accusers becomes apparent. Scholars such as Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum will formulate a hypothesis where they will state that among those accused of witchcraft a minority of them were in some regard against the Parris family.¹ Other scholars will be quick to note that many of the witches that were accused by the horde of young girls, and later by other accused witches in March and April of 1692 were accused simply because of their association with another accused. Such as in the case of Rebecca Nurse and her two sisters, Mary Easty and Sarah Cloyce, who were accused within a span of a few weeks from each other.² Another correlation that we can note early on is that several of the witches accused have already faced down accusations, and many already went through a trial sometime between 1640 and 1680.³ It is almost as if their re-accusations are done as a sort of cleansing of the community from anyone who could potentially possess the weakness of soul that would be required if they

¹ Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, 65. "Only two weeks after the Village church was organized, then, Parris had publicly identified a group of Villagers as its enemies – and, by implication, as his." Members of this group would include "Joseph Porter, Joseph Hutchison, Joseph Putnam, Daniel Andrew, and Francis Nurse...and all five members (belonged to) what now openly emerged as the anti-Parris faction in the Village." Some of the leaders of the Anti-Parris faction were in positions of influence either familial or socially over some of the people who were accused of witchcraft. See Appendix B – Boyer and Nissenbaum's "Anti-Parris Network" Chart.

² Norton, 73-74. Karlsen, 38.

³ Karlsen, 38 and 259-263. Five of Salem's women who had been accused previously were Bridget Bishop, Rachel Clinton (sometimes known as Rachel Hatfield), Susanna Martin (or called, Martine), Dorcas Hoar, and Mary Staples.

indeed were taken in by the Devil's games. All of the nineteen accused witches who would die after the first trial held by the Court of Oyer and Terminer commenced in June of 1692, had been sitting in their jail cells waiting for the inevitable to happen since the early spring. That first trial conducted on June 2, 1692 would find a twice-widowed woman, who was noted as being convicted simply "because of her dress (and) her habits," not only the first witch to be hung, but also the first witch to be tried and convicted by spectral evidence alone.⁴

Bridget Bishop

The morning of June 10, 1692 dawned like any other, except for today in Salem Town, Massachusetts, one woman would find her fate at the end of a hangman's noose. Her name was Bridget Bishop, and earlier that year she had been accused of being one of the ringleaders of a group of witches in Salem Village and Salem Town. Among her accusers were other women who would also find themselves accused, such as Deliverance Hobbs of Topsfield. Hobbs would survive the hysteria, but first she would readily proclaim for all to hear at her own inquiry that "this Bishop was at a General Meeting of the Witches, in a Field at Salem-Village, and there partook of a Diabolical Sacrament of Bread and Wine."⁵ This "meeting of witches" where they were said to partake together of an unholy sacrament would later be used to convict Rev. George

⁴ Rosenthal, 75.

⁵ Richard Francis, *Judge Sewall's Apology: The Salem Witch Trials and the Forming of an American Conscience* (New York: Fourth Estate, 2005), 120. (This particular quote originally came from George Lincoln Burr, *Narratives of the Witchcraft Cases, 1648-1706* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1952), 223-24.

Burroughs, who was once Salem Village's pastor, as the leader of Salem's witches and the one who would give these women the devil's drink.⁶

Like many of the other women accused in the spring of 1692, Bridget Bishop was accustomed to being accused of witchcraft. She was once accused in 1680, but at that time she was found to be not guilty. However, the stigma of once being called a witch would haunt her for the rest of her days, as it did several other women who would face their worst and their last trial at the hands of Salem's judges. In 1680, Bridget Bishop, then Bridget Oliver, was just barely a widow when she was accused of witchcraft. Her husband, Thomas Oliver, had died in the summer of 1679, leaving her a widow with ten acres of land, a house, household goods, and various other equipment that totaled £76 and 8s.⁷

Another strike against Bridget Bishop was that she was not a complacent wife. Prior to Mr. Oliver's untimely demise in 1679, court records show that in 1670 Thomas and Bridget were brought to court because of their fighting. They were forced to pay a fine or face being whipped. In January 1678, Bridget was accused of using foul language against her husband. For recompense, both Bridget and Thomas had to stand back to back and gagged for an hour in the public market.⁸ The other piece of evidence that was frequently used against Bridget was that since she often flouted puritan custom by

⁶ Ibid., 104.

⁷ Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem-Village*, 157.

⁸ Ibid., 155-156.

wearing red clothing and working in a pub, then she must be consorting with the devil – alcohol was the devil’s brew and red was his chosen color.⁹

Besides having already been accused, Goody Bishop would also hold another article in common with several of her accused sisters, and that is that she was considered by the community of Salem to be an “unorthodox woman.” And, because of that distinction, along with her earlier branding as a witch, it is not difficult to see why her name was a widespread expression on the lips of the accusers and other villagers who were facing the same fate. Nonetheless, there is also one more thing Bridget Bishop would share in common with several other people accused early on, which is the disturbing fact that she did not live in Salem Village—she lived in nearby Salem Town—and she did not know the young girls who were her accusers, nor did the girls know her.¹⁰ Nonetheless, at the trial of Bishop in early June, Abigail Williams, Betty Parris, and the others sat in their seats and proceeded to entertain both the spectators and the judges with an extravagant show that would have Goody Bishop condemned to death on the sole basis of the spectral evidence produced by these girls and other members of Salem Town.¹¹ Among the spectral evidence of pinching and stabbing that was used to indict her, the young accusers at her April 19 inquiry, also mimicked in unison every head

⁹ Starkey, 107. Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, 95. And, Norton, 112-113. Will all have Bridget Bishop as a tavern owner and outsider to the village and a women as Norton puts it with a “bad reputation.” However, Bernard Rosenthal sees Bridget Bishop’s character confused with that of another woman who lived outside the village, wore red, and was a tavern owner with the Bishop woman who was accused of witchcraft a number of years before. Rosenthal, 72. For the purposes of this work, the author sides with the former group of scholars, not to discount the work of Rosenthal, but for majority consensus.

¹⁰ Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem-Village*, 37.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 36-50. Including in Boyer and Nissenbaum’s records for Bridget Bishop in regards to the trials, there are several that say that she personally wore red, was mean to them, and was belligerent to customers at her husband Edward’s pub. However, the Death Warrant for Bishop signed by Chief Justice Stoughton only cited the bewitching of Salem Village girls – whom she had never met – Abigail Williams, Ann Putnam Jr., Mercy Lewis, Mary Walcott, and Elizabeth Hubbard as the sole reason for her execution as a witch.

gesture, or “turning of her eyes.”¹² After Goody Bishop was sent to Gallows Hill the morning of June 10, both Salem Village and Salem Town took a break from the trials and a lull fell over the villages for a few weeks, yet no one was released from prison.

The use of spectral evidence was again debated amongst the clergy and the judges, yet it would continue to be used as the most damning evidence of witchcraft. These quiet moments in June would quickly be replaced on July 19, 1692 when five more women would face their fate upon Gallows Hill. On that Tuesday, Susannah Martin (or otherwise known as Martine), Sarah Wilds, and Elizabeth How would join old Rebecca Nurse, age 71, and one of the original women accused, Sarah Good, in front of their executioner. At this time, Tituba was still in prison, and Sarah Osborne, who was charged at the same time as Sarah Good and Tituba, died in a Boston prison before Bridget Bishop had stood trial.¹³ The trial documentation that we have for both Sarah Good and Rebecca Nurse are among the most complete court records available, and they will be the next focus of our case.¹⁴ Their stories lend another layer of intrigue to our already thickening pile of deception that deals with the religiously motivated cleansing of the village, and the social and economic desires of the Putnam and Parris families.

Sarah Good

What do we make of a beggar woman who moves house to house with her young daughter? She has no money, no standing within the community, and she has a vulgar tongue. Do we do our Christian duty and help her out of the goodness of our hearts, or do we turn our backs on her and her child? In the case of Sarah Good and her little four-year

¹² Francis, 118.

¹³ Norton, 165.

¹⁴ Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem-Village*, 1.

old daughter, Dorcas, what was done about her was to accuse her of witchery and to hang her upon Gallows Hill.¹⁵ Marion Starkey discusses this issue in her work, *The Devil in Massachusetts*, stating, “Much as labour was needed in the colony, people had long ago developed a reluctance to incur the presence of Sarah in their homes, for she could be shrewish, idle, and above all slovenly.”¹⁶ The reason why Sarah and young Dorcas moved from house to house within Salem Village was that her husband, William, did not have any land of his own to speak of so he had to move from place-to-place to find work as a laborer for others. Often he would take his older children with him, leaving Sarah in the village with little Dorcas. Starkey will join another Salem scholar, Carol Karlsen, in her assertion that Sarah fell into a category of accused persons made up of those who apposed or were disgruntled with their position in life. Starkey points out that the average puritan had no use for pity, for they were “dedicated to industry, accustomed to measuring godliness by the prosperity meted out as a reward.”¹⁷ Karlsen will go one-step further and suggest that since the puritan loathed anyone who thought of himself or herself as above their place in the hierarchy of both church and community, certain people who acted without humility towards their lot in life were continually faced with opposition. Karlsen notes that we find in the confessions or other statements of these witches, such as Sarah Good, that they are drawn towards the inklings of the devil because of their “unhappiness with the material conditions of their lives,” and because they said that Satan “promises prosperity, fine clothes, future husbands, and security.”¹⁸

¹⁵ Rosenthal, 62.

¹⁶ Starkey, 50.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Karlsen, 127.

When viewing the transcripts from Sarah's examinations we can see more clearly how this notion is played out.

Ezekiel Cheever was one of the recorders who kept track of the examinations of the witches by writing down his observations much the same as a court reporter would do today. His record of Sarah's March 1, 1692 examination conducted by Hathorne noted twice the community belief that after Sarah went to a neighbor's house to receive aid, be it food or other necessities, she often walked away muttering what was believed to be negative expletives against the person who had just helped her. Hathorne tried to catch her in this on two occasions. He asked her "Why did you go away muttering from Mr. Parris's house?" and "What is it you say when you go of muttering from persons' houses?"¹⁹ Sarah's reply to the question of her recent encounter with Mr. Parris was that she had not muttered but rather thanked him for his help. Her reply to the second question was to go into a confused discourse claiming first that she left people's houses muttering commandments and then later stating that her mutterings were more of a psalm, not a commandment, but she could not note exactly which one.²⁰ Sarah would also fall prey to the antics of the young afflicted girls who would claim that they saw her apparition and that it was biting, pinching, or hitting them on numerous occasions throughout the spring of 1692.²¹ We already know that the testimony of the young girls is not a unique scenario in the witchcraft cases, and neither was the fact that Sarah's husband would come out and testify against her in order to save his own life from the hangman's noose. Spouses only

¹⁹ Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem-Village*, 5.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 5-6.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 3-17. The testimonies in this section included one from Elizabeth Hubbard, aged 17; Ann Putnam, Jr., aged 12; Abigail Williams, aged 11; Mary Walcott, aged 17; and Susannah Sheldon, aged 18; five of the nine original afflicted girls. It also included several other testimonies by people who had claimed to have seen Sarah Good's apparition.

had two avenues open to them: repentance to the church with the denouncement of their spouse or the fate of potentially being charged alongside them with the crime of witchcraft.²² William, Sarah's husband, had chosen the former by signing his name to the testimonies of three other men against Sarah. However, William did not claim to see the mere apparition of Sarah doing harm to others, but rather that he saw her "witch's teat"²³ on her shoulder, something that he had never seen before.²⁴ In 1710 however, William would petition the General Court Committee and receive restitution for "the damage sustained by him in the year 1692 by reason of the sufferings of his family upon the account of supposed witchcraft."²⁵

Nevertheless, Sarah Good was not the only women who underwent examination for the witch's teat. Sarah was examined on June 10, 1692 along with Bridget Bishop, Elizabeth Proctor, Susanna Martine, Alice Parker, and Rebecca Nurse. That court document states that Good, Martine, and Parker had teats located on their bodies around the same place, although they do not indicate where. However, for Proctor, Bishop, and old Rebecca Nurse, their presumed teats were located in the vaginal section of their bodies, which alerts us to the fact of how invasive and thorough the search was, and neither was it conducted by one person, but a party of one surgeon, J. Barton and nine other women. The women also did not just undergo one search, but had to endure another

²² In the case of Giles Corey, we will see him stand up for his wife by refusing to admit that she was a witch.

²³ Barstow, 76. The witch's teat was a mark similar to a mole in the secret places of an accused witch where it was said that a witch's familiar (imp, dog, cat, another type of animal, or the devil) could suckle her in order to forge their bond. The examination for, and the location of, a witch's teat was paramount for the proof of witchery both in England where the practice originated (Barstow, 76) and in America to some extent, but was not as important in these trials as the use of spectral evidence was.

²⁴ Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem-Village*, 10.

²⁵ Ibid., 16.

later that same day.²⁶ Often the presumption of the existence of that teat would change and it was never a change for the good. For example, in the case of Rebecca Nurse, her afternoon examination would find the presumed teat gone and only “dry skin” in its place.²⁷ This was seen as a sure sign of her devilry, for a teat was said only to be visible near the time that her familiar was suckling her.²⁸ Within the entire case of Rebecca Nurse, we will find much the same testimonies against the actions of her said apparitions, but the politically motivated charges against her will be for very different reasons than those of Bridget Bishop and Sarah Good.

Rebecca Nurse

Rebecca Nurse would be hung at Gallows Hill as Sarah Good had been on July 19, 1692 and she will live on in Salem lore as one of the most unlikely women to be accused, at least we would assume so on the surface of things, for she was not poor like Sarah Good, nor was she as unorthodox as Bridget Bishop. Moreover, at aged 70, it was impossible that she could be conceived of as competition for the afflicted girls for the hearts of men.²⁹ So what then was her crime? For the answer to that question, we once again have to turn our minds to the political and religious links of Salem Village and its people. One attempt at understanding why Goody Nurse was accused of witchcraft is that by being rich and owning a 300-acre farm near the Ipswich road, she was a target for the self-interests of others.³⁰ An account of Goody Nurse in light of the desires of the Putnam

²⁶ Ibid., 30-32.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Hill, *Delusion of Satan*, 163.

²⁹ Hill, *Witch Trials Reader*, 108.

³⁰ W. Elliot Woodward, *Records of Salem Witchcraft, Copied from the Original Documents*, 2 vols. (Roxbury, Mass.: Priv. print. for W. E. Woodward, 1864; reprint, New York, Da Capo, 1969), 88-89.

household and its ambitions can be seen through the actions of their daughter, young Ann Putnam Jr., one of Salem's afflicted.³¹ On March 13, when she first saw a new female apparition, young Ann would testify in court that she did not know the name of this apparition, but she did know where she sat in the meetinghouse. Goody Nurse would be convicted based on these assertions by the elder Ann Putnam who very quickly claimed, once Ann Jr.'s testimony was entered, that she had come to see the apparition of Nurse quite regularly.³² With the declaration that the aged and in ill health Nurse was a daily visitor to the Putnam household, and was threatening the very soul of Ann Putnam Sr., was all the evidence needed to see her sent to prison to await her trial. Boyer and Nissenbaum, in *Salem Possessed*, also go on to assert that she was a target for the Putnam household because Ann Putnam feared Goody Nurse

...who was from (the neighboring) Topsfield, whose town authorities had for years been harassing the Putnam family by claiming that parts of their lands actually lay in Topsfield rather than Salem Village. And her husband Francis had been involved during the 1670's in a protracted dispute with Nathaniel Putnam over some mutually bounded acreage.³³

Even though this information on the Putnam family and their dealings with Rebecca Nurse and her husband, Francis, go far in showing us some of the political issues surrounding the accused and their accusers families, it is by no means the totality of the issue. What we know to be true about Salem and its people during 1692 is for the most part speculation coupled with documents, letters, and other historical data dating to

³¹ Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem-Village*, 20-21. She would also be accused by the testimonies of several other people including three more of the afflicted girls, Elizabeth Hubbard, Abigail Williams, and Mary Walcott.

³² Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, 147.

³³ Ibid., 149. Another available resource for this can be obtained from the *Records and Files of the Quarterly Courts of Essex County, Massachusetts, 1636-1638*, 8 vols. Salem, 1911-1921. Records 7,8 and 47.

before and after the trials. Yet, what we find in the hearts of the people who came out of Salem and their regrets for either their religious or politically motivated roles in the affair give us our best insights into the “chaos of conscience” the aftermath of Salem had caused for those involved with the trials. Part of that internal conflict had a lot to do with eternal issues for the puritan heart, such as the excommunication and pauper’s burial of condemned witches. In Rebecca’s case, a fortnight before she was executed she had to sit once again in the church where “after sacrament,” which she could not partake of, she was officially excommunicated before the entire assembly, thus condemning her soul to hell.³⁴

Nevertheless, before we can begin an analysis of the motivations behind Salem and the latent guilt they caused, we must first dig a little deeper and look at four of the cases against prominent males in Essex County. During the trials of John Proctor, Giles Corey, John Willard, and Rev. George Burroughs, the motivations of the afflicted girls and their families become a little clearer. Moreover, ultimately within the trials and executions of both Giles Corey and George Burroughs especially, we will see the lines blurred between who a follower of Christ is and who the follower of the devil could be.

³⁴ Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem-Village*, 33.

CHAPTER FIVE
Wizardry Revisited: Salem's Accused Men

*"God has turned me over to evil men
and thrown me into the clutches of the wicked."*
-Job 16:11 (NIV)

The Salem witchcraft trials did not only claim women as their victims, which made it unique among common witchcraft cases where the majority of the accused were women.¹ Also unique to Salem was the fact that whole families were named during the spring of 1692, including the Carrier family of Andover, the Jacobs family of Salem Town and Salem Village, and the Proctor family who were made famous by Arthur Miller's play, *The Crucible*.² The Proctor family, in particular John Proctor, will be discussed in detail in this chapter along with Giles Corey who was accused together with his wife, Martha, primarily because he did not speak out against her as William Good had done in the case of Sarah Good. This chapter will also focus on two men who were as unlikely to be accused as Rebecca Nurse had been, John Willard and Salem Village's former minister, Rev. George Burroughs. Just as with Nurse, the accusations of both Willard and Burroughs would cause quite a uproar amongst residents of Essex County, showing us again that the reason for their accusations had more to do with the religious, social, and/or political motivations of a few people than for any real sense of devilry.³

¹ Karlsen, xii and 51. At Salem, forty-four of the one hundred and eighty-five accused persons would be male. Seven of those men will be tried, five of them will be convicted, and all five of those men will be executed, she does not include Giles in the list of executed, just tried. She counts his pressing as accidental.

² Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem-Village*, 376-378.

³ Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, 199. Boyer and Nissenbaum will claim that when we look at the accusations against John Willard and Rebecca Nurse, will see that "the accused were, in many cases, people who had not been born to their 1692 standing, high or low, but who had reached it through

John Proctor

John Proctor has the distinction to be the first male accused of witchcraft in early spring of 1692. With his accusation came a new understanding of who could be conceived of as a witch for Salem and for what reasons. There is no surviving record of his arrest warrant, but we do know that he was accused shortly after an accusation went out against his wife Elizabeth on or around April 4. Scholars such as Marion Starkey and Bernard Rosenthal are not of one mind on this issue. Starkey places Proctor's accusation after he stood up for his wife at her April 11 indictment, where an outlandish Abigail Williams was said to declare that "he can pinch as well as she."⁴ Yet, Rosenthal states that Starkey's source is wrong for this and places Proctor's imprisonment around April 6, before Elizabeth had her hearing, and because of the fact that the statement by Abigail was made on April 4.⁵ Nevertheless, no matter what date you place on the accusation of John Proctor, the most important factor of his case is that he was accused at all.⁶

According to Rosenthal, with Proctor's accusation came the release of the taboo notion that the business of witchcraft was only "women's work." And, with the release of that taboo, the judges and magistrates were now forced to accept *all* of the charges of the accusers whether the accused was a man or a woman, for to challenge the credibility of girls' testimony would have seen the trials ended and their previous indictments

force of circumstance, in the course of lives characterized by economic as well as geographic flux...John Willard...and Rebecca Nurse, for example were all outsiders who had moves both *in* and *up*.

⁴ Starkey, 94-95.

⁵ Rosenthal, 110-111. Rosenthal's source for this timeline comes from (*SWP* II: 677) and on the evening of April 6, she claimed he was afflicting her. This is the more likely explanation and is held by Mary Beth Norton's work, *In the Devil's Snare*, 71. Norton cites (*SWP* II: 677) along with 670, 666, and 665 – Norton, 346.

⁶ Norton, 44. Norton makes the claim that both Proctor and Giles Corey were accused early on with their wives in keeping with the belief that in Salem, "experts concurred that people closely related to witches were themselves highly likely to become malefic practitioners."

unfounded.⁷ Another scholar, Carol Karlsen, will view the originations of Proctor's accusation of witchcraft in light of his treatment of his servant, Mary Warren, one of the afflicted girls who had found solace in the teachings of Tituba.⁸ Karlsen will make the claim that "despite her possession (he) kept her at his spinning wheel, threatened to beat her, and expressed publicly his desire to see all the possessed hang."⁹ Karlsen's assertions as to possible reasons why John Proctor was charged with witchcraft are not the only ones available for us to consider. Boyer and Nissenbaum will cite Proctor's business and the political and religious implications of that business as another motive for his inclusion in the spring arrests of witches and wizards.

John Proctor, like Bridget Bishop, was a tavern owner who applied in 1666 for his license to operate a tavern on the Ipswich Road. Boyer and Nissenbaum note in *Salem Possessed* that he was only granted that liberty "with the stipulation that he sell exclusively to strangers. Thus, from the Salem Village perspective, the Proctor house became a rendezvous point for outsiders – and *only* for outsiders."¹⁰ Boyer and Nissenbaum go on to argue that for those church members that fell within the pro-Parris ideological camp that they would claim a sense of superiority given to them by their leader, Rev. Parris, and that it would help usher in the divisions between those who sided with the pro-Parris faction and those who did not. An example from where the two

⁷ Rosenthal, 109.

⁸ Starkey, 88-102. This chapter titled *John Proctor's Jade* will deal exclusively with Mary Warren and her relationship with some of the accused. However, it is imperative that we note that Mary was not saved from speculation and was the subject of a hearing herself as Starkey notes and that on May 12, "(Mary) gave up trying to defend Proctor from the charge of wizardry...Dreamily she reported that she had felt a Shape hovering above her; she had reached up and pulled it down, and lo, there was John Proctor in her lap." Starkey speculates that since Mary was returned to the folds of an afflicted girl after this outbreak that it may have been used as a ploy to give the accusers more credibility. Starkey, 101.

⁹ Karlsen, 243. She derives her scholarship on this issue from (*SWP* II: 683-84 and *SWP* III: 793-804).

¹⁰ Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, 101.

factions will get their origins comes from Rev. Parris' "Ordination Sermon" given to the members of Salem Village on November 19, 1689. In it, Parris states that he is called to make

...differences between the clean and unclean, so as to labor to change and purge the one, and confirm and strengthen the other...As I am to give cordials to some, so I may be sure to administer corrosives to others. And what I do this way, without partial respect to persons, you must not, you cannot, you ought not to be angry: for so I am commanded.¹¹

Boyer and Nissenbaum will see this and other actions for and against Parris as quite self-evident to the people of Salem "that what was going on was not simply a personal quarrel, an economic dispute, or even a struggle for power, but a mortal conflict involving the very nature of community itself."¹² The witchcraft trials of 1692 were the climatic event for Boyer and Nissenbaum of the fragmented community that was ushered in upon Samuel Parris's arrival. John Proctor was part of the anti-Parris faction, and his political stance against the conduct of persons associated with the trials helped to seal his fate as a condemned man along with the fates of some of his relatives.¹³

Salem scholars such as Bernard Rosenthal, Marion Starkey, and Mary Beth Norton, when discussing issues pertaining to John Proctor, will note that while he was in prison he spoke out publically against the abuses that he saw, thus further pushing him towards the hangman's noose. Rosenthal reports that on July 23, Proctor wrote a letter "addressed to a group of ministers...complaining of imprisonment on the basis of charges

¹¹ Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem-Village*, 187.

¹² Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, 103.

¹³ Starkey, 190.

from five confessing people.”¹⁴ One of the five cases that Proctor cited was that of his son, William, who Proctor says was

Examin’d, because he would not confess that he was Guilty, when he was Innocent, they tyed him Neck and Heels till the Blood gushed out at his Nose, and would have kept him so 24 Hours, if one more Merciful than the rest, had not taken pity on him, and caused him to be unbound. These actions are very like the Popish Cruelties.¹⁵

As Mary Beth Norton notes, the outcome of Proctor’s efforts to the ministers of Boston, including Increase Mather, is unknown. Yet, Proctor and the others who signed the petition urged the ministers to give it to Governor Phips, and his reaction to it as well is unknown, yet it was discussed by Phips and others at the July 25/26 council meeting. However, as Norton notes, the “futility of the plea becomes evident when one realizes that the men passing judgment on it were the judges and their council colleagues.”¹⁶ We could also suppose that the ineffectiveness of it can best be seen in the fact that John Proctor would be sent to Gallows Hill on August 19, 1692. He would be joined by John Willard and George Burroughs.¹⁷

John Willard

John Willard, as noted previously, fell into the ranks of Rebecca Nurse in so much that his acceptance onto the rolls of Salem’s condemned was issued in part because he rose from the lower ranks of society to obtain a status in the community that was not readily obtained by the average villager. This can best be attested to by the testimonies of those who condemned him, which included the Putnams, Samuel Parris, three of the

¹⁴ Rosenthal, 61.

¹⁵ *SWP* II: 690.

¹⁶ Norton, 237-238.

¹⁷ Rosenthal, 108.

afflicted girls, and several of his family members.¹⁸ Boyer and Nissenbaum, in *Salem-Village Witchcraft*, lay out some of the legal transactions of Willard along with the testimonies of his accusers. Some of his accusers will attack Willard based upon what it is perceived he said about witches and what should be done about them. For example, in the Testimony of relatives Phillip Knight and Thomas Nichols, they will remark that in April of 1691 upon hearing that several villagers had been put under the suspicion that they were witches, Willard supposedly replied “hang them, they are all witches.”¹⁹ The afflicted girls of Salem Village, however, will go into less vague accusations against the person of John Willard. Susannah Shelton, Elizabeth Hubbard, and Mercy Lewis will attest to seeing his apparition. Mercy Lewis will also testify that along with the other witches she saw Willard frolic with them for a period of “three weeks” prior to her May 11 court appearance. Yet, she will not claim that he did any personal damage to her until she testified on May 16 during his trial hearing that the apparition of Willard “struck (her) down or almost choked (her) to death...also, during the time of his examination, I saw the apparition of (him) go from him and afflict the bodies of Mary Wolcott, Abigail Williams, Elizabeth Hubbard, and Ann Putnam, Jun.”²⁰

In *Salem Possessed*, Boyer and Nissenbaum will slate Willard, as they did with Proctor, on the side of the anti-Parris faction, although his connection to it is obscured through marriage lines, yet he was an outsider to Salem Village since he originated in Lynn. Because of his interloper status, even though he married into a long-established Salem Village family, the Wilkins, he was still an outsider, and therefore naturally

¹⁸ Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem-Village*, 53-66.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 53.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 57.

included on the list.²¹ One of the other strikes against Willard was that his kinsmen, Thomas Wilkins, had refused to join with the rest of the family in their accusations against Willard. Thomas Wilkins would be one of the founding members of the anti-Parris family and would later be disowned by his father Bray Wilkins, who was Willard's grandfather-in-law, and further makes the case against Willard for political reasons even sounder.²²

As Boyer and Nissenbaum note, Margaret Knight's marriage to Willard posed serious problems for the Wilkins family who was "tight-knit" and marginalized because of their failed economic rise prior to the 1690's. Willard, however, did not fit within either their economic or social envelope because he had money and was purchasing more land – two staples needed for an economic climb.²³ It is suspected by Boyer and Nissenbaum that Willard felt his family's accusations of him so keenly that he wished that Bray, the patriarch of the family, would pray with him through this issue. Bray declined and fled Willard's company later upon seeing him again. Bray testified that he was "'taken in a strange condition,' finding himself in utter 'misery,' unable to urinate and feeling pain 'like a man on a Rack.'"²⁴ Peter Hoffer, in *The Devil's Disciples*, suggests that what the eighty-one-year-old man most likely was suffering from was a stone causing damage within his urinary tract.²⁵ Nonetheless, Bray Wilkins and the rest of his family's accusations of Willard would see him convicted as a wizard, especially since he will also be seen as a man fully capable of murder.

²¹ See Appendix B – Boyer and Nissenbaum's "Anti-Parris Network" Chart.

²² Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, 197.

²³ *Ibid.*, 197-199.

²⁴ Norton, 158. As a source for this text Norton cites (*SWP* III: 847)

²⁵ Hoffer, 70-71.

The murder that Willard was accused of committing was that of young Daniel Wilkins, the grandson of Bray. Young Mercy Lewis claimed that she had seen the apparition of John Willard torturing the body of Daniel Wilkins on May 14, and that he told her he would kill him within two days. She also claimed that she saw Willard's apparition again on May 16, choking Daniel, who would die that same night.²⁶ Ann Putnam, Jr. would testify in court on June 2 that she had been visited by several ghosts who said that they were killed by Willard. Norton, remarks on this that, "Samuel Parris, Thomas Putnam, and Nathaniel Ingersoll supported the young accusers in court."²⁷ The projection against Willard, which was supported by the men of the pro-Parris faction, only served to set Willard further on the path to Gallows Hill. Willard also falls into the company of Sarah Good in the fact that his spouse accused him of witchcraft.²⁸ However, in contrast to the spouses of Good and Willard, Giles Corey does not denounce his wife, Martha, in the irreverent manner that they did; therefore, Corey makes his mark upon our story as one of the rare exceptions to the rule of accuse or be accused yourself.

Giles Corey

Giles Corey, along with his wife Martha in April of 1692, would join the small group of accused men who will be accused by the afflicted girls and their association with accused witches.²⁹ Deliverance Hobbs, who had been declared a witch earlier by the young girls, would get things started in the Corey case. From her jail cell, which she shared with the once afflicted but now accused witch, Mary Warren, would link Corey's

²⁶ Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem-Village*, 57.

²⁷ Norton, 242.

²⁸ Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem-Village*, 64. Margret's testimony will be that Willard had beaten her as if possessed and that he had afterward "ran up a steep hill almost impossible for any man to run up."

²⁹ Karlsen, 51. Giles Corey was one of the five men who were tried and executed.

name to that of other well-known witches. On April 21 and 22, in meetings with the magistrates, Hobbs would claim that she had been invited to attend a meeting of witches that included the Coreys, the Proctors, Rebecca Nurse, Bridget Bishop, Sarah Good, and Sarah Osborne. These meetings were overseen by their preacher, George Burroughs, and it was where they received the “devil’s sacrament of ‘Red Bread, and Red Wine Like Blood.’”³⁰ At the close of that statement, supposedly Hobbs’ daughter Abigail Hobbs, who was in jail as well, was brought in and fell to the ground while Deliverance said she saw Giles Corey beating her.³¹

Besides being said to be in the company of other witches and wizards at a satanic picnic, Giles Corey was a prime candidate for the accusation of witchcraft in keeping with the rest of the people that we have discussed, simply because he was a man who was, according to Boyer and Nissenbaum, “prospering through somewhat obstreperous (relations as a) farmer and landowner.” Of course, that was not his only strike against him. Giles’ wife was reported to have had an illegitimate mulatto son who lived with them (strike two) “just over the Village line in Salem Town” (strike three), which caused disputes with the illustrious Putnam clan.³² They were also members of the Salem Village Church, a Church of Christ establishment set up in November of 1689 in Salem Town, which apposed the theology of Samuel Parris in Salem Village.³³ To be a practicing member of this church proved quite detrimental in the wake of accusations of witch and wizard flung out by the young girls of Salem Village in the spring of 1692, and it will be

³⁰ Norton, 138. (*SWP* I:91-92 and *SWP* II:658-59)

³¹ *Ibid.* Every person that Deliverance said was at the picnic except Sarah Wilds, who Deliverance said had brought her to it, were executed during the course of the summer. Also note that three of the five men who would die during the trials were at that picnic.

³² Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, 146.

³³ *Ibid.*, 62-63, and 146.

the primary focus of the following chapter. However, before we begin a discussion on the religious backdrop of the trials, we must first finish off with the man Giles Corey proved himself to be during his trial and torture, and then discuss the role Rev. George Burroughs, formerly of Salem Village played during these events.

Besides the unknown amount of people who died in prison before they could stand trial, as Sarah Osborne had done, Giles Corey is another exception to how an accused witch/wizard was put to death. Eighteen people would find their fate at the end of a hangman's noose, but Giles would meet his fate from the ancient English torture technique of *peine forte et dure*, which was done in an attempt to get a person to enter a plea, rather than to kill him or her. Giles was subjected to this form of torture because he refused to implicate himself as a wizard. Starkey notes, "his only recorded utterance – and it is tradition which records it – being an occasional gasp, 'More weight.'"³⁴ Carol Karlsen will claim that Giles refused to enter a plea because he was attempting to ward off the stigma of a wizard, which in Colonial times meant that his family would be disinherited of all their land and money, as the family of Rebecca Nurse had experienced.³⁵

Besides the broad tradition around Corey that holds to the phrase "more weight," another narrower tradition claims that Giles refused to testify against his wife who was accused before him, just as John Proctor had refused to do. Bernard Rosenthal places himself within this camp claiming that Giles addressed accusations about his wife, but that there were "no specific charges (made) by him against his wife."³⁶ Mary Beth Norton

³⁴ Starkey, 205.

³⁵ Karlsen, 107-108.

³⁶ Rosenthal, 161-162.

will claim that Corey's "testimony against his wife, offered during and after her examination, had not sufficiently differentiated himself from her, and consequently he ended up facing witchcraft charges."³⁷ Marion Starkey will claim that he did indeed testify against her, if not a little bumbled.³⁸ Since consensus on this issue is not complete, and that records exist which do indicate what a direct accusation is – as we saw in the cases of Sarah Good and John Willard – Giles Corey is aligned, for the purposes of this work, in the camp of spouses who did not testify against their spouse. Giles Corey was a man who was pressed to death for his silence, and that is what shall always be the most important remembrance of him.³⁹ From the case of Giles, we move on to that of Rev. George Burroughs, a man who would be drug back from Maine in order to stand trial against the claim that he was the ringleader for Salem's entire commune of witches. And, yet again, this claim would originate from the lips of the young Abigail Williams, orphaned niece of the infamous Samuel Parris.⁴⁰

George Burroughs

In 1692, having left the parish of Salem Village some six years prior to the arrival of Samuel Parris and his family, George Burroughs was living in Black Point, Maine.⁴¹ Nevertheless, he will be brought before the magistrates in Salem Town, an accused wizard by several of the afflicted girls and some of the Putnams. Nonetheless, because of his enhanced status as a minister, the girls were asked again and again if they stood firm

³⁷ Norton, 114.

³⁸ Starkey, 74-75.

³⁹ Ibid., 206. Starkey will write of Giles death "there had been a kind of sublime obstinacy in the old man. There was a meaning in his death, symbolism which they could not define and by the same token could not stop talking about."

⁴⁰ Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, 6.

⁴¹ Norton, 129.

in their resolve that he was the mastermind behind this hysteria. In Peter Hoffer's discussion of this situation he states that another prominent minister in Beverly, Massachusetts had come to discuss the accusations against Burroughs with the girls, "demanding that the witness recant if anything she said was untrue, for bearing false witness was an unpardonable sin." And, this accusation also gave Parris a moment's pause, Hoffer writes, "Parris had an affirmative duty to warn the girls that they must not lie (in this)."⁴² However, there was no moderation to their accusations against Burroughs. As was now becoming typical, their claims merely started a landslide of insurmountable claims from all corners of society, accused witches and relatives of the afflicted girls.⁴³

George Burroughs not only became a connector point, with his alleged position as the mastermind and devil's sacrament provider, for Salem's population of witches. His trial and execution also brought out many prominent figures connected to the proceedings from the fringes of it, such as Cotton Mather. In Judge Samuel Sewall's diary he writes the following missive in regards to Burroughs' August 19 hanging:

This day George Burroughs, John Willard, Jno. Proctor, Martha Carrier and George Jacobs were executed at Salem, a very great number of spectators being present. Mr. Cotton Mather was there, Mr. Sims, Hale, Noyes, Chiever, etc. All of them said they were innocent, Carrier and all. Mr. Mather says they all died by a Righteous sentence. Mr. Burroughs speech, prayer, protestation of his innocence, did much move unthinking persons, which occasions their speaking hardly concerning his being executed.⁴⁴

Judge Sewall's words give us an intimate look into the battle that was raging in the hearts and minds of those people who were living through this crisis. It is difficult to understand exactly what Cotton Mather meant by "Righteous sentence," yet it gives us a

⁴² Hoffer, 96.

⁴³ Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem-Village*, 67-90.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 87.

glimpse into the frame of mind that these leaders of Salem were communicating with. Cotton Mather and Judge Sewall were not the only ministers present at Burroughs execution. John Hale⁴⁵ and Nicholas Noyes, who was the associate pastor of the church in Salem Town,⁴⁶ were other ministers present for this grim event. As Sewall points out, no one did much speaking out against the accusations of another person because of their great fear of being declared a witch themselves, as we saw earlier in the cases of Rebecca Nurse and John Proctor. The repentance of Judge Sewall and others who lived to survive Salem will be the subject of our next chapter. However, we cannot leave the case of George Burroughs before we look a little more closely at the day he was executed and what his, “speech, prayer, and protestation of innocence” included.

As Bernard Rosenthal discusses in *Salem Story*, the trial and execution of George Burroughs had to go down paths that had not been treaded before – especially for Cotton Mather – in their attempt to claim Burroughs as “the local commander of the evil army” who Mather wanted to see hang.⁴⁷ Mather, who had spoken out against the use of spectral evidence earlier in the year, had to set it aside in the case against Burroughs, along with his espoused notion that a witch/wizard could not recite the Lord’s Prayer, as he declared was a test proven in the case of Goody Glover in his *Memorable Providences*.⁴⁸ Mather believed that Burroughs was a dissident minister who passed up communion and

⁴⁵ Is also the gentleman mentioned previously that Boyer and Nissenbaum had said came personally to ascertain whether the pronouncements against Burroughs from the afflicted girls were the truth.

⁴⁶ Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, 62. This is the church mentioned earlier in the Giles Corey case that held beliefs that were against those of Salem Village and Samuel Parris.

⁴⁷ Rosenthal, 146.

⁴⁸ Linder, (accessed on March 5, 2008), Sect. VIII.

neglected Baptism, and therefore was an evil man in the eyes of his puritan mandates.⁴⁹ Yet, when the morning of August 19 donned, and Burroughs stood upon Gallows Hill, he repeated the Lord's Prayer "slowly and faultlessly," and so clear that everyone could hear him.⁵⁰ Cotton Mather, as reported by Judge Sewall, could only claim that Burroughs was dying as the result of a "Righteous sentence." What does this hypocritical effort upon the people condemned at Salem truly teach us about the righteous indignation of those who passed judgment on their fellow human for whatever religious, social, or political reason suited their fancy? For a brief answer to this, Robert Calef, who came out in 1700 to criticize Mather and his account of the trials in *Wonders of the Invisible World*, would say that it teaches us nothing but what can happen with a bevy of misconstrued information. For example, Calef said of the Burroughs' trial that where Burroughs' human strength was used against him as proof that he was working for the devil that Burroughs was the one who, "lifted the gun, and the barrel of molasses by the power of his own well-strung muscles, and not by any help from the devil, as was supposed by the Mathers, both father and son! Alas! (T)hat a man's own strong arm should thus prove his ruin."⁵¹ In this section of Calef's work he was addressing how accusers often told of Burroughs breaking joints with his bare hands and killing several people, including his two wives. The

⁴⁹ Rosenthal, 145-146.

⁵⁰ Starkey, 97.

⁵¹ Samuel P. Fowler, *Salem Witchcraft : Comprising More Wonders of the Invisible World, Collected by Robert Calef, and Wonders of the Invisible World, by Cotton Mather: Together with Notes and Explanations* (Dearborn, MI: University of Michigan, 2005), 278. This is a direct quote from Calef, yet for the sake of understanding the author replaced the "f" which were often used in colonial times in place of the "s" within the quote, so molaffes became molasses.

reference to a gun and a barrel of molasses come from the two testimonies of Simon Willard.⁵²

As we have seen throughout the various chapters of this work, often the men and women who were accused during the witchcraft trials were accused on the basis of nothing more than the apparitions of their persons biting, pinching, throwing to the ground, and other little grievances to physical bodies of the accusers. This evidence on the surface seems flimsy enough, as Increase Mather will purport when he formally speaks out against the use of spectral evidence in the fall of 1692, almost two months after Burroughs is hung. Yet, it is the main reason while nineteen people will be executed.⁵³ Spectral evidence's inadequacies as the sole provider of the death sentence for Salem's witches preyed upon the souls of the people who were lucky enough to walk away from Salem. Their stories will be the focus of our final discussion on the Salem Witchcraft Trials, yet the poignancy of these stories binds together our understanding of the horror an episode of mass hysteria can accomplish within the fragile human heart.

⁵² Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem-Village*, 84-85.

⁵³ Starkey, 214-215.

CHAPTER SIX
Surviving Salem: A Politic of Faith

*“The womb forgets them, the worm feasts on them;
evil men are no longer remembered but are broken like a tree.”*
-Job 24:20 (NIV)

As we have already previously discussed, Boyer and Nissenbaum, in *Salem Possessed*, will look at the two fractions of Salem’s people – especially its witches – and divide and label people in either the anti-Parris or the pro-Parris camps. Their premise is that they can tie a majority of the tried and executed witches to the anti-Parris camp, specifically, the Proctor family, Rebecca Nurse, and John Willard,¹ or they will label them as accused based on the criteria of their status as an outsider, economically mobile, or lacking in deference to either the Parris or Putnam families.²

In the cases we have reviewed, each of our seven accused witches/wizards fell into one or more of these categories. Bridget Bishop, Rebecca Nurse, Sarah Good and John Willard were all perceived as interloping outsiders, or as Boyer and Nissenbaum say of Bishop, “one whose arrival had brought discord and family conflict in its wake.”³ John Willard, Rebecca Nurse, John Proctor, and Giles Corey supposedly thrust their economic mobility in the faces of the Putnams and Parris family who were not as comfortable as they were. *Salem Possessed’s* argument on this point relates directly to the girls who saw their own poor lives in the future to be mere projections of their parents’ lives, especially for the children of the Putnam and Parris households. This type of negativity to the wealth exhibited by Willard and Nurse shows them rising from nothing, something the

¹ See Appendix B – Boyer and Nissenbaum’s “Anti-Parris Network” Chart.

² Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, 190-204.

³ Ibid., 193.

girls' families had failed to do.⁴ The deference to the Parris and Putnam families in their minds is evident in all seven cases discussed. We also need to remember that especially in the cases of Bishop, Burroughs, and the Corey's, the girls who had accused them never met them before their antics ousted them in the courtroom, yet each of these people where in some way at odds with their families.⁵

Boyer and Nissenbaum may be scholars who combined these correlations between the Putnam and the Parris families into an academic work, but they are by no means the first or the last scholars to do so. Norton, Starkey, Rosenthal, Hill, and Karlsen will also make such assertions in their works, as we have looked at previously, and John Demos will write a whole piece on the social, economic, and political culture of witchcraft in New England.⁶ All of these issues culminate in our understanding of the roles that politics has played in the witchcraft trials. We have been able to bring the motivations behind the accusers and their families into focus, revealing their skewed lens that saw the accused as a type of evil set apart from themselves. This was even seen in October of 1692, when a group of Andover citizens wrote, as reported by Marion Starkey, "We know no one can think himself safe if the accusations of children and others who are under diabolical influence shall be received against persons of good fame."⁷ The people had had enough. And, they finally took a stand to stop the atrocity before them, yet it would come too late for the nineteen people who were executed. We can praise the fact that we now have a keener insight into why Salem's witch hysteria

⁴ Ibid., 199.

⁵ Ibid., 204-209.

⁶ John Demos, *Entertaining Satan: Witchcraft and the Culture of Early New England* (New York: Oxford University, 2004).

⁷ Starkey, 220.

happened on a social and political level, but that still leaves our hearts and minds left wanting in our attempt to understand the religiously led motivations behind Salem.

In our earlier discussion on Increase and Cotton Mather, the history of witch hunts throughout Colonial New England, and the four-hundred years it had swept through Europe, we garnered much insight into why the medieval and the puritan mind was bent in favor of the existence of witches who they felt were rampantly in pursuit of our souls. For the most part, we can see how the belief that if we are not continually on guard against the devil, then the devil can take over our souls. We can also readily see how that belief can be, and was in the case of Salem, contorted into a hunt for the devil, for the worry that comes with wanting to avoid seeing evil in ourselves or someone else, can begin to take over our lives. That is why the Puritans kept such strict rules on church attendance, the sanctity of the Sabbath, and the proper conduct for a Christian's life. It was all done in order to keep the devil at bay.⁸ With all that being said, how then do we account for the pain and regret that came after Salem? Many of those people who had the ability to walk away from Salem with their lives, especially if they had come from it unscathed by the stigma of "witch," felt compelled to change their lives in an attempt to wash their souls clean from the crimes against other human beings and God that they had committed. How do we deal with these people on a theological level both during the trials themselves and beyond them? In order to answer these questions we have to examine more closely the lives of some of these people. In particular we will look at Ann Putnam Jr. and Judge Samuel Sewall.

⁸ Hoffer, 26. And, Karlsen, 160-166.

Ann Putnam, Jr.

As we have seen in our discussion of the trials thus far, Ann Putnam, Jr. took center stage in all seven of our cases. She was not only just one of the “afflicted girls,” she was also the twelve-year-old daughter of two of our often politically and economically charged players, Thomas and Ann Putnam. We know from our earlier discussion that she sat with Tituba in the Parris’ kitchen amused and ultimately affronted by the stories she told and the magic she performed.⁹ The trial transcripts written down in both Boyer and Nissenbaum’s works, *The Salem Witchcraft Papers* and *Salem-Village Witchcraft*, have given us a view of Ann in her role as accuser. Yet, we are still left with the question of what became of young Ann. Did she grow up and regret the choices and the accusations that she had made?

In Marion Starkey’s work, *The Devil in Massachusetts*, she recounts how in August of 1706, Rev. Joseph Green prepared himself to read the confession of Ann Putnam Jr., who was now twenty-six. Ann stood in the meetinghouse that day along with the family of Rebecca Nurse, who Starkey writes, “had not forgotten,” and bowed her head as Green read her confession before she was allowed to take communion. Part of that confession read, “I desire to be humbled before God...(for) it was a great delusion of Satan that deceived me in that sad time...”¹⁰ Ann also begged solemnly for forgiveness with words similar to those Samuel Parris had used in his own confession, *Meditations for Peace*. Ann asked the congregation and God before her to forgive “all those unto whom I have given just cause of sorrow and offence, whose relations were taken away

⁹ Starkey, 29-38.

¹⁰ Ibid., 258-259.

and accused.”¹¹ Ann would not be the only person to apologize publicly for her role in the trials, but she would be the only afflicted girl to do so. Still, she never claimed the witchcraft did not happen, but she did allow for the fact that the devil had used her.¹² Rosenthal points out the Ann’s reaction to the trials, her change of heart, stood in direct contrast to the view Chief Justice carried with him to his grave. His view was not that the devil had been at work, but rather that God had been at work through them. He made no apologies for his role as judge and the man who signed the death warrants of the accused. Rosenthal writes, “Stoughton pursued his cause to the end, and when others later retreated in shame from what they had done, Stoughton held fast...Ann blamed the devil; Stoughton credited God, and never backed off from affirming the rectitude of his conduct.”¹³ Stoughton had succeeded Phips as Governor of Massachusetts at Phips death in 1695,¹⁴ thus not realizing any true political harm from the trials. Ann would marry and have children of her own, yet she will be marked by the fact that “false accusation leaves a hole in the heart which no surgeon can repair.”¹⁵ Even though Judge Samuel Sewall made no false accusations, he still served on the court that sent nineteen people to their deaths, and the whole it left in his heart changed the rest of his life’s course.

Samuel Sewall

Five years after the events of Salem’s witch-hunts had run their course, the former judge of the Court of Oyer and Terminer made his formal apology for the role he played

¹¹ Ibid., 260.

¹² Rosenthal, 202.

¹³ Ibid., 195.

¹⁴ Starkey, 263.

¹⁵ Hoffer, 101.

in the condemnation of Salem's alleged witches. He would make his apology in front of John Hale in his parish church on January 14, 1697.¹⁶ Judge Sewall who was one of the richest men in the area bowed before his peers as Hale read his apology:

Samuel Sewall, sensible of the reiterated strokes of God upon himself and family; being sensible, that as to the guilt contracted, upon the opening of the late Commission of Oyer & Terminer at Salem (to which the order for this Day relates) he is, upon many accounts, more concerned than any that he knows of, Desires to take the Blame & Shame of it, Asking pardon of Men, And especially desiring prayers that God who has an Unlimited Authority, would pardon that Sin, and all other his Sins; personal, & Relative: And according to his infinite Benignity, & Sovereignty, Not Visit the Sin of him, or of any other, upon himself or any of his, not upon the Land: But that He would powerfully defend him against Temptations to Sin, for the future; and vouchsafe him the Efficacious, Saving Conduct of his Word & Spirit.¹⁷

According to Richard Francis, in his semi-biographical work, *Judge Sewall's Apology: The Salem Witchcraft Trials & the Forming of An American Conscience*, Sewall and his wife had experienced the death of their infant daughter Sarah on Christmas Day 1696, and the stillbirth of their son in May of that same year.¹⁸ Francis notes that when Sewall, who was an avid diarist, wrote the phrases "sensible of the reiterated strokes of God upon himself and family," and where he asks God to pardon the sin so "Not Visit the Sin of him, or of any other, upon himself or any of his, not upon the Land," Sewall was addressing the spiritual ramifications of Salem that he felt he had experienced a little too close to home. After this pronouncement in church, Francis also writes that Sewall's life would be changed and he would find himself on a path that led him to write a religiously motivated tract that was well before its time. Sewall wrote *The Selling of Joseph* in 1700, which Francis calls, "one of the most surprising and

¹⁶ Starkey, 265.

¹⁷ Francis, 181-182.

¹⁸ Ibid., 179.

courageous acts of his life...it was one of the first antislavery tracts ever written in English.”¹⁹ It would not be detrimental to our cause to assume that Sewall’s heart was changed after his confession, and his diaries after 1696 go far in supporting that. Yet even if we did not comment on Sewall’s life after his apology, we can discuss the theological implications within his apology itself.

Within Sewall’s act of contrition is the biblical text of Exodus 34:7, and its description of God: God is a God “...forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, yet by no means clearing the guilty, but visiting the iniquity of the parents upon the children and the children’s children, to the third and the fourth generation” (NRSV). Sewall’s experiences prior to his confession and the confession itself, when coupled with this passage from Exodus, show us a man who took his role in the Salem Witchcraft Trials and applied it to his own life.

Besides Sewall, Ann Putnam, Jr., and Samuel Parris, several of the jurors would form their own public apologies for their actions in Salem Town.²⁰ And, like William Stoughton, several other people would never come forward with an apology – or if they did – it was not a formal one before their church or community. Cotton Mather, like Stoughton, never apologized for Salem either. Mather enjoyed a prolific career continuing on with his 1693, *Wonders of the Invisible World*, yet the validity of its accounting of the trials was discounted by Robert Calef in 1700, with his, *Salem Witchcraft: Comprising More Wonders of the Invisible World*.

Survivors in 1710 would petition for and receive a small bit of restitution for the harm caused them by their family members’ indictment on the charges of witchcraft and

¹⁹ Ibid., 221.

²⁰ Rosenthal, 202.

their execution – even if they had been the one to accuse them.²¹ Yet, all of these things seem trivial when compared to the great loss that fell upon the one hundred eighty-five people who were accused of witchcraft in the spring of 1692. And, it seems even more sorrowful in light of the nineteen recorded executions and the many more speculated deaths that occurred in prison.²² Nonetheless, understanding the spiritual ramifications of the people who survived Salem is an integral part of our story, for it brings with it a sense of place in the world of the seventeenth-century Puritan. It helps us to see how far we have come in our quest to seek God and denounce the devil, and yet it too sheds light on how far we still have to go in that great quest to know the heart and mind of God. The unique backdrop of Salem includes the religious motivations of the accusers, such as Samuel Parris and Cotton Mather, who wanted to see the church purged of wayward souls who could be easily prone to sin. It also includes the spiritual battles that Parris, Sewall, and Ann Putnam, Jr. had to face in the aftermath of Salem. Yet, we also cannot forget the political, social, and economic world that folded in around the accused by their accusers in a game of malice that had deathly repercussions. Each of these elements played key roles in the Salem Witchcraft Trials of 1692. Each is its own testament to the lives lost. Each element mingles together in the unique backdrop of Salem. And, each element has afforded us our chance to resurrect the witches of Salem in order to learn from them, to understand their plight, to place them in their proper place in the narrative of American History, and ultimately to remind us that there is nothing wrong with a reverence for God couched within a heady fear of the devil. Yet, we should always temper that fear with a full measure of love and acceptance of one another and our faults;

²¹ Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem-Village*, 16-17, 34-35, 51-52, and 65-66.

²² Karlsen, 51.

so as not to find ourselves trapped someday by that fear, just as the people of Salem were over three hundred years ago.

CONCLUSION

The Witches We Have Known

“A man will give all he has for his own life.”
-Job 2:4 (NIV)

In *Resurrecting a Witch*, we began our journey with the intent to understand how faith and politics could collide in the souls of a few seventeenth century Puritans, leading them to be caught up in a whirlwind of mass hysteria. We have seen how a people who housed their faith in an unhealthy fear of God turned on one another in a misguided attempt to save their own souls from the devil, whom they felt was always waiting just beyond their door.

In our first chapter we looked at a brief history of witchcraft, and how the witch hunts in Europe were viewed in the minds of both Increase Mather and his son, Cotton. Both Mathers wrote extensively about witchcraft and the devil prior to the Salem Witchcraft Trials. Like the Mathers, the worry that an unwatchful soul could fall prey to the wiles of Satan was uppermost in the minds of many late seventeenth century Puritans. Because of this deep-rooted fear of the devil, the “fits” that took hold of nine young girls in January of 1692 would propel a few dubious people into a series of events beyond their control.

Chapter Two started out with a more detailed discussion of the Mathers. Later it focused on the men who were magistrates, jailers, and in a sense, executioners, for they were the men who would sign the death warrants for the nineteen people executed. Within this chapter, we witnessed the types of coercion tactics Chief Justice William Stoughton, John Hathorne, and Jonathon Corwin employed in the pre-trial testimonies and trials of 1692. Governor William Phips was also discussed in contrast to the three

judges. Even though Governor Phips gave the order for the trials to begin, it would ultimately be his decree that would see them end in the autumn of 1692. However, the judges did not act alone. They had a bevy of crucial witnesses at their disposal only too eager to scream, “Witch!”

Resurrecting a Witch’s third chapter focused on Tituba, the Carib Indian slave of Rev. Samuel Parris, and her unorthodox relationship to the nine young girls who became Salem’s most notable set of accusers. This chapter discussed a few of these girls in detail, specifically Ann Putnam Jr. It outlined the “fits” that continually plagued them and the spectral accusations they made during the trials, which unfortunately led to the deaths of some of Salem’s accused. The lives of the indicted men and women became the focus of the following two chapters.

Chapter Four looked at the lives of Salem’s accused women, discussing what things many of them had in common, and also looking into the few cases where there was marked disparity in the socioeconomic situations of the accused. As an example of this state of affairs, we saw how Rebecca Nurse, being a woman of wealth and social standing in her seventies, was accused, tried, and executed in the late summer of 1692, which was in contrast to the first trial and execution of Bridget Bishop. Bishop was a middle-aged woman renown for flouting puritan beliefs, running a tavern, and sparring with her husband in public. This chapter also detailed the life of Sarah Good, a homeless woman who, with Tituba and Sarah Osborne, was among the first women accused of witchcraft.

In the fifth chapter we turned to the men who were indicted as Satan’s wizards. As we did in our discussion of the perceived witches, we summarized the lives of four of Salem’s accused men in comparison with one another. *Resurrecting a Witch* intimately

recounted the trials of political activist John Proctor; the industrious John Willard; the elderly, Giles Corey, who was pressed to death; and the uncharacteristic trial of a former minister to Salem Village, Rev. George Burroughs. It was the, open indictments and executions of both men and women in Salem Witchcraft Trials which set them apart from earlier witch trials in both America and Europe. And, a re-examining of their unorthodox practices a few short years later, would lead very quickly to regret on the part of some of its most notable supporters.

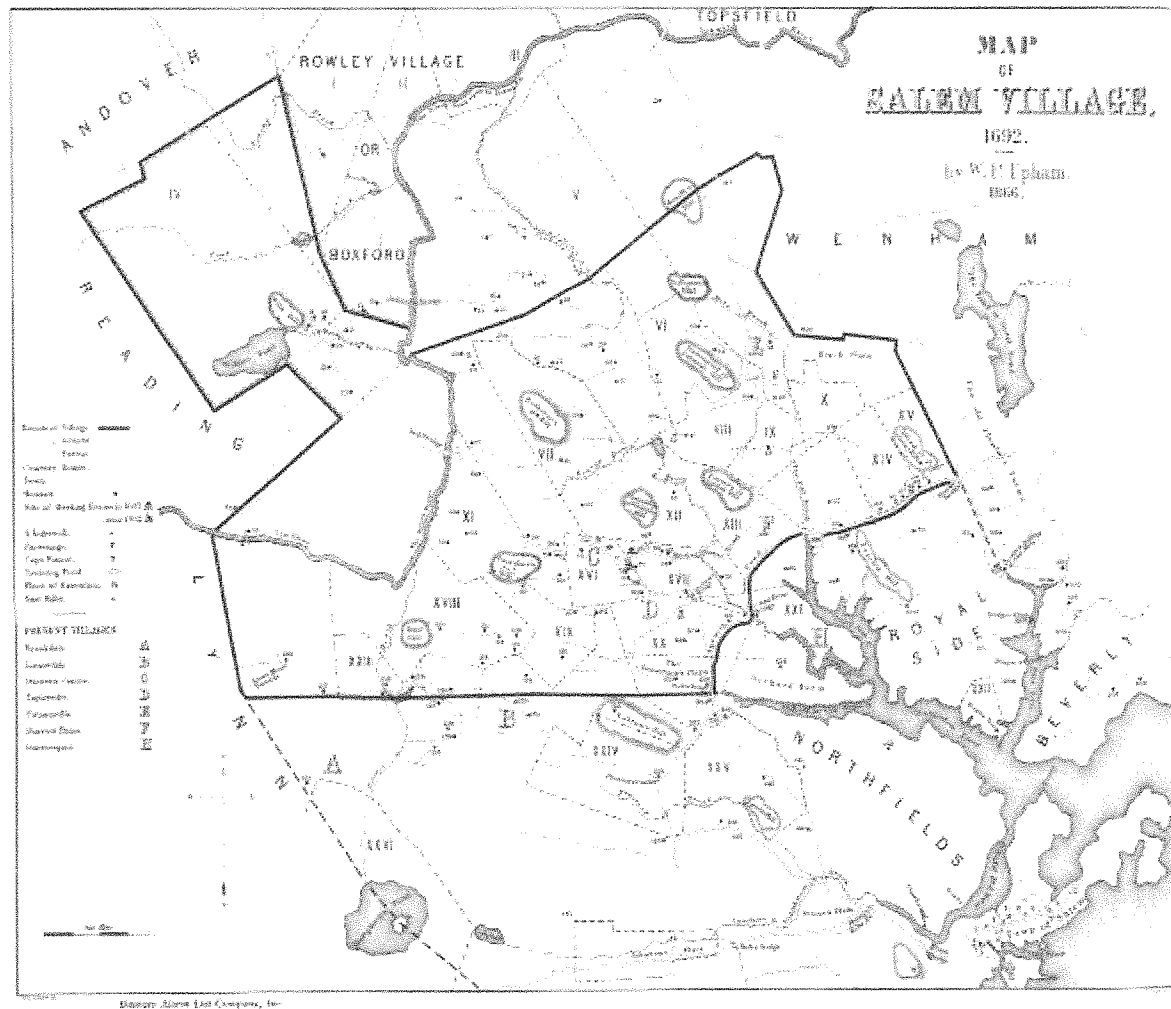
Our last chapter dealt distinctly with the social, political, and spiritual ramifications on the souls of those people who were able to walk away from Salem's witch crisis. The years that followed the witchcraft trials left young accuser, Ann Putnam, with an insurmountable sense of regret and guilt. Furthermore, Samuel Sewall, traumatized by his role as a judge, would publicly apologize just five short years after the trials had ended. Sewall would also change the course of his life to one that fought against all forms of human injustice. As we saw in this chapter, no one left Salem without feeling as if they were marked by God.

The Salem Witchcraft Trials of 1692 denoted a time in American History where a misguided faith coupled with the political desires of key individuals, namely the Parris and Putnam families, mingled in a deadly concoction and incited one of America's last trials where the presumed guilt of the accused led to their downfall, since the words "innocent until proven guilty" were not yet a core principle of the American psyche. The witch crisis that swept through Essex County in 1692 give us one of the most definitive snapshots in American History, chronicling the misery that can be wrought when faith

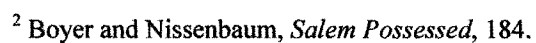
and politics combine to become the most unlikely, and in the case of Salem, the most lethal of bedfellows.

APPENDIX A

MAP OF SALEM AND ESSEX COUNTY¹



¹ Benjamin C. Ray, "Salem Witch Trials", University of Virginia www.salemwitchtrials.org (accessed March 3, 2008).

BOYER AND NISSENBAUM'S "ANTI-PARRIS NETWORK" CHART²

APPENDIX C

COMPLETE LIST OF ACCUSED PERSONS IN OR NEAR SALEM VILLAGE³

NAME	DATE OF WARRANT
Daniel Andrew	May 14
Bridget Bishop	April 18
Edward Bishop	April 21
Sarah Bishop	April 21
Mary Black	April 21
Sarah Buckley	May 14
George Burroughs	April 30
Sarah Cloyce	April 4
Giles Corey	April 18
Martha Corey	March 19
Mary DeRich	May 23
Mary Easty	May 20
Sarah Good	February 29
Dorcas Good	March 23
George Jacobs, Sr	May 10
George Jacobs, Jr	May 14
Margaret Jacobs	May 10
Rebecca Jacobs	May 14
Rebecca Nurse	March 23
Sarah Osborne	February 29
John Proctor	April (date unknown)
Elizabeth Proctor	April 8
Benjamin Proctor	May 23
Sarah Proctor	May 21
William Proctor	May 28
Tituba Indian	February 29
Mary Warren	April 18
John Willard	May 10
Mary Withridge	May 14

³ This list is compiled for the most part from, Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem-Village*, 375.

APPENDIX D

LIST OF EXECUTED WITCHES/WIZARDS⁴

June 10, 1692

Bridget Bishop

July 19, 1692

Sarah Good

Rebecca Nurse

Susannah Martin

Sarah Wilds

Elizabeth How

August 19, 1692***

George Burroughs

John Proctor

John Willard

George Jacobs

Martha Carrier

September 22, 1692 ^^^

Martha Corey

Mary Easty

Alice Parker

Ann Pudeator

Margaret Scott

Wilmott Reed

Mary Parker

Samuel Wardwell

***Elizabeth Proctor most likely would have been hung beside her husband if she where not pregnant.

^^^Giles Corey was pressed to death on September 19, 1692

⁴ Rosenthal, 67, 86, 108, 152, and 159.

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