

Witchcraft

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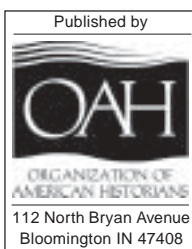
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Front Cover: "Examination of a Witch," Thompkins H. Matteson. (Image courtesy of the Peabody Essex Museum.)



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On Teaching—A discussion and analysis of various teaching strategies and activities

Lesson Plans—Lessons for the subject period or topic of each issue

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- Encouraging and supporting excellence in historical research, interpretation, and publication;
- Advancing the teaching and practice of American history at all levels and in all settings;
- Promoting the widest possible access to historical sources and scholarship, and the widest possible discussion of historical questions and controversies, including advocacy for professional scholarly standards where appropriate;
- Generating support for the preservation, dissemination, and exhibition of sources dealing with the history of the United States; and
- Encouraging respectful and equitable treatment for all practitioners of history.

Enchanting Students in the Twenty-First Century

Elizabeth Reis

Is there any subject more compelling and intriguing to American students at all age levels than witchcraft, witch-hunting, and especially the Salem witch trials? I have delivered lectures on the subject to varied audiences, including fourth graders, middle and high school students, college undergraduates, religious groups, book clubs, and senior citizens. Each audience has some familiarity, of course, with “witches.” For most, the word “witch” conjures up images of Halloween black hats and broomsticks; others hear “witch-hunt” and recall McCarthy-style badgering of innocent people. Many adults remember something about the Salem trials from their own elementary school days, though this information may have become distorted with the passage of time. Myths surrounding Salem’s history abound. For example, I have had listeners ask me about the “millions burned” at Salem. Though millions were not killed and no one was burned, the sense that something went wrong at Salem is right on the mark, and it is what makes exploring this subject so fascinating.

Students yearn for an understanding of how things could have happened as they did in 1692. They want to know: How did the accusations and executions get so out of hand? Were Salem villagers and townspeople simply filled with hate? Were they ignorant, superstitious, or just plain crazy? How could ostensibly reasonable people actually believe in the possibility of witchcraft, something that seems so far-fetched to most of us today? Salem endures as a cultural icon, in part, because it serves as a kind of shorthand for a time when irrationality and superstition apparently ran amuck. When we label some troubling event a

“witch-hunt” today, we invoke the curse of 1692 Salem. And we do so regularly. As teachers we need to grapple with the complexity of the original late seventeenth-century events and the frequently employed analogy to Salem. Our challenge is to move beyond simplistic descriptions to examine early New Englanders on their own terms, true to their own logic, yet somehow able to engage in behavior strikingly at odds with our own twenty-first-century standards. In the process, we may also be able to assess our own logic and the strange places it might lead us.

Is there any subject more compelling and intriguing to American students at all age levels than witchcraft, witch-hunting, and especially the Salem witch trials?

It is not easy to transport our modern sensibilities back into the seventeenth century. How can we help students take the necessary imaginative leap out of their present context and into a very different time? Before I begin explaining the trials, I first tackle Puritanism, highlighting its emphasis on questions of salvation vs. damnation. Seventeenth-century New Englanders’ religious beliefs informed their understanding of God and Satan, good and evil, and the

possibility that witches might infect their communities. I want my class to take such beliefs seriously and understand that these people were not “crazy,” that their religious beliefs ordered their world, made sense to them, and helped them act in ways they considered necessary, proper, and just.

Once students show a willingness to suspend disbelief, teachers can expect lively and engaging classroom sessions examining the witchcraft material. The episode lends itself quite easily to dramatic reenacting of events. In this issue, Walter Woodward offers us his thespian lesson plan, which can be readily adapted to

teachers' classroom needs and time constraints. There are countless ways of presenting the witchcraft information in a hands-on fashion. All one needs are copies of the primary documents, which are available online, as Benjamin Ray's essay explains.

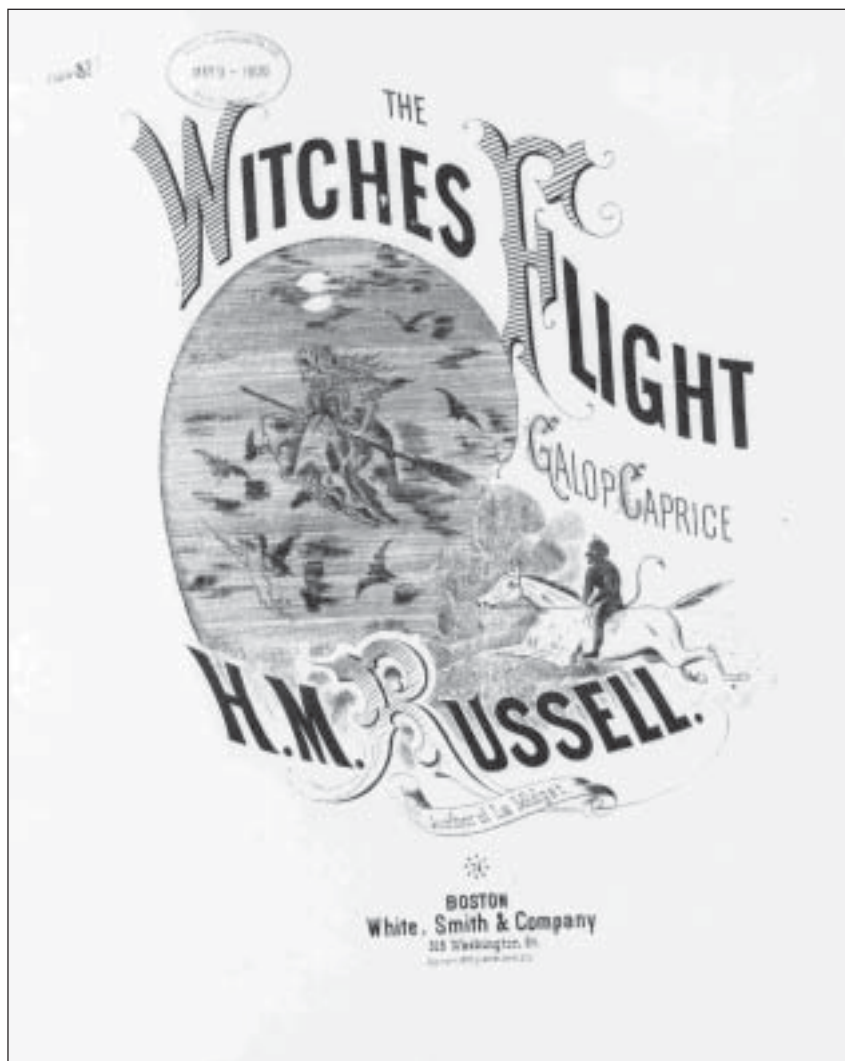
Turning the classroom into a courtroom is not only fun but also instructive. Teaching about Salem is so rewarding, I believe, because even after countless articles and books by talented scholars, we still do not have all the answers. As students pore through the primary documents, reading the testimony aloud, pleading their cases for or against the accused, I am continually amazed at the fresh interpretations that emerge. Students have the opportunity to learn firsthand what historians do. They can compare what they have read for themselves in the witchcraft trial records, for example, with the historiography. They can see how difficult it is to interpret antique words, archaic or idiosyncratic sentence structure, and shorthand syntax, and they can see and evaluate what historians have chosen to focus on and what they have ignored or neglected in their readings of Salem's events.

Much of the process of discovery I am describing can be applied to many historical subjects. But there is something special about witchcraft and witch-hunting. Perhaps students' excitement derives precisely from the fact that today's world is so completely different. I have often tried to find some point of comparison for students, which might help them understand the worry and fear that enveloped Salem and explain why the accusations were not dismissed as mere nonsense. The closest I have come is to compare Salem's crisis to modern-day accusations of child abuse in schools or daycare centers. Most parents would react with dread, anger, and great energy if their child came home

from school complaining about such an incident. Parents would act with dispatch, calling each other, seeking information and corroboration about the alleged occurrence, talking to teachers and trying desperately to uncover the truth and punish any offenders. Would this be hysteria? Does one's answer change if the events did or did not occur, or if the people

truly believed they did happen? 11 September offers new parallels; since September 11, frightened neighbors and airline passengers have sometimes suspected others—based on their distinctive appearance or unusual activities—of covert, nefarious intent. Is a suspected terrorist, like a suspected “witch”? When is prudence hysteria? These are difficult questions that will make students, and all of us, think.

Perhaps it is not our cultural distance from the seventeenth century that makes Salem and other episodes so captivating; it may be that we recognize something of ourselves in these distant ancestors. Faith and hope, fear and anxiety, guilt and retribution: these are human feelings, not bound by time or space. Study of witchcraft and witch-hunting in America can reveal important lessons about a remote American past and its more



The title of this song demonstrates the prevalence of witchcraft in American popular culture throughout the nineteenth century. (Library of Congress, Music Division, American Nineteenth-Century Sheet Music Collection, Call number M2.3.U6A44)

recent and persistent legacy. □

Elizabeth Reis is the author of Damned Women: Sinners and Witches in Puritan New England (1997) and the editor of Spellbound: Women and Witchcraft in America (1998) and American Sexual Histories: A Blackwell Reader in Social and Cultural History (2001). She has also edited Dear Lizzie: Memoir of a Jewish Immigrant Woman (2000). Reis teaches Women's and Gender Studies and History at the University of Oregon.

Witchcraft in the Anglo-American Colonies

Students today bring to the classroom both an intense interest in witchcraft and a peculiar blend of relevant images and ideas. The cackling, nasty old woman flying on a broomstick, as embodied in the Wicked Witch of the West in *The Wizard of Oz*, comes from many television rebroadcasts. Situation comedies old and new bring us the timeless Samantha of innumerable *Bewitched* reruns and the more recent *Sabrina the Teenage Witch* and her aunts. Descriptions of Harry Potter and his friends studying magic and witchcraft at the Hogwarts School, from the immensely popular books and movies, provide another set of images. And from popular culture arrive both the so-called “ancient” religion of Wicca, with its magic circles, solstice ceremonies, and benevolent feminine spirits, and, in some quarters, the belief that hundreds of thousands of women were burned to death in a misogynistic

orgy of persecution that lasted for centuries. With such contradictory notions all simultaneously claiming a place in their students’ minds, how can teachers introduce them to the reality of witchcraft in the past?

Because most American students will have heard references to “Salem” or perhaps to witchcraft trials in colonial New England generally, one of the best ways to interest them in the historical roots of witchcraft is to study the subject in the context of Early American history. It is also a good way to interest students in colonial history by approaching such general topics as the history of families, communi-

ties, slavery, and Indian relations through the prism provided by witchcraft episodes. Accordingly, after a brief introduction to accessible overviews of European and English witchcraft, this essay will concentrate on describing studies of the phenomenon in the seventeenth-century English colonies in North America.

Contemporary treatments of witchcraft continue to be influenced by Sir Keith Thomas’s *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century England* (1971), a study of changing English belief systems. Thomas, later seconded by other authors, argued that many witchcraft accusations arose in small villages because of conflicts among neighbors that were intensified by alterations in the early modern English economy. Thomas contended that as traditional communal ties broke down, poorer villagers’ requests for charitable assistance began to be refused. Those who failed to offer aid under such

circumstances then felt guilty for not honoring neighborly traditions. When they subsequently experienced misfortunes such as the loss of livestock or the unexplained death of a child, they projected their own feelings of guilt onto those whose requests they had rejected, attributing their adversities to the malevolence of a witch. For that reason, Thomas concluded, witches tended to be identified as poor, elderly widows living on the margins of society, precisely because they were the villagers who most often asked for help from their neighbors.



Harry Potter, Samantha from television’s *Bewitched*, and the Wicked Witch of the West from *The Wizard of Oz*, represent images of witches with which most Americans are familiar.

Later scholars have largely accepted Thomas's focus on investigating the dynamics of exchanges among residents of small communities as a primary cause of witchcraft accusations, while simultaneously modifying and broadening his interpretation of those interactions. Some have pointed out that older women occasionally seem to have deliberately flaunted reputations as witches in order to extort assistance from their neighbors or have noted that the women accused of malefic acts had often violated community norms, thus singling themselves out for negative attention. Other historians have examined sources of conflict that had little or nothing to do with a changing economy—a childless woman's reputed envy of a mother's healthy youngsters, for example, or families' arguments over property boundaries. Robin Briggs's *Witches & Neighbors: The Social and Cultural Context of European Witchcraft* (1996) has extended such analyses to cases arising on the European continent, although scholars once believed that the English patterns outlined by Thomas were unique to that culture. Brian Levack's *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe* (1995) is an excellent, brief overview of English and European witchcraft.

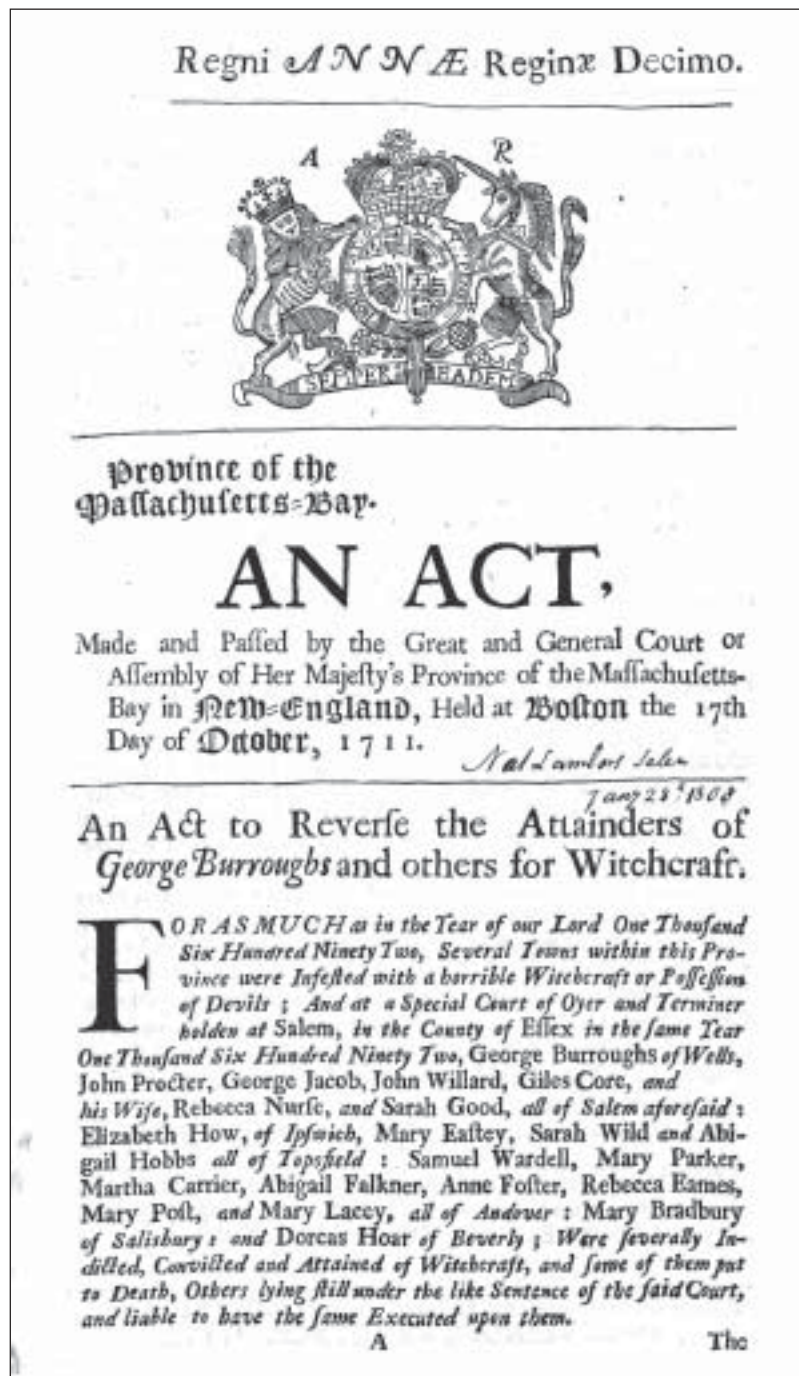
Most works studying the American context have focused exclusively on New England because the vast majority of known witchcraft cases arose in Massachusetts or Connecticut or developed among Puritan New Englanders who had resettled elsewhere (on Long Island, for example). Therefore, some historians argue that Puritan beliefs made colonists particularly prone to offer witchcraft accusations, although they disagree about the specific aspects of Puritanism that might have triggered such behavior. Others point out, however, that only New

Englanders established the sorts of small, relatively self-contained communities that in Europe tended to generate witchcraft charges. By contrast, Virginians and Marylanders lived primarily on isolated farmsteads. Other colonies were founded later in the century, when

witchcraft prosecutions were already beginning to decline in number and frequency. Accordingly, many have concluded that the absence of numerous witchcraft cases outside of New England could be attributed to causes other than the absence of Puritanism in those jurisdictions. It is important to note here that because most of the court records of colonial Virginia were destroyed by fire in the Civil War, it is impossible to know how many witchcraft cases were actually heard in that colony.

Students must understand the pre-Enlightenment worldview that underlay witchcraft suspicions in order to comprehend the processes of accusation and prosecution. In the centuries before the rise of modern scientific thinking in the late seventeenth century, natural phenomena or illnesses often lacked any obvious cause. Prior to the invention of weather satellites, for instance, hurricanes or other destructive storms could appear from nowhere and disappear just as quickly. Before germs and viruses were identified, children, adults, and valuable farm animals could quickly sicken and die for no apparent reason. Under such circumstances, the putative actions of a malevolent witch could supply seemingly logical reasons for someone's misfortunes.

Consequently, a person enduring "strange" losses or illnesses (the word "strange" was frequently employed in such cases) would search his or her memory for past clashes with a possible witch and then identify the malicious enemy responsible for the afflictions. Two books are especially useful in helping modern Americans to



In 1711, the General Assembly of the Massachusetts Bay Colony reversed the court's decision against many of the accused witches, including George Burroughs. (Library of Congress, Printed Ephemera Collection; Portfolio 33, Folder 40)

understand this alien, early-modern tendency to attribute otherwise inexplicable events to witchcraft: Richard Godbeer, *The Devil's Dominion: Magic and Religion in Early New England* (1992), which addresses such beliefs in the specific context of witchcraft cases; and David D. Hall, *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment: Popular Religious Belief in Early New England* (1989), which examines the phenomenon more generally.

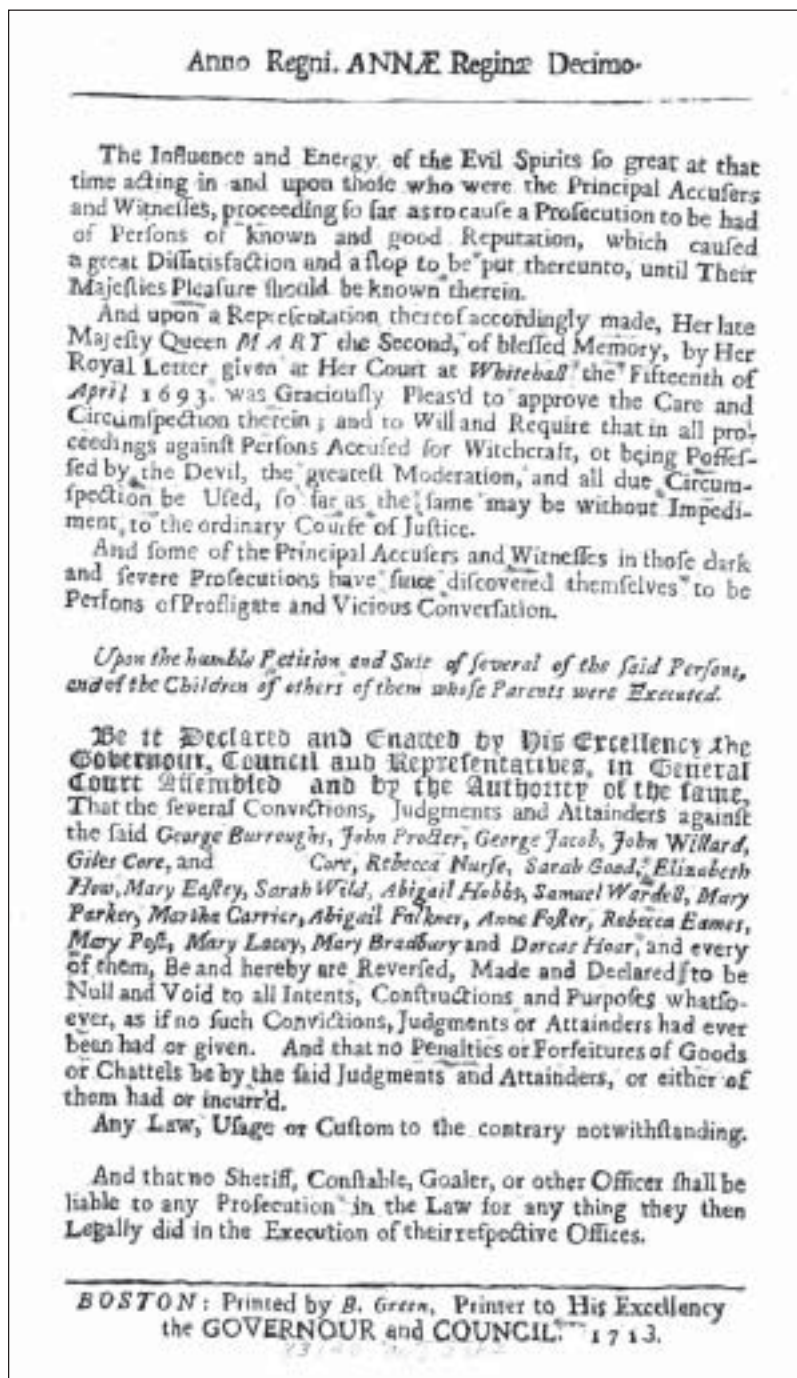
One additional factor also entered into witchcraft accusations: gossip. Seventeenth-century America produced no newspapers or magazines, not to mention the obviously anachronistic radio and television. Many people (especially women) could not write, and paper was scarce and expensive, so few people drafted letters. Thus news—and witchcraft charges—spread primarily by word of mouth. Often the earliest indication that a particular woman's neighbors believed she practiced witchcraft came not when they formally charged her with that offense but rather when she or her husband sued those neighbors for defamation. Successful lawsuits often quieted accusations, and many such cases never developed any further. Those who teach or write about witchcraft episodes in the colonies thus need to distinguish between incidents that never went past the level of gossip (sometimes the mere filing of defamation charges could stop the talk even without a subsequent civil suit) and those that eventually led to official prosecutions. Although no books have focused on witchcraft gossip alone, two touch on the topic in wider contexts: Jane Kamensky's *Governing the Tongue: The Politics of Speech in Early New England* (1997), and my own *Founding Mothers & Fathers: Gendered Power and the Forming of American Society* (1996).

Two comprehensive studies of New England witchcraft stand out above the rest. They adopt different approaches to the subject and frequently arrive at divergent conclusions, but taken together

they provide an excellent overview of the phenomenon. Many of the records on which these two books are based have subsequently been edited and published by David D. Hall, in a volume entitled *Witch-Hunting in Seventeenth-Century New England: A Documentary History, 1638-1693* (1999). This paperback edition is quite accessible to high-school and college students because Hall has modernized spelling and punctuation in all the selections.

John Putnam Demos, *Entertaining Satan: Witchcraft and the Culture of Early New England* (1982), examines witchcraft episodes from four perspectives: biographical, psychological, sociological, and chronological. He attempts to discern patterns in more than one hundred witchcraft cases, categorizing accused witches by sex, age, and marital status, as well as by a host of other measures such as wealth and reputation. Demos, whose book won the Bancroft Prize, intersperses chapters based on detailed accounts of particularly well-documented cases with others that discuss broad patterns. In *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman: Witchcraft in Colonial New England* (1987), Carol Karlsen also intermingles such general

analyses with extended treatments of specific individuals. Karlsen contends that many accused witches were seen as outspoken trouble-makers (or potentially so) in their communities, thus taking issue with a more common view of the accused as scapegoats for community tensions and fears. Karlsen's witches often seem to be early protofeminists or at least women who did not act in conventionally feminine ways. Unlike Demos, who explicitly

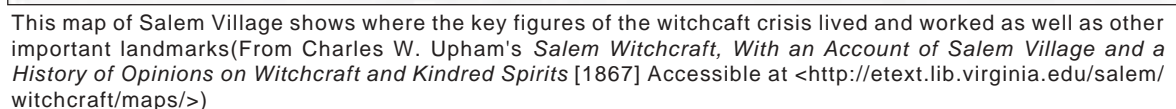


This is the second page of the act exonerating many of the accused witches.

Many other books describe the Salem crisis alone, so it is appropriate to preface a discussion of those works with a brief summary of the events in Essex County, Massachusetts, during the seventeen months between January 1692 and May 1693. That period began with the onset of fits experienced by two little girls living in the household of the Reverend Samuel Parris of Salem Village (now Danvers) and ended with the final trials of accused witches. After adults in the Village attributed the girls' strange fits to witchcraft, growing numbers of accusers, primarily females ranging in age from eleven to twenty, claimed to be tortured by the apparitions of witches, and to see the ghosts of dead people who charged such witches with killing them. Older male and female neighbors of suspects came forward as well, to describe how they and their animals had been bewitched by the malefic acts of the accused. Before 5 November, when the last three formal charges were filed, legal actions had been instituted against at least one hundred forty-four people (thirty-eight of them male). Trials began in June before a special court constituted for the purpose. In late October, the governor suspended that court, which had drawn considerable criticism for its conduct of the trials;

Paul Boyer's and Stephen Nissenbaum's *Salem Possessed: The Social Origins of Witchcraft* (1974) remains very influential more than a quarter-century after its publication. Adopting the analytical method pioneered by Keith Thomas, Boyer and Nissenbaum trace the relationships among the residents of Salem Village back to the precinct's founding in the 1630s. They describe the political, economic, familial, and religious conflicts that contributed to the identification of certain villagers as witches and to the alignment of others with the young accusers. The book's exclusive focus on Salem Village explains much about the early stages of the crisis, when both accused and accusers were drawn largely from that small area, but says little about the later months, when charges spread beyond Village borders to other Essex County towns, especially to Andover (which eventually contained the largest number of accused

A more recent book also concentrating on Salem Village—indeed, on one resident of the Samuel Parris household—is *Tituba, Reluctant Witch of Salem: Devilish Indians and Puritan Fantasies* (1996), by Elaine Breslaw. Tituba, Parris's slave, was both the first person to be accused and the first to confess to being a witch. She has often been described as either African or half-Indian, half-African in origin, but all contem-



porary sources identify her solely as an Indian. Breslaw argues that she was probably born on the mainland of South America, and that she was most likely kidnapped as a child and carried to Barbados, where Parris possibly purchased her during his residence on that island before he became the minister of Salem Village. Breslaw's detailed examination of Tituba's two confessions and her sensitive discussion of the slave woman's possible motivations are useful additions to the Salem literature. Also supplying important information about the origins of the crisis is Larry Gragg's biography of Samuel Parris, *A Quest for Security: The Life of Samuel Parris, 1653-1720* (1990).

Other works broaden the focus beyond Salem Village. Richard Weisman, *Witchcraft, Magic, and Religion in 17th-Century Massachusetts* (1984), discusses the Salem trials in the context of witchcraft prosecutions in the Bay Colony earlier in the century. Peter Hoffer's *The Devil's Disciples: Makers of the Salem Witchcraft Trials* (1996) argues that the young accusers constituted (in effect) a "girl gang" of juvenile delinquents, finding hints of physical and sexual abuse underlying maidservants' charges against their masters and mistresses. (He also asserts, contrary to all other modern scholars, that Tituba was of African origin.) Hoffer, a specialist in legal history, has written a companion volume, *The Salem Witchcraft Trials: A Legal History* (1997), which addresses the many complex legal issues arising from the conduct of the formal proceedings. Elizabeth Reis is one of the few recent authors to eschew legal analysis. In *Damned Women: Sinners and Witches in Puritan New England* (1997), she asks why so many women confessed to being witches and why more women than men were accused, finding her answers in the gendered nature of Puritan religious experience. Students interested in pursuing gender issues both in Salem and in other witchcraft cases throughout American history should consult Reis's edited collection, *Spellbound: Women and Witchcraft in America* (1998) as well.

One of the most important books on the Salem trials is Bernard Rosenthal's *Salem Story: Reading the Witch Trials of 1692* (1993). Rosenthal, a literature professor, considers not only the trials themselves but also the ways in which they, and the various participants in them, have subsequently been portrayed in novels and plays. Rosenthal's insistence that well-known Salem tales be fully documented in the seventeenth-century record has exposed a number of myths that have developed over the last three centuries, including, most notably, the widely accepted notion that the crisis had its origins in Tituba's leadership of a fortune-telling circle comprising the later "afflicted girls." As Rosenthal shows, not one shred of evidence dating from 1692 suggests the existence of such a group guided by Tituba. His skeptical approach to the sources leads him to conclude that the accusers were deliberately faking their afflictions from the outset. Many scholars disagree with that conclusion (and with his readings of some of the court records) while still recognizing the value of his contributions to the interpretive dialogue about 1692.

Less respected among those who study Salem witchcraft but still demanding attention from historians and teachers because of their currency in the popular imagination are the theories attributing the crisis to some sort of biological cause. Ever since the publication of an article on the subject in *Science* in 1976, some—including the producers of a documentary shown on PBS in summer 2001—have believed that ergot poisoning (caused by rotted rye baked into bread) produced

the symptoms of the afflicted Villagers. In 1999 Laurie M. Carlson added another possibility to the mix in her *A Fever in Salem: A New Interpretation of the New England Witch Trials*, arguing instead that in 1692 both people and beasts suffered from encephalitis. Neither theory has many adherents among historians, although Mary K. Matossian based one chapter of her *Poisons of the Past: Molds, Epidemics, and History* (1989) on the ergot hypothesis. The problems with such conjectures are obvious to any Salem researcher. No theory involving illness or poisoning can explain contemporary observations that the Village afflicted were healthy most of the time, for they were only sporadically attacked by specters. Furthermore, even if the accusers had ingested a hallucinogen or were suffering from some sort of illness, that could not explain the content of their visions or the precise nature of their charges, which is, after all, what matters most.

In my own book on Salem, *In the Devil's Snare: The Salem Witchcraft Crisis of 1692* (2002), I advance still another interpretation of the crisis, one that stresses the many links between participants in the witchcraft trials and a concurrent Indian war on the Maine-New Hampshire frontier. Several key accusers were refugees from Maine, as were a number of the accused; and the authorities—judges and jurors alike—also had frontier connections. Only the mental, emotional, and physical effects of a vicious and prolonged conflict literally on the borders of Essex County, I argue, could have produced the plethora of witchcraft accusations in 1692.

Teachers interested in developing assignments focusing on colonial witchcraft will thus find many excellent secondary resources readily available to them for reading and reflection. Those who wish to pursue Salem in particular should be aware of the superb website maintained by Benjamin Ray of the University of Virginia. "Witchcraft in Salem Village," at <<http://etext.virginia.edu/salem/witchcraft>>, funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities, includes keyword-searchable transcriptions of published works, including the complete published *Salem Witchcraft Papers* (edited by Boyer and Nissenbaum), interactive maps, and images of all the original documents (for those who want to try the daunting task of reading seventeenth-century handwriting). All other websites focusing on witchcraft, including that under the auspices of the Salem Witch Museum, pale by comparison. They are filled with errors and should generally be avoided. □

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Mary Beth Norton is the Mary Donlon Alger Professor of American History at Cornell University. She has written four books on Early America, including most recently and relevantly, In the Devil's Snare: The Salem Witchcraft Crisis of 1692 (2002). She has also coedited three books on American women's history.



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Confess or Deny?

What's a "Witch" to Do?

When I teach about the Salem trials, students typically ask two related questions: "why were women accused of witchcraft more often than men?" and "why would a woman confess to witchcraft if she really didn't do it?" This essay attempts to answer both of these questions. But, first, what was a "witch"? For Puritans, a witch was a person who made a pact with the devil, thus giving the devil permission to use her body to harm others and lure them into his service. This definition highlights something important about the Puritan world—it was the scene of a cosmic struggle between God and Satan. Puritan New Englanders accepted the devil's presence and believed he could come to earth, seduce victims to sign his book or covenant, and enlist sinners in his war against God.

Witches could be male or female, but in New England they tended to be women. In fact, so many of the accused witches in Salem were women (approximately 78 percent) that it is worth exploring Puritan attitudes towards women, sin, and the devil. It would be easy, but inaccurate, to characterize the Puritans simply as misogynists. In fact, Puritan New Englanders considered themselves to be rather more enlightened than others when it came to women's place in society and in their cosmology. They did not subscribe to the prevailing European view that women were inherently more evil than men. And yet womanhood and witchcraft were inextricably linked both to each other and to Puritan interpretations of evil and sin (1).

Ministers spoke of the devil's proximity in their weekly sermons and they articulated the notion that his presence was ubiquitous.

Ministers made it perfectly clear that intimacy with Satan ended one's chance of attaining saving grace and damned one to an eternity in hell. They preached that unreformed sinners—those who served the devil rather than God—would be doomed, and they peppered their sermons with images of hell's dark abyss. Calvinism made salvation an uncertain reward for even the most righteous, but it surely damned those who followed the devil's path. Even within the confines of predestination, sinners could indeed work their way to hell.

Because complicity with Satan implied such dire consequences, ministers felt it was their obligation to warn their audiences of the devil's objectives. In weekly sermons and written tracts, ministers repeatedly admonished their congregations not to fall prey to Satan's methods. While the devil could not force one to lead a life of sin and degradation, he possessed a frightening array of persuasive tools and temptations and would go to any length to lead people into sin, thereby possessing their souls.

Perhaps unwittingly, the clergy's evocative language and constant warnings about the devil's intrusions reinforced folk beliefs

about Satan, in the minds of both ordinary church-goers and clergy. The violent battle between Satan and God described in glorious detail in the ministers' sermons became, during the witchcraft crises, a vicious confrontation between the accused and her alleged victim. True, during church services, ministers did not describe the



Rebecca Nurse stands in chains in front of Rev. Nicholas Noyes, who pronounces her guilt in front of the congregation. (From John R. Musick, *The Witch of Salem or Credulity Run Mad*, [New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1893] 275. Artist: F. A. Carter)

devil's actual, physical appearance specifically, in all its horror. His existence in this arena remained ethereal rather than corporeal. Yet during the witchcraft episodes, when both the accusers and the accused detailed their encounters with the devil, neither the clergy nor the court challenged lay images of Satan. Whether he appeared in the shape of a dog, a yellow bird, or a hideous creature, part monkey and part man, such testimony was eagerly accepted. In their zeal to put the devil to rout in the godly commonwealth, believers emphasized Satan's direct physical presence.

During witchcraft trials, the court set out to prove that accused women had indeed signed the devil's book, thus becoming witches. They hoped to find witnesses to such signings, as the laws of evidence required, but they also realized how difficult it was to obtain such proof—everyone knew that the devil obtained his signatures in secret. In fact, no witnesses to any actual signing ever came forward during the Salem trials.

Confessions were the next best thing. If an accused woman admitted to signing the devil's book, then the case against her was assured. What better "proof" that witches were indeed among the godly in Salem than a confession? It is important to point out that very early in the Salem episode, the court decided not to hang those who confessed, hoping that they could be persuaded to name others involved in this wicked affair. Surely this decision—and the avenue of escape it seemed to open for the accused—helps to account for many of the approximately fifty confessions. Yet self-preservation alone does not explain the admissions of guilt at Salem, even though those accused faced the gallows.

"Why did they confess?" might not be as pertinent a question to ask as "how did they confess?" Confessors' language suggests that the choice to confess or to deny charges of witchcraft paralleled the ways in which women and men confessed more generally in early New England. Women and men thought about sin and guilt differently, whether they were applying for church membership or trying to convince the court that they were innocent of witchcraft. Women were more likely to interpret their own sin, no matter how ordinary, as a tacit covenant with Satan, a spiritual renunciation of God. In the completely different context of conversion narratives (oral testimonies required of both women and men in order to achieve full membership in a church), women spoke about their vile nature, while men tended to focus on particular sins like drinking or gambling. In essence, women were more convinced that their sinful natures had bonded with the devil; men seemed confident of their ability to throw off their evil ways and turn to God in time.

If women more generally feared they had unwittingly covenanted with the devil, it took less to convince them that they had in fact accepted a literal invitation from Satan to become witches. During the Salem witchcraft trials and other episodes, the distinction was blurred between an implicit covenant through sin, which fettered sinners to the devil and would take them to hell, and an explicit pact with the devil, which turned sinners into witches. This was especially true for women.

Rebecca Eames's confession illustrates the slippery slope that turned confessions of ordinary sin into admission of witchcraft. Eames first confessed that she had covenanted with the devil and that she had seen him in several guises, including a mouse or a rat. She wavered on whether or not her shape had actually harmed



A woodcut from Cotton Mather's 1692 account of witchcraft depicts the power of Satan behind the witches.

anyone but apologized nonetheless. During her second examination she slipped and blurted out that right after she made a black mark in the devil's book, signing her name, she "was then in such horror of Conscienc that she tooke a Rope to hang herselfe and a Razer to cutt her throate by Reason of her great sin in Committing adultery & by that the Divell Gained her he promiseing she should not be brought out or ever discovered." In effect, she admitted her earlier sin of adultery and used its potential exposure as her excuse for covenanting with the devil. Was Eames horrified by the evil pact with the devil or by confrontation with her prior sin? Or did she believe she had effectively covenanted with the devil by virtue of her earlier sexual violation?

The court believed confessors like Eames because their disclosures made sense to them. A confessing woman was the model of Puritan womanhood, even though she was admitting to the worst of sins. Apology was critical; recounting tales of the devil's book was not enough. A good Puritan woman/witch needed to repent her obvious sins. A confessing woman confirmed her society's belief in both God and the devil. She validated the court's procedures, and she corroborated Puritan thought concerning sin, guilt, and the devil's wily ways. A confessing woman created a model of perfect redemption, and during the Salem trials (though not elsewhere) she was rewarded with her life. In confessing, these women reacted to the unbearable pressures of their own and their community's expectations of proper female behavior.

And what of the deniers? Why did the court not believe their protestations of innocence? Many deniers had credible alibis and flawless reputations, yet the court hounded and pressured them with questions seemingly designed to force them to admit that they were indeed guilty of witchcraft, or at least of *some* sin. The denials are as telling as the confessions; women who insisted on their innocence often implicated themselves unwittingly because they admitted to being sinners. They were unable to convince the court and their peers that their souls had not entered into a covenant with the devil; they could not wholeheartedly deny a pact with Satan when an implicit bond with him through common sin was undeniable.

The sense of the depraved female self, which also emerges from women's conversion narratives, merged with the community's (and each accused woman's own) expectations about the rebellious female witch. Ironically, those who would not confess and allow themselves to be forgiven—yet who did admit to sin, as any good Puritan should have—were executed.

Let us look at Rebecca Nurse's denial. Known for her piety, Nurse insisted that she was innocent of the crime of witchcraft. But she could not deny that something was amiss with the accusing girls in court, as they thrashed about in the courtroom, feigning attacks by Nurse's supposed specter. Clearly the girls were bewitched, Nurse admitted, thus further implicating herself. She maintained her own blamelessness but asked, "what sin hath god found out in me that he should lay such a burden on me in my old age?" In other words, Nurse denied that she had literally signed the devil's book, but she unwittingly acknowledged that she had been guilty of *some* other sin in her lifetime.

Rebecca Nurse was hanged because the court did not believe she was free from sin. The court even conceded that perhaps she did not sign the book. But the magistrates asked, "haven't you been led aside by temptations that way?" Either way, she would be in the devil's camp. The court wanted to believe that the accused were guilty, as at least one woman, Sarah Churchill, noticed. Churchill first confessed to witchcraft charges, then later recanted. When asked why she had initially confessed, she explained that the magistrates had threatened to put her in the dungeon if she refused. Furthermore, she stuck with her story for so long that she did not know how to extricate herself. Most presciently, Churchill believed "that If she told mr Noys but ons [once] she had sat hur hand to the Book he would be leve her but If she told the truth and saied she had not seat her hand to the Book a hundred times he would not beleve hur" (2). Indeed, everyone wanted to believe that witches flourished in Salem, and they expected that these witches were female.

Not only was it far more unusual for a man to be accused of witchcraft than a woman, but when men were accused, or when they confessed or denied, their gender mattered as well. Men were far more audacious in their rejection of the charges. One man, George Jacobs Sr., shouted back at the court "You tax me for a wizzard, you might as well tax me for a buzard. I have done no harm." Another, Andrew Carrier, confessed after a fashion, though his ambivalent recounting of a witch meeting expressed none of the apology or remorse typical of the female confessors. His confession "counted" nonetheless, and he escaped the gallows because the court was not prepared to convict many male

witches (3). Puritans simply did not suppose that men would surrender to the devil as easily as women.

Clergy and laity shared assumptions about their world, about God and the devil, about sin and salvation, and about the ways in which the devil afflicted the body in order to possess the soul (and seemed to possess women more successfully than men). During the witch trials, when women predominated among the accused, lay visions of the devil's powers pushed ministers' teachings in unforeseen directions. The consequences for women could be grim. Women were accused more than men because Puritans believed that they were more likely to succumb to the devil's temptations. According to a strict interpretation of Puritan theology, both men

and women could cleave to the devil or choose to follow in God's path. But in actuality, Puritans believed that women were more frail, both physically and mentally. Women's weaker bodies betrayed them, thus allowing Satan greater access to their souls.

During examinations, accused women were damned if they did and damned if they did not: if they confessed to witchcraft charges, their admissions would prove the cases against them; if they denied the charges, their very intractability, construed as the refusal to admit to sin more generally, might mark them as sinners and hence allies of the devil. Theology thus conspired with mundane practice, making it easier for Puritans (Puritan women as well as men) to

imagine that women were more likely than men to submit to Satan and become witches. □



"Oh, give me leave to pray!" (S.C. Kilburn, artist, 1880. In Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, "Giles Corey of Salem Farms," *The Poetical Works of Longfellow* [Boston: Houghton Mifflin Boston, 1902] 747.)

Endnotes

1. Carol F. Karlsen, *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman: Witchcraft in Colonial New England* (New York: Norton, 1987), 47; see Richard Godbeer, *The Devil's Dominion: Magic and Religion in Early New England* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 235-42 for useful appendixes of names and outcomes of cases before and during the Salem crisis. For other cases that never came to trial see John Demos, *Entertaining Satan: Witchcraft and the Culture of Early New England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 402-09.
2. Paul S. Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, eds., *The Salem Witchcraft Papers: Verbatim Transcripts of the Salem Witchcraft Outbreak of 1692*, 3 vols. (New York: Da Capo Press, 1977) I: 212.
3. *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, II: 475-76, 530.

Elizabeth Reis is the author of Damned Women: Sinners and Witches in Puritan New England (1997) and the editor of Spellbound: Women and Witchcraft in America (1998) and American Sexual Histories: A Blackwell Reader in Social and Cultural History (2007). She has also edited Dear Lizzie: Memoir of a Jewish Immigrant Woman (2000). Reis teaches Women's and Gender Studies and History at the University of Oregon.

Excerpt of the examination of Rebekah [sic] Nurse at Salem Village

(as reprinted at <<http://etext.virginia.edu/salem/witchcraft/texts/transcripts.html>>)

[Judge]: You do Know whither you are guilty, & have familiarity with the Devil, & now when you are here present to see such a thing as these testify a black man whispering in your ear, & birds about you what do you say to it

[Nurse]: It is all false I am clear

[Judge]: Possibly you may apprehend you are no witch, but have you not been led aside by temptations that way

[Nurse]: I have not

[Judge]: What a sad thing it is that a church member here & now an other of Salem, should be thus accused and charged

Mrs Pope fell into a greivous fit, & cryed out a sad thing sure enough: And then many more fell into lamentable fits.

[Judge]: Tell us have not you had visible appearances more than what is common in nature?

[Nurse]: I have noe nor never had in my life

[Judge]: Do you think these suffer voluntary or involuntary

[Nurse]: I cannot tell

[Judge]: That is strange every one can judge

[Nurse]: I must be silent

[Judge]: They accuse you of hurting them, & if you think it is not unwillingly but by designe, you must look upon them as murderers

[Nurse]: I cannot tell what to think of it

Afterwards when this was som what insisted on she said I do not think so: she did not understand aright what was said

[Judge]: Well then give an answer now, do you think these suffer against their wills or not

[Nurse]: I do not think these suffer against their wills

[Judge]: Why did you never visit these afflicted persons

[Nurse]: Because I was afraid I should have fits too

Note Upon the motion of her body fitts followed upon the complainants abundantly & very frequently

[Judge]: Is it not an unaccountable case that when you are examined these persons are afflicted?

[Nurse]: I have got no body to look to but God

Again upon stirring her hands the afflicted persons were seized with violent fits of torture

[Judge]: Do you beleive these afflicted persons are bewicht

[Nurse]: I do think they are

Israel Porter, Elizabeth Porter, Daniel Andrew and Peter Cloyce for Rebecca Nurse

We whos nams Are under writen being desiered to goe to goodman nurs his hous to speeke with his wife and to tell her that several of the Afflicted persons mentioned her: and Acordingly we went and we found her in A weak and Lowe condition in body as shee told us and had been sicke allmost A weak and we asked how it was otherwis with her and shee said shee blest god for it shee had more of his presents in this sickens then sometime shee have had but not soe much as shee desiered: but shee would with the Apostle pres forward to the mark: and many other places of scriptur to the Like purpos: and then of her owne Acord shee begane to speek of the Affliction that was Amongst them and in perticuler of Mr Parris his family and howe shee was greved for them though shee had not been to see them: by Reason of fits that shee formerly use to have for people said it was Awfull to: behold: but shee pittied them with: all her harte: and went to god for them: but shee said shee heard that there was persons spoke of that wear as Innocent as shee was shee belived and After much to this purpos: we told her we heard that shee was spoken of allsoe: well she said if it be soe the will of the Lord be done: she sate still awhile being as it wear Amazed: and then shee said well as to this thing I am Innocent as the child unborne but seurlly shee said what sine hath god found out in me unrepented of that he should Lay such an Affliction upon me In my old Age: and Acording to our best observation we could not decern that shee knewe what we came for before we tould her

*Israel porter

*Elizabeth porter

To the substance of what is Above we if caled there too: are Ready to testifie on: oath

*Daniell Andrew

*Peter Cloyce

(as reprinted at <<http://etext.virginia.edu/salem/witchcraft/texts/transcripts.html>>)

Rebeca Eames further acknowledgeth & declareth that she was baptized aboute three years agoe in five Mile pond and that her son Daniell was also then baptized by the Divell, and that her son Daniell hath benne a Wizard aboute thurteene Yeares and that [] Toothaker Widow, and Abigail faulkner are both Witches and that her son and both them have benne in Company with her in Ando- ver afflicteing of Timothy Swan and further Confirms what she formerly acknowledged (viz) that she hath benne a wicth this 26 years and that the Divell then appeared to her in the likeness of a black man and she then gave herselfe she sayth soul and body to the Divell and promised to sarve & obey him and Keepe his ways and further declares that she did Then at that tyme signe to a paper the Divell then had that she would soe doe and sayth she made a Mark upon said paper with her finger, and the spott or Mark she made was black, and that she was then in such horror of Conscienc that she tooke a Rope to hang herselfe and a Razer to cutt her throate by Reason of her great sin in Committing adultery & by that the Divell Gained her he promiseing she should not be brought out or ever discovered.

Rebecka. Emes. signed & owned the abovesaid Confession to be the truth before me *John Higginson Justice of peace. 15 Sep't 1692



New England's *Other* Witch-hunt: The Hartford Witch-hunt of the 1660s and Changing Patterns in Witchcraft Prosecution

Although many teachers focus on the Salem witch-hunt of 1692, the history of witchcraft in New England provides other important perspectives from which to examine this perennially interesting topic. Salem, as the most expansive and punitive single episode of witch-hunting in colonial New England, assuredly merits, and gets, significant attention. In the past decade, more than thirty scholarly works, a dozen educational video projects, at least nine major internet websites, and over a hundred primary and secondary supplementary curriculum resources have been produced, all focusing on the Salem witch-hunt. As useful as much of this material is, concentrating exclusively on the events at Salem masks critical features of the cultural and historic importance of witchcraft as a continuous presence in New England's history. Witches, many students are surprised to learn, were an active force in New England from the early seventeenth century until well into the nineteenth century.

Had the Salem witch-hunt never happened, colonial New England would still have a long and complicated history of witchcraft allegations, trials, and executions. New England Puritans accused at least one hundred people of witchcraft in the half-century before Salem. Fourteen of those people, and perhaps as many as sixteen, answered those charges with their lives. Fear of witches and belief in their magical powers was not an isolated episode in the colonial experience; it was deeply woven into early New England's culture.

Considering witchcraft as a presence during the decades before Salem enables teachers and students to analyze aspects of witchcraft history that are lost or obscured when the study is limited to Salem alone. Questions about the cultural force of witchcraft beliefs, the impact of witchcraft on community stability, the consistency of magistrates' attitudes toward witchcraft suspects, and the relationship between witchcraft and other colonial crises are perhaps best observed in the long view. Some questions, in fact, cannot be answered without looking carefully from the longer perspective.

Consider, for example, the question of whether there were patterns in witchcraft prosecution. Historians have noted that

Salem represented an anomaly in New England witchcraft prosecution. At Salem, magistrates dispensed with their customary skepticism regarding witchcraft charges, becoming aggressive witch-hunters. This change in magisterial perspective was an essential ingredient in the deaths of the nineteen Salem victims. But was magisterial prosecution that unprecedented? Examination of the pattern of witchcraft executions in early New England suggests something different. There were two periods of intense danger for accused witches in seventeenth-century New England. The first occurred between 1647, when New England hanged its first witch, and the 1663 execution of Mary Barnes, who was the last person to die in the Hartford witch-hunt. During this period, Puritan elites prosecuted witches zealously. Thirty-four people were tried for witchcraft and nearly half of them were convicted and hanged. Connecticut assumed a leadership role in witch killing, executing each of the first seven witch suspects it brought to trial and eleven of the fifteen witches hanged in New England in this first wave of executions (1). Magistrates and ministers were as active in convicting witches during this period as they were in 1692.

From 1663 until 1688, however, a surprising turnabout occurred. New England enjoyed a twenty-five year period without a single witchcraft execution. Connecticut, which had been New England's most aggressive witch-hunter, became the most tolerant—it never executed another person for witchcraft. Massachusetts ended this period of forbearance in 1688 with the execution of the confessed witch, Mary Glover, which set the stage for the events of 1692. The period that historians characterize as typifying all New England witchcraft prosecution prior to Salem actually represented a period of calm between two very intense storms. What accounts for this unusual pattern? The answer lies in an analysis of New England's other witch-hunt, the understudied but pivotally important Hartford witch-hunt of the 1660's.

**“Goody Ayres torments me, she pricks
me with pins, she will kill me.”**

In March 1662, eight-year-old Elizabeth Kelly of Hartford died in agony. Days before, she had been stricken with excruciating stomach pains. Kelly was certain that Goody Ayres, a local woman known for spreading stories of encounters with the devil, was the source of her torment, and begged her father repeatedly to call the magistrates to apprehend Ayres. When Kelly died, saying with her last breath, “Goody Ayres chokes me!” the magistrates were sent for, and the killings of the Hartford witch-hunt began (2).

To determine the cause of Kelly’s death, the magistrates turned to physician Bray Rossiter, who conducted an autopsy. His finding that Kelly had died not of natural, but of preternatural causes, unleashed a torrent of witchcraft accusations. Hartford began a year of panic that produced eight trials in as many months. New witchcraft victims screamed their presence; one young woman, “or rather . . . the Devil making use of her lips,” according to Hartford Reverend John Whiting, spoke in a “very awful and amazing” Dutch accent accompanied by “extremely violent bodily motions,” as she accused her neighbor, the aged Rebecca Greensmith, of being a witch (3). In an official flurry of activity, witnesses were deposed, suspects interrogated, trials set.

The aggressive prosecutorial attitude of ministers and magistrates was essential to the outcome of these cases. Although learned elites are frequently presented as resisting popular pressure to convict witches through official skepticism and scrupulous insistence on direct evidence of the devil’s involvement in inflicting harm, this certainly was not the case in the early days of Hartford’s witch-hunt. Hartford’s venerable Reverend Samuel Stone, accompanied by the youthful Reverend Joseph Haynes of Wethersfield and Reverend Samuel Hooker of Farmington, formed a prosecutorial tribunal. They gathered evidence, recorded notes, and forcefully interrogated witnesses. Rebecca Greensmith crumbled under the ministerial assault. When Joseph Haynes had begun to present evidence against her, Greensmith felt as if “she could have torn him in peeces” (4). But as his battering interrogation persisted, she broke down. She said she felt “as if her flesh had been pulled from her bones . . . and so could not deny any longer” (5). Similarly, When Goody Ayres heard the depositions against her read she exclaimed, “This will take away my life” (6). Two of the suspected witches were subjected to trial by water—bound hand and foot and thrown into a pond to see whether they would float. The logic behind

this ordeal was that since witches had rejected their baptisms by covenanting with the devil, the water would reject them, and they would float. If the water accepted the bound suspects by letting them sink, then the suspects were innocent. Although the ministers and magistrates did not accept the test as a proof of guilt, it was used to provide support to the other evidence against the accused.

Within the year, Rebecca Greensmith and her husband Nathaniel went to the gallows as witches, as did Mary Sanford and Mary Barnes of Farmington. Goody Ayres, in expectation of a similar fate, fled the colony with her husband, leaving behind everything, including an eight-year-old son. Three more potential victims, James Wakeley of Wethersfield and Katherine Palmer and her husband Henry, are also believed to have fled Hartford to escape execution. In an act of coerced political diplomacy, yet another accused witch, Judith Varlet, sister-in-law of New Netherlands’s governor Peter Stuyvesant, was allowed to leave the colony for New Amsterdam only after a heated protest by Stuyvesant against the Connecticut court’s “pretend accusation of witchery” (7). Only two suspects, Andrew Sanford, husband of the hanged witch Mary Sanford, and Hartford’s Elizabeth Seager, had been acquitted and Elizabeth Seager already faced a second trial on new charges of witchcraft. Hartford seemed poised to continue its deadly assault on Satan’s servants through 1663 and into 1664.

The summer of 1663, however, produced a turning point in the Hartford witch-hunt and in the prosecution of witchcraft in New England, because Governor John Winthrop Jr., who had traveled to England in 1661 to obtain a royal charter from Charles II, returned to Connecticut. Son of the Governor of Massachusetts, founder of three towns, industrial entrepreneur, member of England’s scientific Royal Society, and the most sought-after physician in all New England, Winthrop was in many ways New England’s quintessential adjudicator of witchcraft cases. As Connecticut’s governor, he served as chief magistrate in capital cases. As a physician, he was an authority on determining the causes of the physical maladies that often provided the foundation for witchcraft accusations. As a dedicated alchemist whose abilities had been recognized by the Royal Society, Winthrop had first-hand knowledge of natural magical practices—like astrology, number magic, and the Hebrew magic of Kabbalah—associated with alchemy, a mystical form of chemical experimentation. Many people today think of alchemy only as a vain and greedy quest to turn lead into gold, but Winthrop and his contemporaries viewed it as a progressive science that promised to produce benefits in medicine,



A community tests a woman by dunking her in a river. Women who floated were believed to be witches while those who sank proved their innocence. *Witches apprehended, examined and executed, for notable villanies by them committed both by land and water: With a strange and most true trial how to know whether a woman be a witch or not.* (London: Printed by William Stansby for Edward Marchant, 1613.)

ecution of witchcraft in New England, because Governor John Winthrop Jr., who had traveled to England in 1661 to obtain a royal charter from Charles II, returned to Connecticut. Son of the Governor of Massachusetts, founder of three towns, industrial entrepreneur, member of England’s scientific Royal Society, and the most sought-after physician in all New England, Winthrop was in many ways New England’s quintessential adjudicator of witchcraft cases. As Connecticut’s governor, he served as chief magistrate in capital cases. As a physician, he was an authority on determining the causes of the physical maladies that often provided the foundation for witchcraft accusations. As a dedicated alchemist whose abilities had been recognized by the Royal Society, Winthrop had first-hand knowledge of natural magical practices—like astrology, number magic, and the Hebrew magic of Kabbalah—associated with alchemy, a mystical form of chemical experimentation. Many people today think of alchemy only as a vain and greedy quest to turn lead into gold, but Winthrop and his contemporaries viewed it as a progressive science that promised to produce benefits in medicine,

mining, metallurgy, industrial processing, and textile dyeing and manufacturing.

Winthrop, like almost all of his contemporaries, believed in the reality of witchcraft. Like many of his learned peers, however, he was highly skeptical of witchcraft allegations. He knew first hand the difficulties involved in practicing effective natural magic and believed that people were too quick to attribute misfortunes that occurred naturally to witchcraft. Two of the major influences on his alchemical studies, the English natural philosophers John Dee and Robert Fludd, had both been falsely accused of practicing witchcraft as a result of their studies.

From the time Winthrop became involved in adjudicating witchcraft cases in Connecticut in 1655—first as a medical consultant and then as Connecticut's governor—he intervened to see that accused witches were not executed, as they had been in every previous case tried in that colony. His journey to England for the charter had removed his powerful moderating influence from witchcraft trials, however, and Connecticut reinstituted its prior punitive practices shortly after his 1661 departure for England. Upon his return—in the middle of the Hartford witch hunt—Winthrop acted forcefully to protect the accused and end the crisis atmosphere. In the process, he established legal precedents, which along with growing elite concern over witchcraft prosecution, helped end executions in New England for a generation.

Elizabeth Seager, awaiting her second trial, was the first to benefit from the governor's return. In all likelihood, Winthrop engineered a compromise with her accusers that once again found her not guilty of witchcraft, but the lesser charge of adultery. Seager, however, a strong-willed and sharp-tongued woman, was indicted a third time in the spring of 1665 for continuing to practice witchcraft. This time, accusers seemed determined to get a conviction, and so, Winthrop allowed them to get one. He remained away from her trial, although as governor he could have presided over it. Once the expected guilty verdict was delivered, however, Winthrop refused to enforce it. Calling together a special meeting of the governor and magistrates, he declared that Seager's conviction seemed "obscure and ambiguous" to him and deferred sentencing until a future date (8). He then did nothing for nearly a year, waiting until judicial reforms authorized in the new Connecticut charter went into effect. These reforms gave the governor new powers including the right to "impose, alter, change, or anul any penalty, and to punish, release, or pardon any offender" (9). A week after Winthrop became empowered to summon special courts of assistants to handle unique situations or special needs, the colony's first Special Court of Assistants overturned the jury's conviction of Elizabeth Seager and set her "free from further suffering and imprisonment" (10). For the first time in Connecticut's history, a convicted witch did not hang.

Other colony magistrates soon adopted the new policy of judicial skepticism. They refused to indict William Graves of



Witnesses testified that Katherine Harrison appeared with a large black dog. (Howard Pyle, "A Wolf Had Not Been Seen at Salem for Thirty Years," *Harper's Magazine*, December 1909.)

Stamford in February of 1667 on charges of bewitching his daughter to death. A few months later, they rejected another witchcraft accusation, this time reprimanding the accuser for "greatly sinning" in bringing such charges (11). Many members of the polity proved less eager than the magistrates to accept this new moderate policy toward suspects. Despite Winthrop's authority, his medical and scientific credentials, and a growing tide of elite skepticism, some New Englanders proved most reluctant to cede full power to determine questions of witchcraft to their leaders. Nowhere was this lay resistance more apparent than in the case of Katherine Harrison, the pivotal case in the transformation of colonial witchcraft prosecution. Harrison was an outspoken Wethersfield medical practitioner, astrologer, and widow who had risen from low status to become a person of substantial means. In May of 1668, Harrison's neighbors began collecting depositions charging her with witchcraft. The evidence against her took a number of forms. She was accused of magically causing the death, on separate occasions, of three people, two of them children. Other witnesses claimed to have seen her spectral apparition. Harrison and her black dog appeared by moonlight in the house of one witness. She appeared first as a calf's head and then as herself in a hay cart before another witness. A third person saw a dog-like thing with Harrison's head walking to and fro in the witness's bedchamber. Additionally, Harrison was charged with using astrology to foretell the future, a practice even the magistrates had to admit was diabolical, since only God knew the future, and one could not foretell future events without aid from the devil.

When Harrison was formally indicted in May of 1669, at least thirty witnesses testified against her. Apparent resistance to the testimony by Winthrop and the magistrates resulted in the jury's being unable to reach a verdict. Harrison was ordered imprisoned until the next court in October, at which time the jury would be reconvened to render a decision. Long before October, however, someone, probably the governor, ordered her release. Harrison was allowed to return to Wethersfield, which produced howls of protest from a frightened community. Thirty-eight Wethersfield residents, including two ministers and the local physician, signed

a petition protesting Harrison's release and demanding her immediate incarceration. They also demanded that Harrison's prosecution be taken away from Winthrop and the magistrates and handled by the colony's foremost lawyer.

When the jury reconvened on 12 October, they found Harrison guilty of witchcraft. But again, as in the earlier case of Elizabeth Seager, Winthrop's court challenged the verdict. Before passing sentence, the magistrates sought clarification on a number of issues central not just to the Harrison case, but all witchcraft cases: the evidentiary standards necessary for conviction; the acceptability of spectral evidence; and the distinction between acceptable and diabolical practice. To provide answers, the court turned to a triumvirate of ministers headed by Gershom Bulkeley. A friend of the governor, Bulkeley was, like Winthrop, both a physician and an alchemist. He shared Winthrop's interest in natural magic and his deep skepticism toward charges of witchcraft.

The opinion Bulkeley wrote in response to the magistrates' queries changed the evidentiary standards for witchcraft conviction in Connecticut. First, it made conviction contingent on two witnesses testifying that they observed the exact same act of witchcraft simultaneously. Almost always, people encountered witches as witches when they were alone. (One witness saw Harrison with a dog, another as a calf on a haycart, a third as a dog-like thing.) Previously, the cumulative impact of these separate reports by individuals had been sufficient to prove guilt. Henceforward, unless two people saw a witch's specter in the same shape at the same time, the accused would go free.

Second, the magistrates worried about whether the devil could assume the form of an innocent person and thus provide false evidence that would lead to a false conviction. Bulkeley and the ministers argued that God would not allow the devil to appear in the guise of an innocent person before multiple witnesses, though it left open the question of his ability to do so before a single person. This reinforcement of the need for multiple witnesses strongly undermined the former standards for conviction.

The magistrates also asked the ministers to render a decision on whether the fortune telling attributed to Katherine Harrison demonstrated her familiarity with the devil. Bulkeley's ambiguous answer to this question essentially said that in theory Harrison was guilty, but in practice, she probably was not. Information of future events was indeed diabolical, Bulkeley wrote, unless it was derived from "human skill in Arts," reason, divine revelation, or information from man (12). Which of those alternate sources of foreknowledge Harrison had used was not explicitly stated, but Harrison was not found to be in league with Satan. In May of 1670, a special court of assistants freed her and ordered her to leave the colony, which she had previously intended to do. Harrison moved to New York, and subsequently seems to have returned to Wethersfield. So ended the last witchcraft trial to take place in Connecticut for twenty-two years.

The Katherine Harrison case closed the anguished story of the Hartford witch-hunt even as it opened the door to establishment of a new pattern of ministerial and magisterial skepticism regarding witchcraft cases throughout New England. Connecticut had no witch trials for a generation, though it endured a minor witch panic during the Salem crisis. It never again executed a witch.

Massachusetts' magistrates, though not bound in any way by Connecticut's legal procedures, shared the new skepticism expressed in Connecticut. It acquitted all people brought to trial over the next eighteen years but one, and that person, Elizabeth Morse of Newbury, Massachusetts, was subsequently released.

Examining witchcraft in New England only from the perspective of the Salem trials limits both the scope of analysis and the range of questions that can be answered about this generative topic. Longer-term analysis provides new insight into the historical nature and patterns of colonial witchcraft prosecution. Analyzing the pattern of executions in seventeenth-century New England reveals that prosecution can be divided into three periods: an early period (1647-1663) of great danger for accused witches accompanied by rigorous prosecution by elites; a middle period (1663-1687) of increasing skepticism regarding witchcraft accusation and elite reluctance to prosecute; and a final period of prosecution (1688-1692) at Boston and Salem in which magistrates again became active in the persecution of the accused. This perspective demonstrates the importance of the Hartford witch hunt as a pivotal moment in the transition of witchcraft prosecution from aggressive magisterial assault on the accused to protective magisterial intercession on behalf of the convicted.

Some scholars have seen this skepticism and reluctance to convict as the standard elite approach to witchcraft cases until Salem. The Hartford witch-hunt shows this not to be true. During the early years of witchcraft prosecution (1647-1663), New England's leaders proved all too eager to send witch suspects to the gallows. Only in the 1660s, after a governor and minister who themselves were magic practitioners took a stand against witchcraft convictions, did the generation of skepticism begin. □

Endnotes

1. The data for Connecticut is based on New Haven and Connecticut colonies, which merged in 1663.
2. "The Testimony of John Kelly and Bethia his wife concerning the sickness and death of their daughter Elizabeth, aged 8 years, May 13, 1662" reprinted in *Witch-Hunting in Seventeenth-Century New England: A Documentary History 1638-1692* David D. Hall, ed. (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1991) 152-154.
3. John Whiting to Increase Mather, 4 December 1682 in *Massachusetts Historical Society Collections* 4th ser. Vol. III, 466-469.
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.*
6. R. G. Tomlinson, *Witchcraft Trials of Connecticut: The First Comprehensive, Documented History of Witchcraft Trials in Colonial Connecticut* (Hartford, CT: Bond Press, 1978), 31.
7. Peter Stuyvesant to the Hartford Magistrates, 13 October 1662. Robert C. Winthrop Collection, Connecticut State Library.
8. Connecticut Court of Assistant Records, 8 July 1665. Connecticut State Library, Hartford, CT.
9. William K. Holdsworth, "Law and Society in Colonial Connecticut, 1636-1672" (Ph.D. diss., University of Connecticut, 1974) 438,440,446,451.
10. Connecticut Court of Assistants Records, 52, 56.
11. "Case of William Graves," Samuel Wyllys Papers, Dispositions on Cases of Witchcraft Tried in Connecticut [1662-1693] Connecticut State Library, Hartford, CT, W-8, W-9.
12. "The answer of some ministers to the questions propounded to them by the honored magistrates" 20 October 1669, *Witch-Hunting*, 182-183.

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Walter Woodward is an Assistant Professor of Colonial American History at Dickinson College. His book, John Winthrop, Jr., Alchemy, and the Shaping of New England Culture will be published by the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture.

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American Indians, Witchcraft, and Witch-hunting

To paraphrase historian David D. Hall, “the people[s] of seventeenth-century New England lived in an enchanted universe. Theirs was a world of wonders” (1). As much as English settlers, Native New Englanders (and Native Americans generally) inhabited worlds of wonder, milieus peopled with extraordinary beings and marked by supernatural phenomena. Witchcraft, among other remarkable beliefs and practices, was an integral part of their worldview, as common among Natives as among European newcomers.

Since the advent of American colonization itself, European commentators have emphasized the cultural differences between American Natives and European colonists, often equating Indian difference with inferiority. Yet, at least in retrospect, the similarities among these contending peoples are striking. A few recent scholars have even argued persuasively that such similarities—not differences, certainly not any “racial” distinction—set European colonists and Native Americans at odds as they competed for the same thing: American land and resources. Yet a shared belief in witchcraft—no more than a similar ambition to live abundant lives in the North American landscape—hardly brought the two peoples together. At least in one important respect, Indian supernaturalism, particularly claims of direct, personal revelation, made Natives suspect in the eyes of colonists and helped persuade English settlers that Indians liberally practiced the dark arts. Hostile colonists characterized the Natives’ homeland as “wilderness,” a “devil’s den.” They saw the Indians’ natural religion as diabolical, understood Native shamans as witches, and demeaned Native practitioners as slaves of Satan. Consider, for example, the descriptions

of the missionary Thomas Mayhew Jr. regarding the Wampanoags of Martha’s Vineyard in 1652:

When the Lord first brought me to these poor Indians on the *Vinyard*, they were mighty zealous and earnest in the Worship of False gods and Devils; . . . The Devil also with his Angels had his Kingdom among them; . . . by him they were often hurt in their Bodies, distracted in their Minds, wherefore they had many meetings with their *Pawwaws* [shaman or chief religious practitioner], (who usually had a hand in their hurt) to pacifie the Devil by their sacrifice, . . . The *Pawwaws* counted their Imps their Preservers, had them treasured up in their friends (2).

Perhaps most disconcerting about this description is that Mayhew, who spoke the Wampanoag language, was himself a knowledgeable and not particularly hostile observer.

The religious contest between Puritans and Indians—or between Europeans and Native Americans generally in the colonial period—was not principally a battle of modernity against primitivism, or reason vs. revelation (let alone “superstition”). It was a contest of power (even magic), and in the minds of Europeans it pit a stronger god against a weaker one. Against Christ, Indian gods—and devils—were simply overmatched. This providential view of triumphant European colonization would continue to set the tone for European American understanding of Indian religion in subsequent eras.

While colonial representations of Indian witchcraft gave the narrative of American colonization a mythic quality—made it an epic contest of life and death, good vs. evil—Native people believed *themselves* to be the primary victims of witchcraft. Devastating epidemics decimated Native popula-



Jesuits provided some of our earliest accounts of American Indian religion. (From *Our Country: A Household History For All Readers* . . . Image courtesy of the Picture Collection, The Branch Libraries, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations.)

tions, white encroachment depleted game and took away their land, and periodic warfare brought violent death and turned Native worlds upside down. Such crises could be interpreted as providentially by Indians as they were by European Christians—that the catastrophe was induced, in part, by witchery—and Indians sought solutions both in religious tradition and innovation. Although Indians continued to face physical and cultural dislocation in the two centuries following the colonial period, they have survived, and among some “traditionalists,” belief in witchcraft endures today (as it does among some Christians), as a means of understanding a world in which, for them, evil exists and bad things happen.

Such contemporary beliefs vary considerably among the diverse American Indian communities of our own time and are not easily summarized. Reconstructing the nature of witchcraft beliefs among those who lived hundreds of years ago is even more difficult. Nonetheless, it is possible to get a sense of Native witchcraft and witch-hunting from the imperfect historical and ethnographic records historians and anthropologists have amassed. The Five, later Six, Nations of the Iroquois, who resided in central and western New York during the colonial period, offer an exemplary case. Here we must distinguish between the “witchcraft” attributed to Indians by ignorant or biased white observers—misrepresentations of misunderstood Native rites and beliefs, which had nothing to do with any diabolical force—and the witchcraft that Indians believed actually troubled their existence, an indigenous craft uniformly regarded by them as nefarious and dangerous.

According to the Jesuit missionary and ethnographer, Father Joseph-François Lafitau, who lived among the Iroquois early in the eighteenth century, “the men and women who cast spells [sorcerers] are regarded . . . as *agotkon* or spirits because of the traffic which people think that they have with the spirits or tutelary geniuses. . . . [T]hose who cast spells have no other aim than to harm and work harm.” These “evil ones” are “the authors of their curses and witchcraft” (3). *Agotkon*, *utgon*, or *otkon*, for the Iroquois, was the evil power or force that witches personified, as they mobilized *orenda*, or power, for evil rather than benevolent purposes to injure others, even their own kin. Both female and male witches inspired near universal fear among Iroquoians, and those suspected of such maleficence were hated and avoided. Although Lafitau decried native shamans as *jongleurs* (“jugglers” or charlatans), unlike Puritan commentators he nonetheless distinguished shaman practices from those of witches, who inspired considerable antipathy among the Iroquois.

Witches’ afflictions threatened the mental and physical health of individuals and entire communities. Iroquois men and women struggled to discern whether the injuries, illnesses, and misfortunes that periodically beset them resulted from natural processes or sinister magic. When natural remedies failed to produce results, and when rituals to uncover hidden wishes of the soul through the examination of dreams failed to have their therapeutic effect, it became clear that witchcraft lurked nearby. In a society based on consensus and the avoidance of outward expressions of conflict, Iroquois men and women repressed their aggression, but such feelings could still simmer below the surface, waiting for opportunities to express themselves. Witchcraft offered a covert, wicked means to assault antagonists within Iroquois communities, to

indulge one’s sense of resentment, rivalry, jealousy, even hatred in secret ways. Behind affectations of serenity or stoicism could lay intense feelings and emotions; disgruntled persons could silently cultivate enmity for years and might be driven, ultimately, to seek the help of witches to punish their enemies or to indulge in the black arts themselves. Fear of witches certainly encouraged circumspection and repression of aggressive acts among the Iroquois, but it also bred endemic suspicion.

Such was the danger of witchcraft that the Iroquois, like English Puritans, would “not suffer a witch to live.” They sanctioned the execution of witches, as quickly as the act could be carried out, and they exempted witch-killing from the rules of kin-based revenge and atonement. In 1653, the Jesuit missionary Francesco Gioseppe Bressani wrote about the Hurons, who were culturally similar to the Iroquoians, “the confidence of the Savages in the multiplicity of spells and witchcraft went so far, that upon mere suspicion they often killed and burned even their fellow-countrymen, without any other accuser or judge than a dying man, who said that he had been bewitched by such a one, who was killing him . . .” (4). A witch discovered among one’s own lineage or clan, after all, could be more dangerous than one operating from afar—he or she could become a cancer within.

Fear of witches, diabolical sorcery, and witch-hunting was gendered among the Iroquois, but in ways more complicated than we might expect. Wherever antagonisms tended to surface in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Iroquois culture, witchcraft might be implicated. Frustrated men, for example, might seek aid in hunting, fishing, or trading activities, to counteract bad luck in such enterprises, and some could be so driven to distraction that they crossed over to the dark side, seeking the services of witches. Some may have become witches themselves; others procured magical charms—considered living, non-human persons of great power—which required careful handling. Those who failed to propitiate them, by feeding, talking, singing, or listening to them, could endanger themselves and their families, as dishonored charms could “turn on” and “eat” their holders. Similarly, women (or men) sometimes resorted to witchcraft as well as legitimate magic in the interest of love, which might have enticed them to cross the line separating the benign from the malignant.

In general, in contrast to European and colonial witch-hunting, those suspected, accused, and executed among the Iroquois were no more apt to be women than men. It is suggestive, for example, that perhaps the most venerable witch among the Iroquois was Atotarho, the powerful male shaman and sorcerer of the Iroquois political creation myth. A hideous figure, twisted in mind and body, with writhing snakes for hair, Atotarho had nearly destroyed the cultural hero Hiawatha with his nefarious magic before the great Iroquois Peacemaker pacified him and transformed him into a benevolent leader. Iroquois communities repeatedly accused Jesuit missionaries of committing acts of malevolence, often attributing to them the contagion that swept through Iroquoia in the seventeenth century. The Jesuit Isaac Jogues, for example, who proselytized among the Mohawks in 1646, came to be considered a sorcerer and a witch. Jogues’s alleged witchcraft cost him his life. Iroquois men and women practiced and suffered witchcraft equally; it was a male as well as female art.

If conscientious religious practice ensured Native people health and prosperity, witchcraft's malignant object was to challenge and frustrate the divine order and to afflict suffering on its victims. As the accusation against a Jesuit missionary above suggests, Indians often associated sickness with witchcraft. Who or what caused loved ones to sicken and die, and what force precipitated the unprecedented misery of epidemic disease that destroyed entire villages and nations? For many, the logical answer was witchcraft. And witchcraft was implicated in the disasters Native people experienced in the late colonial and early national periods as well, when the American Revolution and its aftermath brought new rounds of death, disruption, and dislocation to the Iroquois and numerous other Indian people. As Natives struggled to reconstitute themselves and survive, visionaries emerged among their leaders who offered charters for the future which blended tradition and innovation. Many such prophets—the Seneca Handsome Lake, for example, and the Shawnee Tenskwatawa—distinguished themselves as adept in identifying witches. Witch-hunting sometimes played a critical role in these postcolonial Native revivals; identification and prosecution of alleged witches destroyed those deemed responsible for the chaos (collaborating leaders who sold land, for example), and continued purges of witches—many of whom dissented or frustrated the prophets' reforms—helped to forge a Native solidarity based on fear but designed to resist the pressures of white encroachment.

The new, nineteenth-century worlds of Native Americans—even those designed by Indian prophets to remain “traditional”—were hybrid creations. While many of those worlds continued to be haunted by witchcraft, the nature of that witchcraft (like Native religion generally) evolved and accommodated or adjusted to the intrusions of outsiders. For the Iroquois (and perhaps other Indians), witchcraft seems to have been feminized—increasingly witches tended to be women, following the prophet Handsome Lake's subordination of women to men in the new social order he prescribed. Witch-hunting, which flourished in the first decades of the nineteenth century and became sporadic thereafter, paradoxically represented both continuity with traditional Iroquois beliefs and

practices and a departure from ancient ways toward a more Christian, misogynous understanding of witchcraft. Oddly, as white Americans distanced themselves from the unsavory past represented by the Salem “witch” trials of 1692, one Iroquois leader, the Seneca orator Red Jacket, appropriated and invoked Salem in order to legitimate Native beliefs and protect Iroquois sovereignty. During an inconclusive murder trial of a Seneca man accused of executing a witch, Red Jacket exclaimed:

What! Do you denounce us as fools and bigots, because we still believe that which you yourselves believed two centuries ago? Your black-coats thundered this doctrine from the pulpit, your judges pronounced it from the bench, and sanctioned it with the formalities of law; and you would now punish our unfortunate brother for adhering to the faith of *his* fathers and of yours! Go to Salem! Look at the records of your own government, and you will find that hundreds have been executed for the very crime which has called forth the sentence of condemnation against this woman, and drawn down upon her the arm of vengeance. What have our brothers done more than the rulers of your people have done? And what crime has this man committed, by executing, in a summary way, the laws of his country, and the command of the Great Spirit (5)?

The defendant was ultimately freed, though he admitted his deed, and the Iroquois resourcefully continued to defend their lives, culture, land, and sovereignty, with varied success. The

Iroquois, like other Native people, generally did not attempt to imitate Puritan forefathers as they sought to survive as Indians. But in their troubled modern history, some Native Americans remained convinced that their distress, both internal and external, emanated from witchery. □

Endnotes

1. David D. Hall, *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgement: Popular Religious Beliefs in Early New England*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 71.



In this seventeenth-century illustration, a demon hovers above an Iroquois longhouse, expressing the French Jesuit Joseph-François Lafitau's sense that Native religion was subject to Satan and addicted to the dark arts. Other European colonists, whether Catholic or Protestant, clergy or laity, shared such a view. (Joseph-François Lafitau, *Moeurs des sauvages américains comparées aux mœurs des premiers temps*, 4 vols. [Paris, 1724], II: 58. Image courtesy of the Lilly Library, Indiana University.)

The Specter of Salem in American Culture

On a blistering July day in 1692, a condemned woman stood under the gallows in Salem, Massachusetts. As she awaited the hangman, her minister urged her to seize her last moments on earth to confess to witchcraft. In desperation she cried out her innocence: "I am no more a witch than you are a wizard, and if you take away my life, God will give you blood to drink!" Sarah Good's anguished protest against her fate echoes through the centuries as the story of Salem witchcraft continues to haunt the American imagination. No other historical event has provided such a wide range of scholars, dramatists, fiction writers, and amateur sleuths with a subject that so stubbornly resists a satisfying conclusion. Less than a year passed from the first accusations of witchcraft to the last, but those few months of accusations, confessions, denials, trials, and executions have spawned a seemingly endless quest to fix blame or find a reason for the ordeal of the witch trials of 1692. Yet, there is another equally intriguing mystery connected with Salem witchcraft—the puzzling question of how and why Salem's witch-hunt has become an enduring and durable American cultural metaphor for three hundred years.

Virtually every American is familiar with Salem as a popular metaphor for "persecution." Ask any American when that association began and he or she will undoubtedly point to the 1950s era anticommunism crusade. While "McCarthyism" reigned in Washington, witnesses decried the frenetic "witch-hunt atmosphere." Commentary on the investigations used such titles as "Salem, 1950" and, ultimately, the 1953 drama *The Crucible* cemented the association in the contemporary imagination. In fact, Salem's witch-hunt quickly became such a byword for the ongoing investigations that FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover was reduced to publicly

denying that his agency operated under the influence of "hysteria, witch hunts, or vigilantes." But the very familiarity of Salem as an analogy for the 1950s "red hunt" obscures a history that has been much longer, richer, and more varied.

The long career of Salem witchcraft as a persistent and persuasive "negative" historical symbol is unique in American culture. The more common symbol is that of the "positive" or heroic models such as Daniel Boone or George Washington who embodied critical

values. Promoting identification with their actions and principles helped strengthen the bonds within what Benedict Anderson has termed the "imagined community" that is the nation (1). Encouraging Americans to emulate the behavior and values of such heroes in times of crisis then drew upon what can be called a common "imagined past." Such models did more than simply inspire, they worked to maintain the community in dangerous times by suggesting appropriate courses of action. The historical example of Salem's witch-hunt, by contrast, resolved cultural dilemmas not by suggesting a course of action, but by warning against one. It conjured up a widely understood historical event from that same "imagined past" to articulate the inevitable consequences of an ill-advised action not only to the individual involved, but to the wider community. If positive icons provided models from which to fashion the self and the community, negative symbols policed the boundaries of that same community. When anxiety about the course of a new cultural movement or political controversy arose, average Americans did not have far to go to find a handy historical parallel to express quickly and completely the range of their fears on the matter. Salem witchcraft functioned well as a universally familiar shorthand for the costs of sliding backward into a world of irrationality and



"The witch hunters of the Puritan days, or, Same benighted spirit with us yet, or, The 'heresy-hunters' of today," by Frederick Burr Oppen, *Puck*, 28 December 1892. (Cartoon Drawings, Library of Congress.)

superstition. By the time that Salem's witchcraft trials became a common subject for imaginary literature and within cultural controversies in the mid-nineteenth century, generations were primed to understand the implications of the plot.

While still in living memory, Salem appeared in the hotly contested 1720 public debate over smallpox inoculation in Boston. As one faction, led by printers James and Benjamin Franklin, questioned the treatment, they used their newspaper to taunt Cotton Mather and other supporters of the unproven and potentially dangerous vaccine with being "the agents of mischief in inoculation as well as in witchcraft." As it passed from lived experience to historical memory, the example of dangerous excess defined by Salem's witch hunt was no longer simply local. In public print and private writings about such concerns as the structure of the English Church in America, the Boston Massacre trials, and the conduct of the Revolution, the specter of Salem was invoked time and again to warn of the consequences of excess passions in politics. The zeal of the local Revolutionary Committee of Safety in 1776, for example, reminded one Connecticut physician of an earlier failure to "stem the torrent of public opinion." Such a climate again threatened to consume the peace and prosperity of the American community as it had "in the time of imaginary witchcraft at Salem."

The project of nation building that followed the Revolution inadvertently made Salem witchcraft more widely infamous. The story of the Salem trials was attractive to authors of schoolbooks who sought to combine a desired strong moral lesson with a compelling historical illustration. Universally presented as an inexplicable terror that engulfed the very Puritan fathers who were promoted in schoolbooks as the origin of all American virtues, Salem witchcraft offered these writers endless dramatic opportunities. American children learned early that even the best men could become victims if they allowed reason and order to be swept away by their toleration of popular "delusions" and "fanaticism." By casting the episode as a vestige of old world superstition, irrationality, and law, schoolbooks in particular provided a view of Salem witchcraft that appeared to take place *in* America but was never *of* America. Framed in provocative language, the episode was presented explicitly as a baseline from which nineteenth-century progress into reason and order could be measured. By the second decade of the nineteenth century, the Salem witch hunt was an established part of American cultural memory through orations, imaginary literature, and histories written for the home and school.

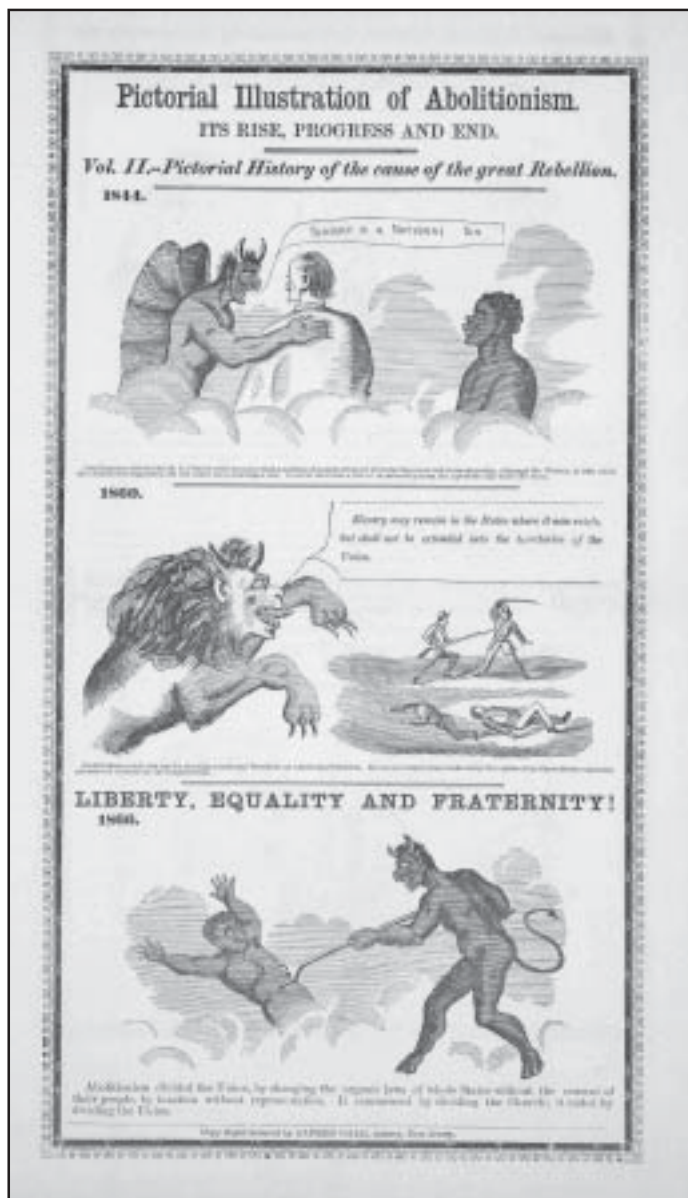
The fall of 1834 brought alarming news from New York City of a scandal that combined religion, sex, and a suspicious death. As more sensational details emerged about the Hudson River Valley "kingdom" of the "Prophet Matthias," reporters for the new daily newspapers scrambled to find ways in which to describe the outrageous and dangerous nature of his cult. *The Sun* reminded readers that religious "delusions originating in fanaticism" often drove men and women to extremes. After all, the charges of "witchcraft in the early days of New England" also originated in such a "mistaken sense of duty."

As witch-hunting in seventeenth-century New England was itself bound up in religious controversy, the use of Salem as a metaphor by ardent opponents of all that they found foreign,

superstitious, or disturbing in the religious "innovations" such as Millerism or Spiritualism that marked the antebellum era is not surprising. Critics of the Church of the Latter Day Saints or Mormons, in particular, found in Salem an example that could be used to discredit the Saints as they prospered and endured. Faith in Mormon doctrines was declared "more astounding than faith in witchcraft." As the faithful migrated to Utah Territory, adopted polygamy, and petitioned for statehood, opponents predicted a similar violent end for a religion that "mixed Puritanism with Mohammedanism." And, contributing to an emerging popular falsehood about Salem, many specified: "by Puritanism we mean . . . the kind that burned witches." Salem provided reporters, editors, and even average citizens with the authority of historical precedent. As they raised the specter of Salem in these debates they issued a strong reminder that there were indeed limits to acceptable modes of "American" religious expression.

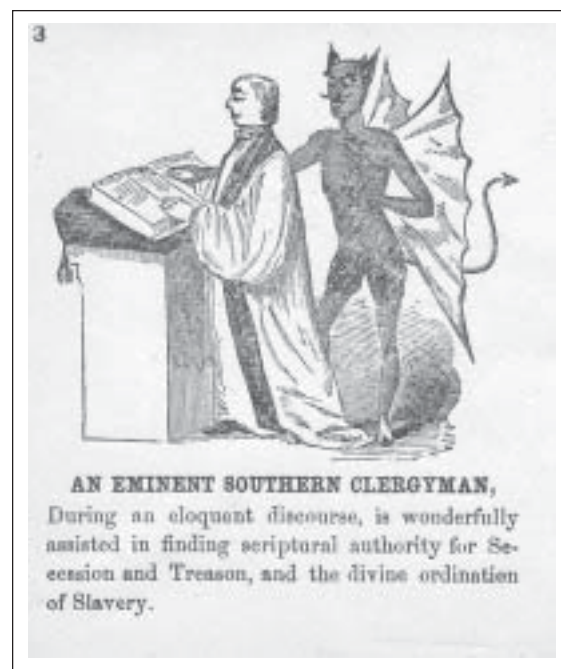
In the 1850s, the sectional crisis brought Salem into widespread use by Southern politicians and writers as a useful expression of their view of long-standing Northern aggressive tendencies. As proslavery Southern Congressmen took to the floor of the House and Senate to denounce Northern abolition activity as hypocritical, it was often not present-day activity that they used as evidence. It was Salem's witch-hunt. How could Northerners, they asked, defend a society in which witches were once "burned, literally, by the cord?" "Witch burning" in Salem, in fact, was an invention of this period and this controversy. The more horrific idea of "burning" was uniquely suited to derive the maximum emotional reaction from its intended audience. It was an image that was effective in the 1850s and which, once established, has been notoriously difficult to dislodge from the myth of Salem witchcraft (2). As the decade wore on, the nation moved closer to civil war. The net woven out of claims that abolition radicalism originated in the "strain of fanaticism that caused the Salem witch hunts" was cast more widely. In articles, editorials, and speeches generated by Southern slaveholders and their supporters, antislavery sentiment was portrayed as a natural product of "witch-burning Puritans" with fanaticism the well-spring of their ideas, the violent overthrow of the Union their goal, and Salem the example of their unhealthy and dangerous moral zeal. The Southern reader was repeatedly reminded that the same men who were "willing to swing over the gibbet . . . every homely woman who dared to live a single life, and earn the reputation of being a witch" would do no less to them if thwarted in their antislavery crusade. In 1859, Virginia's governor suggested that Northerners, rather than demonstrate in support of radical abolitionists, might otherwise entertain themselves by finding "a witch or two to drown or burn." In these formulations, Southerners were the true guardians of American principles while Northerners "sang psalms and burned witches." A Southern congressman reminded the House that "no southern calendar of crime can afford such cases as the Salem murders." Finally, on the very eve of Southern secession, a prominent New Orleans-based periodical used its editorial to remind readers that the recent election of Abraham Lincoln signaled that "the North, who, having begun with burning witches, will end by burning us!"

But the true sign that Salem had become a universally recognized and useful cautionary tale was the use of Salem by the Northern press during the Civil War. The appearance of the



Before and during the Civil War, Confederate sympathizers used the rhetoric of witchcraft to condemn abolitionists and the North. (Alfred Gale, *Pictorial illustration of abolitionism. Its rise, progress and end. Vol. II.-Pictorial history of the cause of the great rebellion ... Liberty, equality and fraternity* . . . Asbury, New Jersey. Library of Congress, Printed Ephemera Collection; Portfolio 100, Folder 47.)

Salem metaphor was not an attempt to malign Confederates, but to marginalize the most radical faction of the abolition forces of the North. The *New York Herald* frequently labeled those who sought not only the abolition of slavery but racial equality as an old familiar type: the “Puritans” who once caused their innocent neighbors to be “put to death as witches.” Other Northerners found in Salem’s metaphor their own expression of what constituted a “reasonable” American attitude toward slavery and emancipation. For all of them—those who desired a peaceful and slow end to slavery without racial equality and overt “Copperhead” Southern sympathizers—their radical abolitionist opponents’ views were those of the extremist, the “intolerant fanatic,” the “witch burner.” By the end of the Civil War the public use of the example of Salem witchcraft in the North to rein in the radical abolitionist influence would demonstrate that the issue was not regionalism but the acceptable parameters of political innovation.



From a northern perspective, slaveowners and their supporters were aligned with evil. (Civil War Treasures, The New-York Historical Society [Digital ID ad04004].)

The Civil War era use of Salem witchcraft had consequences beyond stirring wartime emotions. It killed the schoolbook Puritan. It had long been difficult to maintain the Puritan symbol as the virtuous national founder alongside the burden of simultaneously condemning his actions at Salem. By 1865 and Reconstruction, which required a tenuous cultural reconciliation between whites, the recent emphasis on the Puritan and his witch-hunting past had left the national icon fatally tainted. As the two hundred fiftieth anniversary of the Plymouth landing approached in 1870, celebration organizers and historians seized the opportunity to substitute the less problematic Pilgrim as the single symbol of colonial founding. As the celebration speaker, Edward Everett reminded his audience, including many invited former Confederates, that “the Pilgrim’s hands [were] clean” and “no bigot’s stake” ever marred a Plymouth common. The relatively unknown Plymouth Pilgrim was easily shaped to serve as the exemplar of the newly important American value of “tolerance” while the Puritan’s reputation declined under the stigma of “intolerance.” The prime example of where such intolerant attitudes and actions could ultimately lead was, of course, always Salem’s “witch-hunt.”

The Salem metaphor once more showed its flexibility as its meaning shifted yet again in the last decades of the nineteenth century. As government bureaucracy and regulation increased, Salem’s metaphor encompassed the idea that the government itself was acting in ways that were dangerously “un-American.” Regulating agencies and bureaus were often seen as operating outside of popularly understood parameters of government power against the individual citizen. Aggrieved citizens, alarmed by a sense of federal and local extremism increasingly defined aggressive prosecution as *persecution*. The 1920s “red scare,” regulatory legislation, Prohibition enforcement, and the Scopes evolution trial, all drew compari-

sons to Salem witch-hunting. By the late 1950s, the combination of the association with anticommunist investigations, mass communication, and the dramatic allegory presented by *The Crucible* provided propulsive force to the association of Salem with persecution. As the next century approached, presidential impeachment, child sex abuse, terrorism investigations, the death penalty debates, gay rights, and a myriad of local and national debates demonstrated on newspaper pages across the country that using Salem to brand one's opponents as "witch-hunters" was not only commonplace but nearly inescapable.

Whether Sarah Good's curse haunted minister Nicholas Noyes's remaining days on earth is not known. But Salem witchcraft's long life as a cultural metaphor suggests that since that long ago day in June of 1692, Salem has haunted the American imagination. □

Endnotes

1. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso Books, 1991).
2. For a similar conclusion about the persistence of "witch burning" within the Salem metaphor, see also Bernard Rosenthal, *Salem Story: Reading the Witch Trials of 1692* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 209.

Gretchen A. Adams is an assistant professor in the department of history at Texas Tech University and is the author of the forthcoming book *The Specter of Salem in American Culture*. She is also the Associate Editor of the *Salem Witch Trials Documentary Archive and Transcription Project* <<http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/salem/home.html>>.



Herbert Block's cartoon responds to an attack against the Girl Scouts of America whose "one world" ideals were branded as "un-American." ("Stand fast, men—They're armed with marshmallows," 11 August 1954, reproduction from original drawing published in the *Washington Post*, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.)

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2. "Tears of Repentance: Or, a Further Narrative of the Progress of the Gospel amongst the Indians in New-England," Massachusetts Historical Society, *Collections*, 3d ser., 4 (1834): 201-202.
3. Joseph-François Lafitau, *Customs of the American Indians Compared to the Customs of Primitive Times*, no. 49, 2 vols. ed. and trans. William N. Fenton and Elizabeth Moore (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1974-1977 [first publ., 1724]), I, 241.
4. *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents*, 73 vols. trans. and ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites (Cleveland: Burrows Brothers, 1896-1901), vol. 39, 27.
5. William L. Stone, *The Life and Times of Red-Jacket, or Sa-Go-Ye-Wat-Ha: Being the Sequel to the History of the Six Nations* (New York: Wiley and Putnam, 1841), 320-21.

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Matthew Dennis is Professor of History at the University of Oregon and author of *Cultivating a Landscape of Peace: Iroquois-European Encounters in Seventeenth-Century America* (Cornell University Press, 1993), *Red, White, and Blue Letter Days: an American Calendar* (Cornell University Press, 2002), and co-editor with William Pencak and Simon P. Newman of *Riot and Revelry in Early America* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002). He is currently at work on *Seneca Possessed: Witchcraft, Gender, and Colonialism on the Frontier of the Early American Republic*.

“How could they believe that?”: Explaining to Students Why Accusations of Witchcraft Made Good Sense in Seventeenth-Century New England

“How could they believe that?”

“Were they just stupid?”

“Why would they buy into such crazy ideas?”

Over a decade ago I began giving lectures about witchcraft in colonial New England, mostly to college students but occasionally also to high school students. One of the greatest challenges I faced was how to overcome the tendency of many in the audience to dismiss early American witch beliefs and accusations as the result of “superstition” or “ignorance.” These reactions were generally spiked with either breezy and amused contempt or horrified and quite selfconsciously righteous indignation.

I have often been tempted to point out that such responses are based, whether explicitly or implicitly, on questionable contrasts with our own ways of understanding the world around us. Many people living in the United States today believe in one sort of supernatural phenomenon or another: they often become members of an institutional religion like Christianity or join alternative movements like Wicca. Students who belong to such organizations or movements tend to forget that some of their own assumptions and beliefs might well strike outsiders as irrational and even morally questionable. Those who view the world from a “scientific” perspective, believing it to be governed by natural rather than supernatural forces, generally dismiss premodern world views as less logical, less empirical, and in general less plausible than their own. They routinely ignore the many unsubstantiated assumptions (otherwise known as “leaps of faith”) that undergird modern scientific paradigms as well as the myriad questions to which such paradigms provide no solutions.

As tempting as it is to confront students with the possibility that the ground on which they stand as they deride premodern beliefs in witchcraft may not be quite so solid and secure as they would like to believe, I prefer to focus their attention on the ways in which colonial witch beliefs were not as irrational or illogical in that cultural context as they might appear. I do this in two ways. First, I point out that explaining illness or misfortune in terms of

witchcraft would have made good sense to early New Englanders, given the ways in which they viewed and experienced the world around them: far from seeming absurd or unreasonable, such an explanation would have struck them as credible and sensible. Second, I get them to look closely at the process through which colonists came to conclude that they were indeed bewitched; students are often surprised and impressed by how cautious, critical, and empirical that process was.

We need to engage several layers of experience and perception within premodern culture in order to appreciate why an accusation of witchcraft would have seemed neither peculiar nor unreasonable to someone living in a premodern society. First, as historian Keith Thomas pointed out in his classic study of English witch beliefs, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (1971), the anxieties that led to accusations of witchcraft “reflected the hazards of an intensely insecure environment” (1). We are raised to believe that modern technologies enable us to control our environment and solve our medical problems. Such confidence is not without some foundation: when it gets dark, we turn on electric lights and so banish the darkness; when it gets cold, we turn on heating devices; when it gets hot, we use air-conditioning units; when we fall ill, medicinal therapies can often either cure us or at least control our symptoms. Seventeenth-century men and women did not enjoy that same degree of control or confidence. Medical experts were, as Thomas points out, “quite unable to diagnose or treat most contemporary illnesses” (2). In general, much that we claim to understand was, for the members of premodern society, incomprehensible and uncontrollable except in supernatural terms.

Seventeenth-century New Englanders, like Europeans and North American Indians, were convinced that they inhabited an enchanted world in which supernatural forces constantly interacted with and shaped the physical reality that could be experienced with

the five senses. For most New Englanders, the overarching paradigm through which they made sense of their world was religious. God and the devil, they believed, were engaged in a relentless struggle for the loyalty and souls of humanity; both divine and diabolical influences were at work in everyday life, sometimes operating through human agents, as men and women were tested, tempted, and punished for their lapses. Less structured and yet influential folk traditions flourished alongside Christianity, including magical beliefs and practices that the colonists brought with them from England. Many New Englanders believed that they could harness occult forces to better understand and control their world. Experts in these techniques—often called “cunning folk” by contemporaries—told fortunes, claimed to heal the sick, offered protection against witchcraft, and could apparently use their powers to harm or destroy their enemies. People who assumed the supernatural to be just as real as the natural world would not have thought it odd to suspect that mysterious ailments or problems had a supernatural cause.

When seventeenth-century New Englanders became convinced that they were bewitched, they usually assumed that the person responsible was a personal acquaintance. Except for large-scale witch-hunts, accuser and accused were generally close neighbors with a history of personal antagonism. Accusing someone of witchcraft involved accounting for an otherwise inexplicable illness or misfortune in personal terms, as an act of aggression by one individual against another (usually as revenge for a perceived injury or slight). This crucial element in witchcraft accusations was closely linked to the circumstances in which most premodern men and women lived.

Historian John Demos reminds us in his book, *Entertaining Satan* (1982), that most New Englanders lived in tiny communities in which the quality of life was “personal in the fullest sense” (3). Each resident not only knew everyone else living in the town or village but also interacted with neighbors in many different roles and contexts. Most of us live in large towns or cities with populations in the tens or

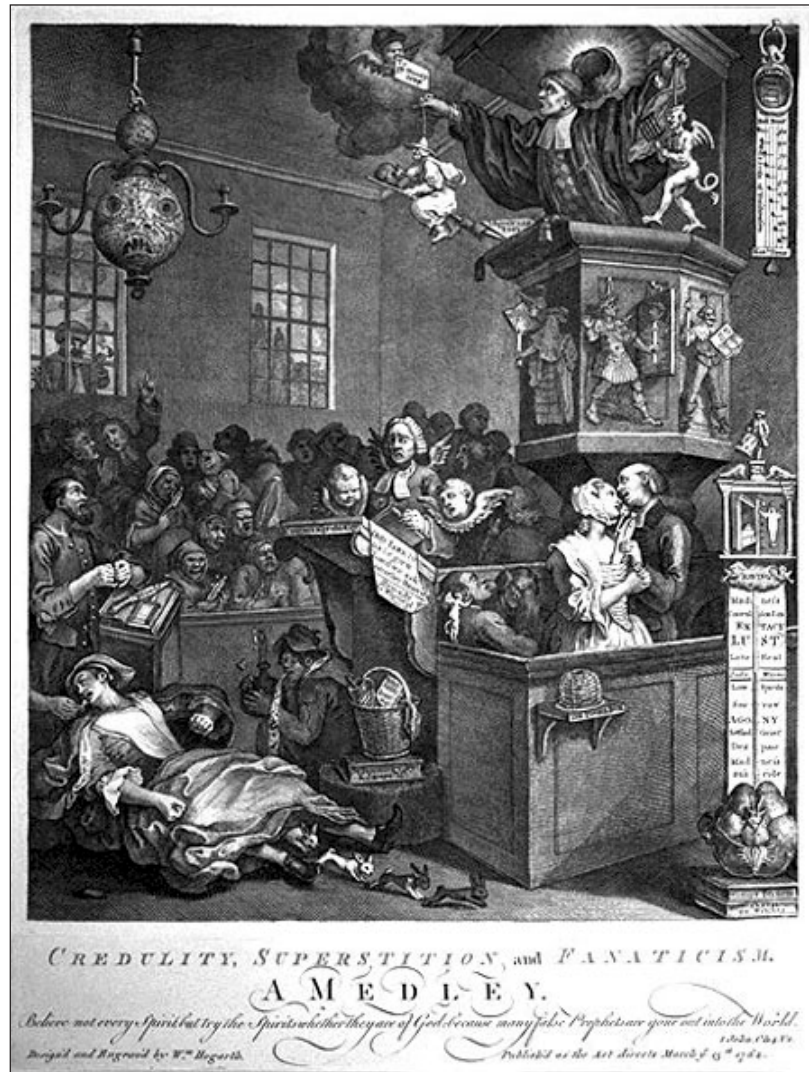
hundreds of thousands (sometimes millions). Many of us have not even met all the neighbors on our streets or in our apartment complexes, let alone those who live in other parts of the town or city. Not only are our lives in many ways quite anonymous, but different people fulfill distinct and isolated functions in our lives. When we go to the bank, a government office, or a shopping mall, the chances are that the official, cashier, or salesperson with whom we deal will be a

complete stranger. Even if we have dealt with the person before, it is unlikely that we know him or her in any other capacity. The experience of a New England settler could not have been more different. Demos invites us to imagine the following scenario:

The brickmaker who rebuilds your chimney is also the constable who brings you a summons to court, an occupant of the next bench in the meetinghouse, the owner of a share adjacent to one of yours in the “upland” meadow, a rival for water-rights to the stream that flows behind that meadow, a fellow-member of the local “train band” (i.e. militia), an occasional companion at the local “ordinary,” a creditor (from services performed for you the previous summer but not as yet paid for), a potential customer for wool from the sheep you have begun to raise, the father of a child who is currently a bond-servant in your house, a colleague on a town committee to repair

and improve the public roadways . . . And so on. Do the two of you enjoy your shared experiences? Not necessarily. Do you know each other well? Most certainly (4).

Personal interactions and influences were central to the experience of these early New Englanders. It therefore made good sense to account for misfortune or suffering in personal terms, just as it should not surprise us that modern Americans inhabiting an often anonymous world should sometimes blame impersonal forces such as “the federal government” for their problems. Witchcraft explained personal problems in terms of personal interactions. A particular neighbor had quarreled with you and was now taking revenge for some perceived injury by bewitching you. That expla-



Credulity, Superstition, and Fanaticism, A Medley by William Hogarth. (Image Courtesy of McCormick Library of Special Collections, Northwestern University Library.)

nation was utterly logical in the context of a culture governed by personal interactions that were many-layered and relentless.

Accusations of witchcraft brought together, then, three crucial strands in premodern culture: the inability to explain or control illness and other forms of misfortune, a deeply embedded belief in supernatural forces that could be used to inflict harm, and the densely personal nature of human interactions. The mysterious and the supernatural converged with what Demos refers to as “things most tangible and personal.” Along “the seam of their convergence” emerged accusations of witchcraft” (5).

In addition to unpacking for students the cultural context in which these accusations of witchcraft took place, I also find it useful to describe in some detail the practical steps that people took once they began to suspect that someone close to them was bewitched. Students often assume that seventeenth-century New Englanders made accusations of witchcraft recklessly and without taking other possible explanations into account because it fits with their preconceived images of the colonists as superstitious and ignorant. Yet most New Englanders were actually extremely cautious about bringing accusations of witchcraft against their neighbors. Far from being credulous or precipitate about such matters, they took careful steps to confirm that the suspicious illness or misfortune in question could not be explained in natural terms before concluding that supernatural forces were at work. They were quite aware of the possibility that accusers might be deluded in some way or deliberately fabricating their symptoms. The process through which New Englanders tested suspicions of witchcraft was marked by careful experimentation and a selfconsciously empirical, at times quite vocally skeptical, attitude.

Consider the case of Katherine Branch, a seventeen-year-old servant in Stamford, Connecticut, who began to suffer horrifying fits in the spring of 1692. The young woman had been “seized with a pinching and pricking at her breast” whilst gathering herbs in a field. On numerous occasions during the days and weeks that followed, she would suddenly and for no apparent reason fall into screaming fits, apparently undergoing terrible pains. At other times, she would collapse into a trance-like state, lying stiff and immobile (6). Daniel and Abigail Wescott, in whose household Katherine lived and worked, responded by summoning the local midwife, Sarah Bates. Goody Bates thought that the illness “might be from some natural cause” and advised the Wescotts to burn feathers under Katherine’s nose, a method that she often found effective when dealing with fainting fits. When that did not produce any lasting relief, Mistress Wescott asked Goody Bates to bleed Katherine because purging the body was believed to be instrumental in healing most physical disorders.

The Wescotts’ initial response to their servant’s alarming symptoms was to seek medical treatment and to treat them as a physiological disorder. Earlier that year in Salem, Massachusetts, the local minister responded to his daughter’s and niece’s strange fits by summoning the local medical expert, a doctor named Mr. William Griggs. It was only when Griggs declared that he could find no natural explanation for the fits and voiced his suspicion that the girls were “under an evil hand” that the minister proceeded to treat their torments as the result of witchcraft. Back in Stamford, Katherine Branch claimed to see specters that tormented her during her fits. Her descriptions of the specters, in conjunction with the failure of medical treatment to bring about any improvement in her condition, drove the Wescotts to conclude that their servant was bewitched. But neither they nor the minister in Salem immediately leapt to that conclusion.

Even once the Wescotts became convinced that witchcraft was responsible for Katherine’s fits, not all of their neighbors followed suit. Several residents in the town suspected that Katherine was counterfeiting her symptoms. Sarah Ketchum later described an experiment that she and several other people witnessed at the Wescotts’ house. After watching Katherine lie in a stupor and then suddenly scream out in terror, Thomas Asten had declared that she was surely bewitched. Ketchum disagreed, saying that she did not believe there to be any witch in the town. Asten replied, “I’ve heard it said that if a person is bewitched, you can take a sword and hold it over them and they will laugh themselves to death.” He took a sword and held it over Katherine, whereupon she burst into laughter. Ketchum whispered that Katherine might have laughed simply because she knew that the sword was being held over her. Mister Wescott, who was present in the room, signaled Asten to

repeat the experiment in such a way that the servant would not know the sword was there. This time she neither laughed or changed her expression in any way.

Other neighbors had experiences at the Wescotts’ house that overcame their doubts. David Selleck and Abraham Finch took turns one night at lying beside Katherine on her bed while the other lay on a chest nearby. At one point during the night, Selleck was positioned on the bed when he felt a pricking in his side that caused him to start. Abraham asked what had happened and he answered, “She pricked me.” “No, I didn’t,” Katherine retorted, “it was Goody Crump.” Before either man could ask who that was, she held her hand over the side of the bed, palm open, and said, “Give me that thing that you pricked Mr. Selleck with!” She then closed her hand. Abraham took hold of it, opened it up, and found a pin,



In this illustration, the accusing girls point at the imaginary flock of yellow birds surrounding the accused witches’ heads. (Howard Pyle, “The Trial of A Witch,” *Harper’s Magazine*, December 1892.)

which he removed. Her hand had been empty when she stretched it over the side of the bed, he would swear it.

Twenty-six-year-old Ebenezer Bishop was sitting beside Katherine's bed in the middle of the night when she suddenly called out, "Goody Clawson! Goody Clawson!" and then, "Goody Clawson, turn head over heels!" After this she had a violent fit and cried out at the top of her voice, "Now they're going to kill me! They're pinching me on the neck!" Ebenezer took the light, leaned over from where he was sitting, and examined the young woman's neck. He could see a red mark about the same size as a modern quarter. Shortly afterwards Katherine cried out that they were pinching her again and pointed to her shoulder, where he could now see another red patch. A few hours later both marks turned black and blue as though she had been bruised, but who or what had done this to her? Ebenezer had been sitting there right beside her. He knew that no visible force had caused those marks. Any doubts the young man may have had that Katherine really was afflicted by supernatural agents faded away as he observed the marks on her neck and shoulder, darkening to a stark and menacing color while she slept fitfully.

These incidents were reported to neighbors and then to court officials with careful attention to detail; officials collected descriptions of what had happened from each of those present so to compare their accounts. The Wescotts's house had become a laboratory for experiments designed to affirm or refute Katherine's claim that malign supernatural forces were causing her torments. Those who believed her and those who did not were equally concerned to justify their conviction and substantiate their claims. Their depositions were studiously empirical, based on careful observation and experiment—in other words, a self-consciously scientific approach.

Even those who believed that Katherine was indeed bewitched did not necessarily take at face value her allegations against specific women. Once the case came to trial, a group of ministers voiced concern that the devil might have presented the spectral images of innocent persons to the tormented young woman. (Similar concerns would lead to the collapse of the trials in Salem, where the judges relied upon spectral evidence.) But they also drew the court's attention to the fact that Katherine's mother had suffered from similar fits; they suggested that the servant might have inherited "her trouble" and then "improved [it] by craft" (7). Abigail Wescott told her niece, Lydia Penoir, that Katherine was "such a lying girl that not anybody could believe one word that she said." Mistress Wescott was apparently convinced that occult forces were at work in her household, but "she did not believe that" most of the accused women were "any more witches than she was" (8).

Throughout the seventeenth century, New England courts refused to convict in witchcraft cases unless there was clear proof of guilt, always elusive when dealing with an invisible offense. Setting aside the trials at Salem (where widespread hysteria overcame temporarily the legal system's customary commitment to rigor), only a quarter of those New Englanders indicted on charges of witchcraft were convicted. Only two of the six women

accused by Katherine Branch were brought to trial and both were eventually acquitted (9). That Katherine's fits should be diagnosed as witchcraft was hardly bizarre or irrational within the cultural context of early New England. Yet at every stage of the process that led from the onset of her fits to formal prosecutions for witchcraft, neighbors and officials tested her claims with scrupulous care and a commitment to empirical verification that we might perhaps characterize as scientific supernaturalism. □

Endnotes

1. Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (New York: Scribners, 1971), 5.
2. *Ibid.*, 9.
3. John Putnam Demos, *Entertaining Satan: Witchcraft and the Culture of Early New England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 312.
4. *Ibid.*, 311-12.
5. *Ibid.*, 312.
6. Surviving documentation for Katherine Branch's torments and the witch trials that resulted can be found in *Witch-Hunting in Seventeenth-Century New England: A Documentary History, 1638-1693*, ed. David D. Hall (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1999), 315-54. For reconstruction and analysis of this episode, see Richard Godbeer, *The Devil's Dominion: Magic and Religion in Early New England* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 163-70, and "Thou Shalt Not Suffer A Witch To Live": *The Other Witch-Hunt of 1692* (New York: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).
7. *Witch-Hunting*, ed., Hall, 348.
8. *Ibid.*, 334.
9. See Godbeer, *The Devil's Dominion*, chap. 5.

Richard Godbeer is professor of history at the University of California, Riverside and is author of *The Devil's Dominion: Magic and Religion in Early New England* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), *Sexual Revolution in Early America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), and "Thou Shalt Not Suffer A Witch To Live": *The Other Witch-Hunt of 1692* (New York: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

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Salem Witch Trials

The Salem witch trials of 1692 have become a prominent feature of the American cultural consciousness. This is due largely to Nathaniel Hawthorne's fictional works, Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* (1953), and also some popular nonfiction books, like Marion Starkey's *The Devil in Massachusetts* (1949) as well as more scholarly works, principally Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum's *Salem Possessed* (1974) and Carol Karlsen's *Devil in the Shape of a Woman* (1987).

The witch trials are often taken as a lens to view the whole Puritan period in New England and to serve as an example of religious prejudice, social persecution, and superstition. While each of these views is appropriate, the words and deeds of the actual people involved have generally been passed over because the original court records have not been readily available. Thus the witchcraft episode is often reduced to an irrational social aberration or the result of ergot food poisoning, a disease caused by moldy rye or other cereals, and the people involved are reduced to one-dimensional stereotypes.

This lesson plan emphasizes two things: using primary source documents to analyze the seventeenth-century court records of the witch trials; and using artistic interpretations to analyze the ways in which the witchcraft episode has been represented by later generations in images.

Time

This lesson plan is in two parts and will hopefully be completed in two or three class meetings.

National Standards

This lesson plan addresses National Standards 2 and 3 in Standards in Historical Thinking by asking students to look at both primary sources and images used to represent the Salem Witchcraft trials to later generations. It also fulfills the standards in 1B Era 2: "demonstrate understanding of family life, gender roles, and women's rights in colonial North America."

Part I

The purpose of the first part of this lesson is to engage students in thinking about primary sources by asking them to look carefully at what people actually said in the records of the courtroom scenes. While attention often focuses on Judge Hathorne and the "afflicted" girls, the wonderful thing about the court records is that they recorded the voices of the accused and conveyed their own words of defense, their occasional laughter, frequent outbursts of sarcasm, their bewilderment and incredulity, and, above all their

undaunted affirmations of innocence. There is also the fascinating drama of the court room scene. This is what inspired Arthur Miller's play, *The Crucible*, and what makes it so dramatically effective.

Documents:

First Examination of Tituba

Examinations of:

Sarah Osborne	John Alden
Elizabeth Proctor and Sarah Cloyse	
Abigail Dane Faulkner Sr.	Sarah Good
Rebecca Nurse	Susannah Martin
Martha Carrier	Martha Cory
Sarah and Richard Carrier	Ann Pudeator
Bridget Bishop	

Find these documents by going to the web page for the *Salem Witchcraft Papers* at <<http://etext.virginia.edu/salem/witchcraft/texts/transcripts.html>>. This page displays the link for each of the three volumes of court records, which are arranged alphabetically in each volume. For example, Volume I contains the "Case" for Bridget Bishop. Click on the "Case Bridget Bishop Executed, June 10, 1692." This will open a new web page with the full case record of all the documents for Bridget Bishop. The first two items in her Case Record are the transcriptions of her two grand jury hearings, each called an "examination." Depending upon the grand jury's vote, the accused person was then held for trial or released. (According to the records, all but one was held over for trial.) There are, in fact, no records of the actual trials—these were either lost or deliberately destroyed and have not been seen since the seventeenth century. What has survived is a fairly complete set of the pretrial records that were used in the trials themselves: the depositions, arrest warrants, indictments, examinations, and so forth are extremely revealing.

The aim of this court was to find the witches—that is, the people living among them whose "specters" ("apparitions," "appearances") were allegedly tormenting the Village girls and causing harm, even death, to some of the villagers. For more background, go to <<http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/salem/overview.html>>

The seventeenth-century writers of these legal documents—court clerks, constables, local town and village authorities—were not well educated. They did not use standardized spellings of words and in some cases struggled to render the rapidly spoken words in court, using abbreviations and colloquialisms that do not quite make sense to us today. But with a little patience and imagination the meaning can be made clear.

Students should look for the following things:

1) Does the judge assume guilt? Give an example, quoting Judge Hathorne's actual words. Why does he appear to assume the defendant is guilty?

2) Describe ways in which the judge and the accusing girls appear to be working together against the accused.

3) Sometimes there are references to "specters"—how would you define this concept?

4) Describe ways in which the accused person tries to defend herself/himself against the accusations. Why did these words have no effect?

5) At the end, is there evidence that the judge is trying to get the accused to confess to being a witch? What would happen if the accused did confess, as many did? Why did many refuse to confess?

6) What are the accused "witches" actually charged with? From the perspective of the twenty-first century, how can we judge their innocence or guilt?

Students at the University of Virginia have written a few analyses of these court room examinations, using the original documents. For an example, please visit the "Education" web page via our web site <<http://etext.virginia.edu/salem/witchcraft/>>.

John Hathorne and Jonathan Corwin presided over Bridget's examination on 19 April 1692. Many of her accusers were present at the examination, including Elizabeth Hubbard, Ann Putnam, Abigail Williams, Mercy Lewis, and Mary Walcott.

As soon as Bridget Bishop entered the courtroom, the afflicted girls fell into fits. Judge Hathorne asked in which witchcrafts she was conversant, to which she replied, "I take all this people (turning her head and eyes about) to witness that I am clear." Then Hawthorne asked the girls if Bishop had afflicted them, to which Elizabeth Hubbard, Ann Putnam, Abigail Williams, and Mercy Lewis affirmed that she had. The afflicted girls charged her with having hurt them in many ways and tempting them to sign the book of the devil. Ann Putnam even went so far as to say that Bishop called the devil her God. Bishop continued to proclaim her innocence by saying that she "never saw these persons before, nor [ever] was in this place before." She claimed to be as "innocent as an unborn child."

At that point, Mary Walcott said that her brother Jonathan had torn Bishop's coat while fighting off her specter. When they examined Bishop's coat, they found the tear in exactly the same location. Judge Hathorne continued the attack on Bishop when he accused her of bewitching her first husband to death. She shook her head no in response to the question, which set the afflicted girls into fits. Sam Braybook affirmed that although she told him

that she had been accused of witchcraft ten years ago, "she was no witch and the devil cannot hurt her."

Bridget Bishop apparently became frustrated with Hathorne's continual attack on her character and his disbelief in her innocence. Her deferential attitude soon gave way to anger as she slowly realized that denial was not an effective strategy. The following interchange between Bishop and Hathorne is very memorable and often quoted.

Bishop staunchly stated, "I am no witch," to which Hawthorne replied, "Why if you have not wrote in the book, yet tell me how far you have gone? Have you not to do with familiar spirits?"

"I have no familiarity with the devil."

"How is it then that your appearance doth hurt these?"

"I am innocent," Bishop insisted.

"Why do you seem to act witchcraft before us, by the motion of your body, which seems to have influence upon the afflicted?"

"I know nothing of it. I am innocent to a witch. I know not what a witch is."

"How do you know then that you are not a witch?" Hathorne demanded.

"I do not know what you say."

"How can you know, you are no witch, and yet not know what a witch is?"

"I am clear: if I were any such person you should know it," Bishop again insisted.

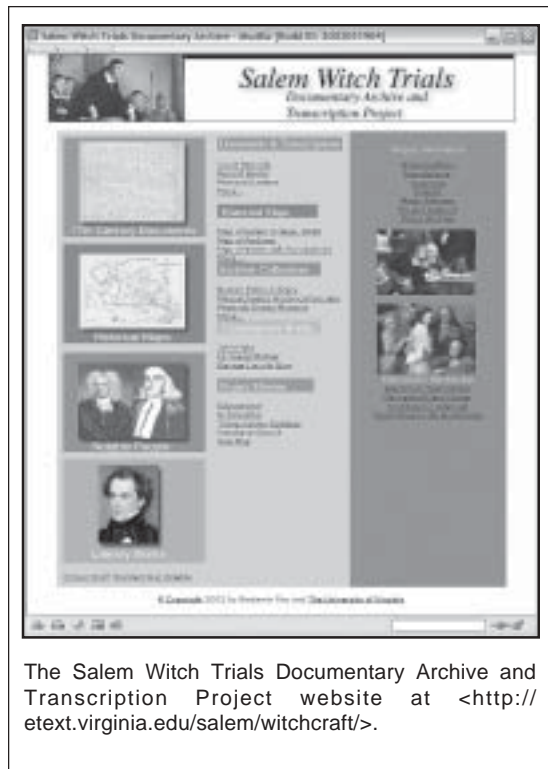
"You may threaten, but you can do no more than you are permitted."

"I am innocent of a witch."

After this comment, Bridget apparently rolled her eyes towards heaven. Immediately, all the girls rolled theirs, and it seemed to the court that a devil was on the loose. After this examination, Bishop was asked if she was not troubled to see the afflicted girls so tormented. She answered no. When asked if she thought they were bewitched, she answered that she did not know what to think about them.

During Bishop's examination before the magistrates, the afflicted girls behaved as if they were tortured. It seemed that by casting her eye upon them, Bishop could strike them down into fits. The only thing that would stop these fits was the touch of her hand upon the girls. Abigail Hobbs, a woman who had already confessed to being a witch, played into this drama by testifying that Bishop's specter tormented her because of her confession. She also affirmed that Bishop had been present at a meeting of witches, in a field at Salem Village, and took part in a diabolical sacrament.

In addition to this evidence, evidence of other previous witchcraft was brought to light. Bishop was accused of murdering



The Salem Witch Trials Documentary Archive and Transcription Project website at <<http://etext.virginia.edu/salem/witchcraft/>>.

children, bewitching pigs, and coming to various townsmen during the night. In further evidence, “poppets” were found in the wall of her cellar. These puppets were made of rags and hogs’ bristles, with headless pins in them. Bishop could “give no account unto the court, that was reasonable or tolerable.” The final piece of damning evidence was when a jury of women found a “preternatural teat” upon her body. Within three hours, the teat had disappeared, adding to the intrigue.

Part II

The purpose of the second part of the lesson is to engage students in thinking about the ways in which the witch trials have been represented in images through time, since it is now one of the recurring icons of the American cultural imagination.

Illustrations depicting the Salem witch trials began to appear in popular history books and in literary magazines in the mid-nineteenth century together with some large oil paintings created in response to growing public interest in the trials. In Salem today, there are museum displays with life size mannequins and wax figures that depict scenes from the witch trials, and illustrations often appear in newspapers and magazine stories about the trials. Although included in this lesson plan, the images can be found in

two other places. On the archive entry page, <<http://etext.virginia.edu/salem/witchcraft/>>, click on the word “images.” This links to a page of seven images by various artists. Many other images can be accessed at “Notable People” section in the Archive, located on the entry page. This opens a page with names of people involved in the witch trials. Several of them have become popular subjects of artists’ imaginations, for example Tituba, Rebecca Nurse, Giles Corey, George Jacobs Sr., Judge John Hathorne, Susannah Martin, and Rev. George Burroughs.

Compare two images of the Salem witch trials

1) Choose two illustrations. Look carefully at these images: How does the artist portray the accusers and the accused? Compare and contrast them.

2) With whom does the artist seem to sympathize—accusers or accused? How does the artist show this?

1. What kind of stereotypes do you see in these illustrations? Has the artist included anything that seems unexpected or different from what you might have imagined? Explain.

2. What kind of overall moral perspective does the artist try to give on the Salem witch trials?



"Arresting a Witch" shows a woman being arrested for witchcraft, depicted conventionally as an old hag by the famous illustrator Howard Pyle. (*Harpers New Monthly Magazine* 67 [1883]: 221).



"Witch Hill or The Salem Martyr" by Thomas Noble Slatterwhite, 1869. This image of a modest girl about to be hanged for witchcraft contrasts sharply with Howard Pyle's image on the left. (Image courtesy of the New-York Historical Society, New York City)

For example, there is a series of pictures showing women, young and old, being arrested for witchcraft and/or being taken to Gallows Hill. Our cultural stereotype of the witch is generally that of an old crone—a disagreeable looking social outcast, who is also rather dangerous. This is how Howard Pyle seems to portray the woman in his illustration “Arresting a Witch.” A closer look reveals that this old crone appears stupefied—hardly realizing what is happening. Pyle does not show her to be a defiant “wicked witch of the east,” all angry and ready to attack her pursuers, but rather a helpless beggar dressed in rags, who has apparently been scavenging potatoes from the village fields. Notice, too, the group of angry men crowding around the man sent to arrest her. They look like a gang of bullies, some also appear curious and fearful—ganging up on this poor old woman.

Compare Pyle’s picture with Noble’s “Salem Martyr.” Noble’s painting shows a beautiful young woman being led to the gallows, wearing a saintly-looking expression. What is she being persecuted for? She is no vicious old crone. She looks like a gentle, spiritual martyr, perhaps a follower of some outlawed form of religion—a wistful heretic whom the Puritans love to hate?

Both artists present different views of the witchcraft trials, and both are sympathetic to the accused. Even though these artists are depicting an event that happened over three hundred years ago, it still has meaning for them and for us. By



"Examination of a Witch"

Generally supposed to represent an event in the Salem witch trials, an earlier version of this painting was exhibited by the artist in New York in 1848 with a quotation from John Greenleaf Whittier's book *Supernaturalism of New England*, 1847: "Mary Fisher, a young girl, was seized upon by Deputy Governor Bellingham in the absence of Governor Endicott, and shamefully stripped for the purpose of ascertaining whether she was a witch, with the Devil's mark upon her." (Painting by Thompkins H. Matteson, 1853. Photograph courtesy of Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, MA.)



"Witchcraft at Salem Village"

In this courtroom scene, an accused woman holds her right hand over her heart and gestures upward—as though she were declaring her innocence before God—while an "afflicted" girl falls on the floor in front of the judge's bench. (From William A. Crafts, *Pioneers in the Settlement of America*, Vol. I [Boston: Samuel Walker & Company, 1876].)



looking into the faces of these Puritan characters, the artists suggest that they could be us and that we are supposed to learn from recognizing the similarity. Students might draw analogies here—does Pyle's picture look like the authorities badgering a homeless person? Does Noble's look like the religious fanatics victimizing someone of a different faith?

The purpose of this lesson plan is thus two fold: to stimulate and guide critical thinking about primary source documents—the very stuff of historical research—and also to stimulate and guide critical thinking about historical themes in American culture, as depicted in artistic works. □

Benjamin Ray teaches in the department of religious studies at the University of Virginia. He is the director of the Salem Witch Trials Documentary Archive and Transcription Project and is collaborating with Bernard Rosenthal in the production of new transcriptions of the Salem witch trial court records.

"Execution of Mrs. Ann Hibbins" by F. T. Merrill, 1886.

This illustration depicts the execution of Ann Hibbins on Boston Commons in 1657. (From Clarence W. Hobbs, *Lynn and Surroundings* [Lynn, MA: Lewis & Winship Publishers, 1886], 52.)

"Witchcraft in Colonial America: A Matter of Lies and Death" by Steven McCracken, 2001.

A scene of "afflicted" girls in Salem, accusing a woman of witchcraft. (*Washington Post*, "KidsPost", 31 October 2001. © Washington Post.)



The Trial of Katherine Harrison

The 1669 trial of Katherine Harrison of Wethersfield, Connecticut marked a critical moment in the history of witchcraft in New England. Because of the multiple types of witchcraft attributed to her (murder by magic, shape-shifting and spectral appearances, and foretelling the future through diabolical astrology), the sympathetic magistrates trying her case were compelled to define the legal definitions of diabolical witchcraft. This need was compounded by the fact that Connecticut's chief magistrate, John Winthrop Jr., was a dedicated alchemist and student of natural magic himself. This case provides an important alternate perspective to the Salem witchcraft trials because the magistrates remained skeptical of the charges against Harrison, though her neighbors were fully convinced of her malice. Their actions ultimately saved Harrison's life, allowing her to leave Connecticut and move to New York rather than face the gallows. Because of the new legal definitions of witchcraft produced in this case, Connecticut, which had previously been New England's most aggressive witch executioner, became the most tolerant. That colony never executed another witch and had no witch trials for a generation.

This lesson plan calls for students and teacher to conduct a simplified mock trial patterned after the Harrison case. Using information gained from primary source documents, students will present testimony against Harrison, judges will probe their stories, Harrison will defend herself, ministers will render their opinion on the definitions of witchcraft, and the jury will decide the case. Then, if necessary, the magistrates will, as they actually did in the Harrison case, set aside the jury's verdict, to allow her to go free.

Time Frame

Two to four forty-minute class periods. (Conducting all elements of the trial takes four periods, but limiting the number of witnesses and combining trial topics allows for shorter units.)

Objectives and National Standards

1. Students should understand that belief in witchcraft was a very real element of Puritan culture. Virtually everyone believed in magic and the potential for people to ally with the devil to magically harm others.
2. Students will learn the categories of magic attributed to accused witches such as Katherine Harrison, and the evidence necessary to legally prove a suspected witch guilty.
3. Students must know the background factors (potential independence, practice as a healer, ungoverned speech) that caused women to be charged with witchcraft.
4. Students should understand the importance of social rank in Puritan New England and the deference and authority ordinary people showed to their social betters.

5. Students will learn to interpret primary documents, as suggested in Standard Three of the National Standards in Historical Thinking.

6. Students will also realize that past cultures were very different from our own.

Background

This lesson is intended for students studying the colonial period of United States history, as part of their examination of witchcraft in colonial culture. As background preparation for this exercise, teachers should already have exposed their students to the following dimensions of the subject:

The Magical World View: The world of wonders in which seventeenth-century New Englanders lived was a place where the boundary between the visible and invisible worlds was permeable, the war between God and the devil intense, and the influence of invisible powers—whether of the stars and planets or demons and spirits—was pervasive. Such beliefs were not just common among ordinary folk, they were shared by the learned. The scientific literature of the day included a vast body of work on magic and the occult. In New England, as in Europe, many learned elites sought knowledge of those aspects of astrology, alchemy, and natural magic that did not involve the devil's influence. This helps explain magistrates' insistence that there be clear proof of the devil's involvement in order to convict suspected witches. It also explains the ways in which stories of magical harms, preternatural occurrences, and spectral appearances found such ready acceptance in colonial sitting rooms, meetinghouses, taverns, and trial courts.

The Gendered and Social Dimensions of Witchcraft: Although men were charged with witchcraft (usually through a relationship with a female witch suspect), the preponderance of witch suspects in New England were women. Particularly vulnerable were middle-aged or older women, especially those with a history of outspokenness. Women such as the widow Katherine Harrison, who acquired a measure of economic independence in the absence of male supervision (by a husband, father, or adult son), were frequent targets of suspicion. Healers, who practiced their arts on the boundaries between life and death, were also subjects of suspicion when too many cases had negative outcomes. Most witchcraft cases were community events in which long-term rumors of unnatural occurrences gradually escalated into full-scale witchcraft charges.

The Role of Rank in Colonial Society: Although class divisions had not been fully articulated in colonial society, there was a clear and dramatic distinction between ordinary folk and the educated elites who held the leadership positions. Magistrates and ministers came from social groups who expected and received a significant

amount of deference from the rest of the community. Capital court cases, in which ordinary folk came before authorities in full exercise of their powers, were often intimidating experiences for witnesses and terrifying for the accused. In this case reenactment, all members should be highly conscious of their social rank in comparison to others, and act accordingly with deference or authority.

Categories of Magic Practice: Three types of magical practice proved of particular importance in the Harrison case, and students should have a clear understanding of the beliefs surrounding them:

1) Murder and Injury By Magic: Harrison was a local healer, known for her abilities in curing diseases. As suspicions against her grew, many people began to suspect she was using magic to cause physical harm and even death. Rebecca Smith, Eleazar Kinnerly, Alice Wakely, Joan Francis, Goodwife Johnson, and Mary Hale were all certain that Harrison had used magic to injure or kill.

2) Fortune Telling: While Puritans believed in certain kinds of astrology—such as that used to help guide their agricultural planting and harvesting—they drew the line at using astrology to predict the future. Since only God could know what lay ahead, they reasoned, only the devil could help a human gain foreknowledge of the future. Harrison was charged by five witnesses, William Warren, Thomas Maples, Mary Olcott, Samuel Martin, and Elizabeth Smith, with being a fortune teller. Several said she bragged about having learned her divination techniques from William Lilly, a famous English astrologer.

3) Spectral Appearances and Shape-shifting: English witchcraft traditions held that with the devil's help, witches could change their appearance, or appear to be in two places at once. The apparition was often thought to be the devil himself, assuming the shape of his partner witch. Spectral evidence was often part of witchcraft testimony and a critical element of trials. At least three people, Thomas Bray, Joan Francis, and Mary Hale, swore they had seen the specter of Katherine Harrison. One question that most bothered the magistrates is whether the devil could assume the shape of an innocent person, thus leading to that person being falsely accused.

4) Harms: Harrison was associated with a number of activities that seemed to reflect her interference with natural processes. Such events stood out in the memories of the witnesses, especially when they felt personally affected. Thus John Wells felt Harrison had magically bound his legs to keep him from collecting his cows from the field; Thomas Waple said Harrison could spin more wool than was possible without magical assistance; John Graves was frightened by his cows' strange behavior on Harrison's land; Joan Frances believed Harrison magically destroyed hops. These evidences of magical practice, called "harms," could be highly influential in witchcraft cases.

Courtroom Procedures: Judges were the most important factors in any witchcraft case. They interrogated the witnesses, decided what evidence could be heard, and even instructed the jury what to think of evidence. Jurors decided guilt or innocence, but their decision could ultimately be overturned by the presiding tribunal. The Governor and Assistants of the Colony of Connecticut comprised the court in witchcraft cases. The most important member of the trial was the governor, who acted as chief magistrate.

Procedure

Class One: The teacher, who will play the role of John Winthrop Jr., Governor and chief magistrate, will provide background information about the Harrison case to students. Then he or she will assign the roles of characters, especially Minister Bulkeley and Katherine Harrison who will participate each day, distributing the primary source material to students for the role in which they are cast. Each student will read through the source material, translate it into contemporary language, and work with the teacher to make sure they understand the evidence they are to give. During each of the subsequent three classes, witnesses will testify to one aspect of Harrison's alleged magical practices: Murder and Injury by Magic; Shape-shifting and Spectral Appearances; Fortune Telling. On days the students are not actively engaged in testifying or serving as officers of the court, they will be members of the jury, or may be assigned as judges.

Class Two: Murder and Injury By Magic Witnesses:

Goodwife Johnson	Joan Francis
Eleazar Kinnerly	Alice Wakely
Rebecca Smith	Mary Hale

Class Three: Spectral Appearances and Harms Witnesses:

Thomas Bracy	Joan Frances	John Wells
Mary Hal	John Graves	

Class Four: Fortune-Telling, Verdict, and Final Disposition Witnesses:

Thomas Waples	Mary Olcott	Elizabeth Smith
Samuel Martin	William Warren	

Trial Procedure

1) The judge (teacher) introduces the central issue of the day's testimony, instructs witnesses on necessary decorum (all give evidence standing, men doff hats), and calls court into session. The judge calls the defendant to a seat in the courtroom and the trial begins.

2) Judge calls witnesses in order and interrogates them as to the nature of their testimony. The judge, who is skeptical of the witchcraft charges, seeks to challenge or raise doubts about the testimony, even as he urges the witness to present it. He may direct questions to Katherine Harrison, who will seek to discredit the stories. Witnesses are to respond deferentially to the judge's questioning but not change their stories.

3) The judge calls on Katherine Harrison to answer the cumulative charges.

4) The jury is polled as to their feelings about Harrison's guilt or innocence.

5) Regardless of the jury's finding, the judge asks for the minister's opinion regarding the acceptability of evidence regarding that day's issue.

Day One: Many witnesses have testified to evidence of Harrison's power to injure and kill, but only one witness testified to each particular instance of her supposed witchcraft. To prove

Witness Testimonies

(From David D. Hall, *Witch-Hunting in Seventeenth-Century New England: A Documentary History* [1638-1792], Images from Cotton Mather, *On Witchcraft: Being the Invisible Wonders of the World*, 1692.)

Goodwife Johnson 27 May 1668: The relation of the wife of Jacob Johnson, she saith her former husband was employed by Goodman Harrison to go to Windsor with a canoe for meal and he told me as he lay in his bed at Windsor, in the night he had a great box on the ears, and after when he came home he was ill, and Goodwife Harrison did help him with diet drink and plasters[.] But after awhile we sent to Captain Atwood to help my husband in his distress [b]ut the same day that he came at night, I came in at the door, and to the best of my apprehension, I saw the likeness of Goodwife Harrison, with her face towards my husband, and I turned about to lock the door and she vanished away, then my husband's nose fell a bleeding in an extraordinary manner, and so continued, if it were meddled with to his dying day. Sworn in court 27 October 1668 attests John Allyn Secretary. [Source: Wyllys Papers, AMBL.]

Joan Francis, her testimony: About 4 years ago about the beginning of Novemeber in the night just before my child was stricken ill Goodwife Harrison or her shape appeared, and I said the Lord bless me and my child. Here is Goody Harrison. And the child lying on the outside I took it and laid it between me and my husband the child continued strangely ill about three weeks wanting a day and then died had fits we felt a thing run along the sides or side like a whetstone: Robert Francis saith he remembers his wife said that night the child was taken ill, the Lord bless me and my child, here is Goody Harrison.

Joan Francis saith that this summer Goody Harrison's s daughter, came for some emptyings, I told her I had none, quickly after I brewed a barrel of beer, and I had drawn but a little of it, and the 'barrel was not bunged, but the head flew out of one end, and all the hops from the bunged off[f] that end, the barrel was almost a new barrel. had it of Joseph Wright, the head and hops flew to the end of the hall, and gave such a report as scared or feared the children. The said Francis saith that when Goodwife Harrison appeared to tier she saw her by a light, there being then a fire on the hearth and stood with her back to the fire and her face towards her, she lying in another room, the door being just against her bed, and against the fire. Sworn in court 29 October [16]68 attests John: Allyn Secretary.

[inscribed:] Robert Francis's evidence about Katherine Harrison a. witch. [Source: Wyllys Papers, AMBL.]

Eleazar Kinnerly aged about 28 years affirmeth that he and his late wife in her lifetime [did] oft say that she suspected or [] that her mother was bewitched, and so it was reported and judged [by?] many others, and also Mr. Kinnerly saith that he heard his late wife affirm that upon some discourse about Master Robbins his death Katherine Harrison let fall these words (in the presence of sundry persons) when your father [above the line: Mr. Robbins] was *killed*—this seized on and took deep impression in the heart of the said Mary that her father was killed and further saith that Goodman Cole of Hartford hearing the words aforesaid it took deep impresion upon his spirit as suspicious of murder. [Source: Samuel Wyllys Papers, CSL.]

Alice the wife of James Wakely aged about or above 50 years testifieth that being present with Mrs. Robbins in the time of the sickness whereof Mrs. Robbins died, she did see and know that the body of Mrs. Robbins was stiff so that both she and Goodwife Wright senior could not move either her arms or legs although both of them tried to move them, and the same day Mrs. Robbins died, then the whole body was limber extraordinary after her death. [Source: Samuel Wyllys Papers, CSL.]

Rebecca Smith aged shout 75 years testifieth as followeth that formerly being at Jonathan Gilbert his house about 14 days together: Good-wife Gilbert the *wife* of Jonathan Gilbert had a black cap which she had lent to Katherine Harrison, and Katherine Harrison desired to have the said cap, but Goody Gilbert refused to sell it to Katherine, after Goodwife Gilbert wore the said cap and when she had the cap on hr head her shoulders and head was much afflicted; after the cap being pulled off; Goody Gilbert said she was well, again a certain time after Goody Gilbert wore, or put on the said cap: then she was afflicted as before; the said cap being again pulled off, Goody Gilbert again said she was well. Thus being afflicted several times, it was suspected to be by witchcraft after the said Rebecca Smith heard say the cap was burned.

And further the said Rebecca affirmeth that she hath been afflicted near a year last past, being suddenly taken her thigh and leg being stiff like a stick. and dreadful sick, having strange fits insomuch that the said *Rebecca often* said in the hearing of her married daughter and others; she thought or doubted that some evil person had bewitched her, but this both she the said Rebecca and the family do affirm—that -since Friday last past she hath been much better of the fits of the aforesaid afflictions have been quite eased and taken away and whereas on the Lord's day since her said first affliction she and her family have observed, that she was usually the most afflicted on the Sabbath *day*—but now this Lord's day last, she hath not only been freed of the fits aforesaid, but also hath found herself well, excepting such infirmities as do accompany old age.

Mary Hale aged about 20 years testifieth that about the latter end of November, being the 29 day 1668 the said Mary Hale lying in her bed a good fire giving such light that one might see all over the room we heard the said Mary then was the said Mary heard a noise



and presently some things fell on her legs with such violence it would have broken her legs, and then it came upon her stomach and oppressed her so as if it would have pressed the breath out of her body then appeared an ugly shaped thing like a dog, having a head such that I clearly and distinctly know to be the head of Katherine Harrison who was lately imprisoned upon suspicion of witchcraft, Mary saw it walk to and fro in the chamber and went to her father's bedside then came back and disappeared: that day seven night next

After at night lying in her bed something came upon her in like manner as is formerly related first on her legs and feet and then on her crushing and oppressing her very sore, she put forth her hand to feel (because there was no light in the room so as clearly to discern), Mary aforesaid felt a face which she judged to be a woman's face, presently then she had a great blow on her fingers which pained her

2 days after which she complained of to her father and mother, and made her fingers black and blue, during the former passages Mary called to her father and mother but could not wake them till it was gone. After this the 19: day of December in the night (the night being very windy) something came again and spoke this to her saying to Mary aforesaid you said that I would not come again, but are you not afraid of me, Mary said no, the voice replied I will make you afraid before I have done with you, and then presently Mary was crushed and oppressed very much then Mary called often to her father and mother, they lying very near, then the voice said though you do call they shall not hear, till I am gone, then the voice said you said that I preserved my cart to carry me to the gallows, but I will make it a [death?] cart to you (which said words Mary remembered she had only spoke in private to her sister a little before, and to no other)[.] Mary replied she feared her not, because God had kept her, and would keep her still[.] The voice said she had a commission to kill her, Mary asked who gave you the commission, the voice replied God gave me the commission, Mary replied the devil is a liar from the beginning for God will not give commission to murder, therefore it must be from the devil, then Mary was again pressed very much then the voice said you will make known these things abroad when I am gone, but if you will promise me to keep these aforesaid matters secret, I will come no more to afflict you. Mary replied I will tell it abroad, whereas the said Mary mentioneth divers times in this former writing that she heard a voice, the said Mary affirmeth that she did and doth know that it was the voice of Katherine Harrison aforesaid, and also Mary aforesaid affirmeth that the substance of the whole relation is the truth.

[margin:] Sworn in court 25 May 1669 attests John Allyn Secretary about the cat.

Thomas Bracy, aged about 31 years testifieth as follows that formerly James Wakely would have borrowed a saddle of the said Thomas Bracy which Thomas Bracy denied to lend to him, he threatened Thomas and said, it had been better he had lent it to him, also Thomas Bracy being at work the same day making a jacket and a pair of breeches, he labored to his best understanding to set on the sleeves aright on the jacket and seven times he placed the sleeves wrong, setting the elbows on the wrong side and was fain to rip them off and new set them on again, and also the breeches going to cut out the breeches, having two pieces of cloth of different colors, he was so bemoidered [i.e. confused] in that matter, that he cut the breeches one of one color, and the other of another color, in such a manner he was bemoidered in his understanding or acting, yet nevertheless the same day and time he was well in his understanding, and health in other matters and so was forced to leave working that day.

The said Thomas being at Sergeant Hugh Wells his house over against John Harrison's house in Wethersfield, he saw a cart coming towards Joh[n] Harrison's house loaden with hay, on the top of the hay he saw perfectly a red calf's head, the ears standing pert up, and keeping his sight on the cart till the cart came to the barn, the calf vanished, and Harrison stood on the cart, which appeared not to Thomas before, nor could Thomas find or see any calf there at all though he sought to see the calf-after this Thomas Bracy giving out some words, that he suspected Katherine Goody Harrison [in margin: Goody Katherine Harrison] of witchcraft[.] Katherine Harrison met Thomas Bracy and threatened Thomas telling him that she would be even with him.

After that Thomas Bracy aforesaid, being well in his senses and health and perfectly awake, his brothers in bed with him, Thomas aforesaid saw the said James Wakely and the said Katherine Harrison stand by the bedside, consulting to kill him the said Thomas. James Wakely said he would cut out his throat, but Katherine counseled to strangle him, presently the said Katherine seized on Thomas striving to strangle him, and pulled or pinched him so as if his flesh had been pulled from his bones, therefore Thomas groaned, at length his father Martin heard, and spake, then Thomas left groaning and lay quiet a little, and then Katherine fell again to afflicting and pinching, Thomas

again groaning Mr. Martin heard, and arose and came to Thomas who could not speak till Mr. Martin laid his hand on Thomas, then James and Katherine aforesaid went to the bed's feet, his father Martin and his mother stayed watching by Thomas all that night after, and the next day Mr. Martin and his wife, saw the marks of the said affliction, and pinching, dated 13th of August one thousand six hundred sixty and eight. Hadley. Taken upon oath before us Henry Clarke Samuel Smith.



John Graves aged about 39 years testifieth as followeth that formerly going to reap in the meadow at Wethersfield his land he was to work on, lay near to John Harrison's and Katherine Harrison their land. It came into the thoughts of the said John Graves that the said John Harrison and Katherine his wife, being rumored to be suspicious of witchcraft, therefore he would graze his cattle on the rowing of the land of Goodman Harrison aforesaid thinking that if the said Harrisons Aforesaid were witches then something would disturb the quiet feeding of the cattle: He thereupon adventured, and tieth his oxen to his cartrope one to one end the other to other end making the Oxen. surely fast as be could tying 3 or 4, fast knots at each end, and tying his yoke to the cartrope about the middle of the rope between the oxen[.] and himself



went about 10: or 12 pole distant to see if the cattle would quietly feed, as in other places, the cattle stood staring and fed not and looking steadfastly on them he saw the cartrope of it[s] own accord untie and fall to the ground, thereupon he went and tied the rope more fast and more knots at an end, and stood apart as before to see the issue, in a little time the oxen as affrighted fell to running and ran with such violence that he judgeth that the force and speed of their running made the yoke so tied as aforesaid fly above six foot high to his best discerning, The cattle were used ordinarily before to be so tied and fed peaceably in other places, and presently after being so led on other men's ground they fed peaceably as at other times. dated 13 August 1668, Hadley; taken upon oath before us Henry Clark Samuel Smith

Thomas Waples aged about 50 years testifieth that Katherine the late wife of John Harrison deceased, was a noted liar and did report she had read Mr. Lilly's book in England and one that did spin more than he doth judge could be spun without some unlawful help: which yarn did not well prosper as Mrs. Cullick said and that the said Katherine told fortunes matters that were in future time to be accomplish[ed] and further saith that Captain Cullick did turn the said Katherine out of his service for her evil conversation. And further the said Thomas Waples testifieth that Goody Greensmith did before her condemnation accuse Katherine Harrison to be a witch. Dated 13 August 1668. Sworn and exhibited in court October 24, 1669. Attest John Allyn secretary.

Thomas Waples his mark.

(Note: Goody Greensmith was executed as a witch in the Hartford witch-hunt)

Mary Olcott the wife of Thomas Olcott testifieth that when Elizabeth the new wife of Simon Smith was servant to Captain Cullick, the said Elizabeth thought she should have been married to William Chapman, although the said Elizabeth affirmed that Katherine, afterwards the wife of John Harrison affirmed that she should not be married to William, for Katherine said that Elizabeth should be married to one named Simon. Dated 8 August 1668 Mary Olcott [Source: Samuel Wyllys Papers, CSL.]

The deposition of **Samuel Martin** senior aged about fifty years testifieth that being at Katherine Harrison her house in March last: we spake in due course about Mr. Josiah Willard and Samuel Hale senior: then and there she said I shall shortly see them gone both them and I asked her why and she said; do you not know, There was one gone the other day: I asked who was almost gone she said Mr. Willard: for he had been sick and further sayeth not. Sworn in court 25 May 1669 attest John Allyn Secretary. [Source: Samuel Wyllys Papers, CSL.]

Elizabeth the wife of Simon Smith of 30 mile Island aged about 34: years testifieth as followeth, viz. that Katherine Harrison formerly living with her in Captain Cullick his house, the said Katherine was noted by the said Elizabeth, and others, the rest of the family to be a. great or notorious liar, a Sabbath breaker, and one who told fortunes, and told the said Elizabeth her fortune, that her husband's name should be Simon, and also told the said Elizabeth some other matters, that did come to pass, and also the said Katherine would oft speak and boast, of her great familiarity with Mr. Lilly one that told fortunes, and foretold many matters that in future time were to be accomplished, and also the said Katherine did often spin, so great a quantity of fine linen yarn, as the said Elizabeth did never know, nor hear of any other woman that could spin so much, and further the said Elizabeth saith that Captain Cullick observing the evil conversation in word and deed of the said Katherine, therefore he turned the said Katherine out of his service, one matter or cause was because the said Katherine, told fortunes, such matters as were to be accomplished in after times, dated July 29, 1668: taken upon oath 28 September 1668 before me John Allyn Assistant. [Source: Wyllys Papers, AMBL.]

John Wells—When my father lived in the house where Joseph Wright liveth some mornings our cows were late before they came home and my mother sent me to see if I could meet them. I went once or twice but the second time I was sent I went about halfway cross the street and could go no further my legs were bound to my thinking with a napkin but [I] could see nothing I looked toward the cattle that were in the street by Goodman Not's shop and I saw Goodwife Harrison rise from a cow that was none of her own with a pail in her hand and made haste home and when she was over her own stile I was loosed. 29 June 1668. This was about 7 or 8 years ago. John Wells. This was owned and acknowledged by John Wells before me Samuel Wells. [Source: Samuel Wyllys Papers, CSL]

William Warren testified in open court that Katherine Harrison was a common and professed fortune teller, and some other matters concerning Katherine Harrison needful to be considered of; because they were not (as I conceive) taken in writing

William Warren says that Katherine Harrison did express that she was a fortunes teller and did tell him and Simon Sackett and Elizabeth Bateman and my master's daughter our fortunes. She said she had her

skill from Lilly [and she looked on my hands]. This was about 17 years ago. Exhibited in court and sworn 30 October 1668. Attest John Allyn Secretary. [Source: Wyllys Papers, AMBL.]

Katherine Harrison: *(As suspicions against Harrison grew, her enemies began to commit acts of vandalism against her property. In this deposition, Harrison details the injuries she has suffered, and asks the court for help in achieving redress.)*

A complaint of several grievances, of the Widow Harrison's which she desires the honored court to take cognizance of and as far as may be to give her relief in.

May it please this honored court, to have patience with me a little; having none to complain to, but the fathers of the commonweal; and yet meeting with many injuries; which necessitates me, to look out; for some relief: I am bold to present you with those few lines; as a relation of the wrongs, that I suffer humbly craving your serious consideration of my state a widow; of my wrongs (which I conceive) are great, and that as far as the rules of justice and equity will allow, I may have right, and a due recompense; that what I would present to you in the first place is we had a yoke of oxen one of which spoiled at our stile before our door, with blows upon the back and side, so bruised that he was altogether unserviceable; about a fortnight or three weeks after the former, we had a cow spoiled, her back broke and two of her ribs, neatly I had a heifer in my barnyard; my earmark of which was cut out, and other earmarks set on; neatly I had a sow that had young pigs earmarked (in the sty) after the same manner; nextly I had a cow at the side of my yard, her jawbone broke, and one of her hooves, and a hole bored in her side, neatly I had a three-year-old heifer in the meadow stuck with a knife or some weapon and wounded to death.

Nextly I had a cow in the street wounded in the bag as she stood before my door, in the street. Nextly, I had a sow went out into the woods, came home with ears lugged [roughly pulled] and one of her hind legs cut off. Lastly my corn in Mile meadow much damnified with horses, they being staked upon it; it was wheat; all which injuries as they do savor of envy so I hope they will be looked upon, by this honored court according to their nature and judged according to their demerit, that so your poor suppliant may find some redress who is bold to subscribe

Katherine Harrison [Source: Samuel Wyllys Papers, CSL]

Gershom Bulkeley The answer of some ministers to the questions propounded to them by the honored magistrates, 20 October 1669.

To the first question whether a plurality of witnesses be necessary, legally to evidence one and the same individual fact: we answer,

That, if the proof of the fact [of witchcraft] do depend wholly upon testimony, there is then a necessity of a plurality of witnesses, to testify to one and the same individual fact; and without such a plurality, there can be no legal evidence of it. John 8:17 the testimony of two men is true; that is legally true, or the truth of order, and this chapter alleges to vindicate the sufficiency of the testimony given to prove that individual truth, that he himself was the Messiah or Light of the world. 12. Matthew 26:59-60.

To the second question whether the preternatural apparitions of a person, legally proved, be a demonstration of familiarity with the devil? We answer, that it is not the pleasure of the most high, to suffer the wicked one to make, an undistinguishable representation, of any innocent person in a way of doing mischief, before a plurality of witnesses. The reason is because, this would utterly evacuate all human testimony; no man could testify, that he saw this person do this or that thing, for it might be said, that it was the devil in his shape.

To the third and fourth questions together: whether a vicious person's foretelling some future event, or revealing of a secret, be a demonstration of familiarity with the devil? We say this much,

That those things, whether past, present or to come, which are indeed secret, that is cannot be known by human skill in arts, or strength of reason arguing from the course of nature, nor are made known by divine revelation either mediate or immediate, nor by information from man, must needs be known (if at all) by information from the devil: and hence the communication of such things, in way of divination (the person pretending the certain knowledge of them) seems to us, to argue familiarity with the devil, inasmuch as such a person, doth thereby declare his receiving of the devil's testimony, and yield the devil's instrument to communicate the same to others. [Source: Wyllys Papers, AMBL]



Witches in the Atlantic World

This topic examines the beliefs about witchcraft and the nature of witch-hunts in a variety of cultures that rim the Atlantic Ocean. The focus is on areas that participated, either passively or actively, in the European westward expansion from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century. Those areas include western Europe, England and Scotland, parts of West Africa, and American Indian groups, all of whom felt the impact of this expansion and were brought into close contact because of it. The reading material noted under “Suggested Strategies” is available in my text, *Witches Of the Atlantic World: A Historical Reader and Primary Sourcebook* (New York University Press, 2000). The lesson plan is adapted from my college-level course on the same subject.

It is important that teachers make some assumptions about the subject and convey these as givens or “facts” to the students. Students have to understand that before the eighteenth century, people everywhere lived in a world populated by invisible supernatural forces, their presence sensed in even the most mundane aspects of life. Witchcraft was one way to explain the presence of evil, to establish a cause for misfortune and disease, to justify natural occurrences like storms and earthquakes, to give meaning to mysterious events, and to provide answers to problems that seemingly defied reasonable explanations. Magic both caused those events and could be used to undo the harmful effects.

The nature and extent of the power of those forces varied from culture to culture. In some, it came from a variety of gods or spiritual entities capable of doing both good and evil deeds. When the gods inflicted harm it was sometimes in retaliation for human behavior that violated a sacred practice. Or misfortune could be caused by people thought to be manipulating a spiritual power through magic to cause harm. Calamities, if not due to divine providence, could be traced to an evil human agent, a witch, working through that invisible spiri-

tual realm. It was necessary in the first case to appease the gods through some socially acceptable magical rituals and in the second to control, banish or even destroy those people with malicious intent.

Christianity, on the other hand, associated magical practice solely with evil doings. The witch was one who received his or her power from an evil force called Satan, a devil, a ruler of darkness who was determined to overthrow the true deity by subverting his kingdom on earth. Although the notion of an evil force was transcultural, the devil idea—a separate and single spiritual malevolency—is a unique part of the Judeo-Christian (and the Islamic) tradition that distinguishes European witchcraft beliefs and witch-hunts from many other societies.

Anthropologists make a distinction between witches and sorcerers. Witches are those whose power is inborn, part of their very nature, and possibly due to some physiological abnormality. Sorcerers differ in that their skill requires the use of artifacts, is learned rather than inherited, and is a deliberately directed magic usually for harmful purposes. Historians generally ignored these distinctions and lump both groups in one category of occult practitioners called witches or use the two terms interchangeably.

The scholars who study these witchcraft beliefs and rituals generally do not believe that the practices have any concrete reality beyond the psychological. The discussion in the classroom should not focus on the magical practices themselves. The teacher's emphasis should be on the social, emotional, and religious context of occurrences attributed to witchcraft and the role of witches and witch-hunts in these communities rather than the magical rituals themselves.



Death and demons surround a dying miser. Hieronymus Bosch, a fifteenth-century artist, often painted his visions of hell, death, demons, and the devil, to express his profound belief in man's inevitable sinfulness and damnation. The demons—who seem to peek around the bed and through the door—also illustrate Europeans' assumptions that God and the devil were constantly at work in their lives. (Hieronymus Bosch, "Death and the Miser," ca. 1485-1490, Samuel H. Kress Collection, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.)

Objectives and National Standards

- 1) To interpret primary documents, as suggested by Standard Three of the National Standards for in Historical Thinking.

2) To broaden the student's understanding of other cultures and their religious beliefs.

3) To establish who are the most likely people to be accused of witchcraft and why some people are more likely to be persecuted as witches than others.

4) To learn why witch-hunts occur at particular moments in history, what sets them off, and what effects they have on their social environments.

5) To understand that there are a variety of beliefs about witchcraft as well as universal assumptions.

6) To put what happened in Salem, Massachusetts in 1692 into an historical context.

Procedures:

Each topic should begin with the posing of a provocative question or the reading of a primary source that is analyzed and discussed in class.

Topical Outline

Part I: Definitions of terms followed by discussion of folk traditions:

- 1) Ancient folk traditions of the European continent
- 2) American Indian spiritual traditions
- 3) Spiritual focus of West African societies along the Atlantic coast and African American derivations

Part II: European religious attitudes toward witches from four different perspectives:

- 1) The Roman Catholic church
- 2) The newer Reformation churches
- 3) The English Protestant world
- 4) Why women were most often accused of witchcraft

Part III: Anglo-American (English colonies) events

- 1) Magical folk traditions in America
- 2) Puritan reaction to witchcraft
- 3) Witches in New England before the Salem event

Part IV: Salem, Massachusetts, 1692

- 1) The events
- 2) The trials and executions
- 3) How it ended

Suggested Strategies and Reading

As an introduction during the first class, pose the question of whether witchcraft really exists. Define witchcraft as the belief in the power to change the course of events using some magical ritual—a charm, a curse, a spell—or an emanation from the eye. Emphasize that the causal connection is psychological and depends on the power of suggestion. Only believers will respond to magical rituals. Nature, of course, is immune. On the other hand, if an earthquake follows a magical incantation, it can be reassuring to be able to blame it on a human agent.

Pose a secondary question of who is a witch? Students may refer to movies, TV depictions, Harry Potter, or other literary sources. These are all modern ideas and may not be related to the historical notions. Some may refer to the Christian definition of Satanic pacts and servants of the devil. A good working definition is that witches are people who think they can influence spiritual forces

directly in order to affect material existence. Not all people agree on whether this power to manipulate occult forces is a natural or acquired ability. Nor is there agreement as to the nature of the spiritual forces or how to appeal to them. Magical rituals differ radically in different parts of the world and the effectiveness of any ritual or belief depends largely on cultural conditioning. What seems to work in one culture *does* not necessarily have any influence on those who are unfamiliar with that practice.

Content for Topics

Part I: Definitions of terms followed by discussion of folk traditions:

1. Ancient folk traditions of the European continent:

There is a witchcraft lore in Europe that is much older than Christianity and has little connection to those religious beliefs. Astrologers in Europe consulted the stars to foretell the future. Cunning folk on the continent and England carried on an oral tradition of healing with herbs invested with magical powers. Ordinary people in Europe were not concerned about Satan's involvement with their magical practices unless provoked to think along those lines by church officials (1). Among the lay people in Europe witches were not always a menace to society. They had much to offer. Only after contact with Christianity did the distinction between those witches who were evil and those who were socially useful become blurred.

Who were the people most likely to be accused of witchcraft?

Some may have been "cunning folk," known to be skilled in the use of magic. More likely they were people who stood out because of odd or antisocial behavior. Folk in the Atlantic world shared the view that evil witches were deviant people who threatened to disrupt the harmony of the community and could not get along with their neighbors (2). Labeled a witch or sorcerer, such a person became a visible, physical presence that could be blamed for calamities that beset the community.

2. American Indian spiritual traditions:

Among the Indians, the shaman acted much as the cunning folk in Europe—curing illness, divining the future, resolving interpersonal conflicts. Preventing evil doings was more a matter of avoidance—not wanting to offend the spirits because that would disrupt a cosmic balance. The notion of a totally good God was an absurdity since their experience taught that all gods were capable of doing good or causing harm (3). Misfortune then was not so much the result of evil acts as of broken taboos, of human failings. Ritual magic was essential to restore the balance in the cosmic order by appealing to the good will of the spirits. The shaman, the magical practitioner, was a respected person in Indian communities. These religious practices were demonized by Europeans.

It is possible that the belief in evil witchcraft and the occurrence of witch-hunts among New England Indians were the result of contact with European ideas and European cruelty and not part of an indigenous belief system (4). North American Indians may have had no concept of a separate evil power among their own gods, but they did associate the acts of their adversaries, especially the Europeans, and the diseases brought with them, with malevolent forces.

3. Africans and African Americans:



This akuaba doll promises fertility to those women who carry it with them. (Ghana, ca. 1970s, Library of Congress, African Section, African and Middle Eastern Division [120].)

Africans, like their other sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Atlantic counterparts, lived in a world inhabited by spirits that continually acted on the destiny of human beings. Basic to the cosmos of many Africans was the twin belief that the spirits of the dead continue to reside in the village among the living and that all human suffering and adversity has a spiritual cause (5).

The harmful effects of these spirits, sometimes due to ancestors who have been offended, could be relieved only by appropriate rituals performed by the witch doctor or Obeah as a healer. Like the shaman, the witch doctor's skill in magical healing was especially respected.

A strong belief in the spiritual basis of disease and death along with the sensitivity to witchcraft and sorcery, was carried over to America by Africans brought as slaves (6). But for Africans in the English colonies the experience of cultural exchange was very different from that of the native American peoples. The weak physical position of the African as a slave cultivated more contempt than fear and thus the African worldview was ignored. The English made little attempt to convert Africans to their Christian beliefs. The result was the retention of many shared African ideas about the spiritual realm and the imaginative merging of magical practices taken from a variety of cultures but often hidden from the eyes of Europeans. Various types of sorcery, called Obeah and condemned as conjuring or witchcraft by the English, predominated in the English colonies (7).

There is no doubt that the strong spiritual component of traditional African religions contributed to the continuing belief in witchcraft and the fear of ghosts, those spirits of the dead who might return to haunt the living who had offended them in life. Because of this idea that the spirits of the dead continue to reside among the living and can cause harm (or protect the family if adequately venerated), it was essential to show respect toward those who had died. Funerals, then, are an important source of information on attitudes toward witchcraft and sorcery among Africans and African Americans (8).

Part II: European religious attitudes from three perspectives:

Within Christian churches, mystical rituals were considered part of the worship of God and, therefore, by definition a valid exercise of religious expression. Outside the church similar rituals, said the theologians, appealed to the devil, the anti-Christ. Such practices were Satanic in origin. Most importantly, all magic of the folk or of other religious traditions, by their very nature non-Christian, were associated with devil worship and had to be destroyed. Witch-hunts became moral crusades intent on clearing the world of some category of people identified as evil agents, servants of Satan, and called witches (9). It was assumed that witches were bent on corrupting the particular church, whether of Protestant or Roman Catholic.

These notions regarding the source of the witch's power partially explains the ferocious and sporadic witch-hunts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in the European world. Witch hunts became a way to assure a conformity of religious practices in Europe and America, in moral terms to institute a communal spiritual cleansing. Destruction of other belief systems was supported by a mandate to wipe out the forces opposing the true God, thus justifying large-scale witch-hunt.

1. Roman Catholic:

The Roman Catholic stereotype of the witch is described vividly in the fifteenth-century publication called *Malleus Maleficarum* (10). Also known as the "Hammer of Witches," it was compiled by two Dominican priests and inquisitors in Germany: the Inquisitor General, Father James Sprenger, and Father Heinrich Kramer, called by his Latinized name, Institoris, who was the main author. The work became the most important source of information on witches and witchcraft for both Protestants and Catholics and was consulted by theologians as late as the eighteenth century. According to the *Malleus*, the witch was one who, through an agreement with the devil, acquired special powers to do both harm and solve problems or cure sickness. The theory about the demonic focus of magical practices lingers on in the mythology of witchcraft.

2. Newer Reformation Churches:

Witch-hunters became even more zealous as the Reformation heated up on the continent. The leaders of newly created non-Catholic churches (Protestants) were anxious to impose their ideas on the uninitiated and the partially Christianized folk who continued to practice older occult rituals and to force their ideas on Catholics within their communities. Protestantism had to secure its place by requiring conformity. Political leaders may have found witch trials useful means of getting rid of their secular opposition, but the religious justification, the urge to combat the devil, provided the moral force.

Courts in Protestant countries on the continent also followed the inquisitorial procedures that had been used in Catholic countries to stamp out witchcraft. Torture remained the most effective means of eliciting confessions of diabolical collusion. Once found guilty, the accused, usually after confessing, were executed by burning at the stake (more likely garroted first). Such admissions of guilt and the public executions that followed, in turn, confirmed the morality and legitimacy of the new Protestant regimes (11).

3. *The English Protestant World:*

In England, although confessions to witchcraft were desired, the procedures and definition of the crime differed. Witchcraft, according to the English civil authorities, was a crime against society and, even though it might be heresy in the eyes of the church, the accused were subject to secular and not ecclesiastical law. The civil authorities were prohibited from using torture as a method of eliciting confessions. For a definition of the crime of witchcraft and how it was treated in the courts, Michael Dalton's seventeenth-century handbook is especially useful as a source (12).

4. *Why women were most often accused of witchcraft:*

Witchcraft, in the European experience, had also come to be a peculiarly female act (13). It was one of the few crimes in the Anglo-American world in which the husband was not held accountable for his wife's illegal actions. Christian theologians, both Catholic and Protestant, set out extensive evidence to explain why women were more vulnerable to Satan's appeal than men were, justifying the greater persecution of women during witch-hunts. In most places the stereotype of the witch was of an old woman, widowed or never married, poor and dependent on others for sustenance, with an unpleasant and abrasive personality, who was often at odds with others (14). Such disagreeable people became useful scapegoats in times of adversity.

Part III: Anglo-American events

The work in this section is on the New England experience. There were very few witchcraft trials in the more southerly colonies and only one execution (15). In contrast, sixty-one people were tried for witchcraft in Connecticut and Massachusetts between 1647 and 1691 (before Salem) and fifteen or sixteen of them were executed (16). Additionally, thirty people were convicted in the Salem court in 1692 and of those nineteen were executed.

1. *Magical folk traditions:*

In America, where few people were persecuted for witchcraft before the 1660s, belief in magical powers was still part of the mental baggage the Puritans brought from old England (17). Although such practices were condemned by the clergy, they continued to be used when orthodox methods of healing failed. Many of these beliefs and practices were exposed during the witch trial testimonies and can also be found in the writings of theologians, especially Increase and Cotton Mather. Of particular interest is Cotton Mather's 1689 *Memorable Providences* (18). Here he describes what he thought was evidence of the devil's work in the Puritan community. In the process he provides a concise outline of his beliefs about witches, their powers, and why they

appeared in Massachusetts. His stories may well have contributed to popular fears by confirming folk tales of miraculous happenings and paving the way for the more vigorous prosecution of witches in New England.

2. *Puritan Reaction to Witchcraft:*

While playing up the reality of the devil, Puritans may have actually encouraged dependence on sorcerers and charmers to do what was forbidden. The Puritan clergy put their followers in the intolerable position of asserting the reality of witchcraft while denying any effective and legitimate cure of its evil effects (19). It is no accident that cases of religious possession, sometimes interpreted as bewitchment, usually occurred in situations of intense religious experience. The strengthened belief in witchcraft may have been an essential element of the peculiar Puritanism developing in America.

3. *Witches in New England Before the Salem Events:*

Of the many incidences of witchcraft in colonial New England, the most dramatic events were connected with cases of demonic possession. Two cases that have left detailed first-hand accounts provided opportunities to focus in on the fears and beliefs widespread in the English colonies: the Goodwin children's bizarre behavior reported by Samuel Willard and Elizabeth Knapp's experiences reported by Cotton Mather (20). Students can read those reports and use them as a basis for discussion.

Part IV: Salem, Massachusetts, 1692

There is something about the Salem experience that takes it beyond the ordinary in a world that routinely executed witches.

The events of 1692 continue to both repel and fascinate the public after more than three hundred years. The drama of the persecutions has captured the literary imagination worldwide as it has repeatedly over the years intrigued American scholars. The events have not only led to a continuing controversy over the causes of such a horror, but also to the question of whether Salem was somehow outside the tradition of European witch-hunting. As the last of the witch-hunts to occur in the English-speaking world, Salem represents a culmination and useful ending for a study of witchcraft and witch-hunts at the end of the seventeenth century.

1. *The events:*

Some time should be devoted to a description of the political problems of Massachusetts in the 1680s, the continuation of Indian warfare, the factionalism in Salem Village because of the desire for independence from the Salem Town, and the dispute between Samuel Parris and his opponents (21). With that as a background, describe the events in the Parris household that led



Matthew Hopkins, a famous seventeenth-century "witch finder general," illustrates the many familiars that accompany witches. (From Matthew Hopkins, *The Discovery of Witches* . . . [London: R. Royston, 1647].)

the girls to accuse three women of witchcraft and the peculiar role played by Tituba through her confession (22).

2. The trials and executions:

Choose one of the accused witches and have the students read the testimony out loud in the class to dramatize the incident (23). Bring their attention to the use of spectral evidence and hearsay, neither of which had been used to convict people in earlier New England trials.

3. How it ended:

In October, the Governor dissolved the court of Oyer and Terminer, effectively ending the use of spectral evidence. There were no further executions for witchcraft in Salem. The trials continued in January under the aegis of a different set of rules that forbade the use of spectral evidence and with a less emotionally charged judicial body. Thirty-three more trials were conducted in several locations but only three people were convicted under the new rules. These three were also reprieved by the Governor who decided that they were not responsible for their actions.

In the aftermath there was a great deal of remorse in the colony. On 17 December 1696 the General Court of Massachusetts tried to make amends by declaring a day of fast and prayer. The day of prayer was to be held throughout the province on 14 January 1697. That proclamation led to a series of individual apologies for participation in the Salem trials. A good example of this remorse is the apology of a group of jurymen that was first published in 1700 (24). □

Endnotes

1. Richard Godbeer, *The Devil's Dominion: Magic and Religion in Early New England* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 30-46.
2. Geoffrey Parrinder, *Witchcraft: European and African* (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), 192-97.
3. Fernando Cervantes, *The Devil in the New World: The Impact of Diabolism in New Spain* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994), 40-46.
4. Alfred Cave, "Indian Shamans and English Witches," *Essex Institute Historical Collections* 128 (1992): 241-54.
5. John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (New York: Praeger, 1969), 107-18; Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Random House, 1974), 210-12.
6. Philip D. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint: Black Culture in the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake Lowcountry* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 612-25.
7. William D. Piersen, *Black Yankees: The Development of an Afro-American Subculture in Eighteenth-Century New England* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), 80-86.
8. Morgan, 640-42.
9. Brian P. Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 2d ed. (New York: Longman, 1995), 27-67.
10. Sections from this work are reprinted in *Witches of the Atlantic World*, Elaine G. Breslaw, ed. (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 21-27, 289-95.
11. Levack, *Witch-Hunt*, 100-19.
12. Reprinted in *Witchcraft in the Atlantic World*, 365-68.
13. John Putnam Demos, *Entertaining Satan: Witchcraft and the Culture of Early New England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 57-64, 86-94.
14. There are many works that focus on this misogyny but see especially Christina Larner, *Enemies of God: The Witch-Hunt in Scotland* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), 94-102; Joseph Klaits, *Servants of Satan: The Age of Witch Hunts* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 65-74; Carol F. Karlsen, *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman: Witchcraft in Colonial New England* (New York: Norton, 1987), 117-52.
15. Richard Beale Davis, *Intellectual Life in the Colonial South 1585-1763*, 3 vols. (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1978), II: 653-62.

16. John Putnam Demos, *Entertaining Satan: Witchcraft and the Culture of New England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 401-408; Godbeer, *Devil's Dominion*, 238-42.
17. David Hall, *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment: Popular Religious Beliefs in Early England* (New York: Knopf, 1989), 71-110.
18. A section of this work is in *Witches of the Atlantic World*, 42-46.
19. Richard Weisman, *Witchcraft, Magic, and Religion in Seventeenth-Century Massachusetts* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984), 23-29.
20. These reports are reprinted in *Witches of the Atlantic World*, 235-255.
21. On this factional conflict see especially Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed: The Social Origins of Witchcraft* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974).
22. Elaine G. Breslaw, *Tituba, Reluctant Witch of Salem: Devilish Indians and Puritan Fantasies* (New York: New York University Press, 1996).
23. Some of these testimonies are reprinted in *Witches of the Atlantic World*. The most complete collection of legal records relating to the Salem court cases is *The Salem Witchcraft Papers: Verbatim Transcripts of the Legal Documents*, 3 vols., ed. Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum (New York: Da Capo Press, 1977).
24. In *Witches of the Atlantic World*, 420-21.

Suggested Reading for Students

Readable popularized versions of the Salem episodes include Bryan F. Le Beau, *The Story of the Salem Witch Trials* (Saddle River, N. J.: Prentice Hall, 1998) and Frances Hill, *A Delusion of Satan: The Full Story of the Salem Witch Trials* (New York: Doubleday, 1995). Marion Starkey's highly dramatized *The Devil in Massachusetts: A Modern Enquiry into the Salem Witch Trials* (New York: Doubleday, 1949) tells a fascinating story but many of the details have been disputed by scholars. Arthur Miller's play, *The Crucible* (1953), is well worth reading for its depiction of the generalized fear in Salem that was at the root of the witch hunt even though the love interest angle is pure fiction. The movie, which is very faithful to the play, is available on video.

Suggested Reading

- Cohn, Norman. *Europe's Inner Demons: An Enquiry Inspired by the Great Witch-Hunt*. New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1975.
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Elaine G. Breslaw, professor emerita of history at Morgan State University, teaches on an adjunct basis at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. She has taught at Johns Hopkins University, University of West Indies in Barbados as a Fulbright Fellow, and published several books and articles on the history of witchcraft, early American medical practice, and colonial Maryland intellectual history.

Tituba

Bernard Rosenthal

In popular imagination the Salem witch trials began with the slave Tituba telling tales of voodoo to a circle of girls who then reacted in fright with bizarre behavior leading to accusations of witchcraft. Although discredited as an act that actually occurred, this story continues to appear regularly in popular narratives. At the heart of our memory of Salem, Tituba remains.

That narratives about her are fictitious does not diminish her significant role in giving credibility to accusations of witchcraft. Because Tituba confessed to witchcraft early on, probably after being beaten by her master, the Rev. Samuel Parris, she gave credibility to the belief that the minions of Satan were assaulting New England's children of God (1). To say that her confession precipitated the trials is inaccurate. To say that it mattered is correct. All evidence of a conspiracy of witches counted and her evidence was powerful. From her tale, either coerced or given as a strategic defense against potential witchcraft accusations, a large body of literature, scholarly and fictional, has emerged, including such modern historical treatments as Elaine Breslaw's *Tituba, Reluctant Witch of Salem* (1996) and Maryse Condé's fictional narrative, *I, Tituba* (1992) (2). Who was this woman who so captured the imagination of future generations?

In terms of hard facts, we know very little. She was the servant of Parris, which almost certainly meant his slave. She probably came from Barbados, although that is not certain. No legal document identifying her as a married woman or giving us a clue as to her origin survives from the time of her confession in 1692. The first printed reference to Tituba as a married woman appears in Robert Calef's *More Wonders of the Invisible World* (1700), in which he published an account by Nathaniel Cary of his experiences in 1692. Cary refers to an unnamed Indian male and "his Wife, who also was a Slave, [who] was imprison'd for Witchcraft" (3). Although Cary does not name her, the reference is almost certainly to Tituba.

Subsequently, in *A Modest Enquiry Into the Nature of Witchcraft*, published posthumously in 1702, Reverend John Hale wrote that Parris "had also an Indian Man servant, and his Wife . . ." (4). The context leaves it unambiguously clear that the reference is to John Indian and Tituba.

There is absolutely no reason to doubt Cary's or Hale's recollection eight years after the event. However, there is good reason to speculate on how to interpret these observations about the

marital status of Tituba. Did Cary know the marital status of Tituba? Did he infer it? We do not know. The closeness of Hale to the events, to such principle characters as Samuel Parris, gives powerful credibility to his authority in this matter. Yet it remains worth considering that these recollections of Tituba as a married woman do not give us much insight into what that marriage actually meant. From a legal point of view, there is no evidence that it meant anything. That is, the legal documents of 1692 and of the years following routinely define the marital status of women in warrants, in depositions, and in other documents related to trial or pretrial events. Women are sometimes described as widows, as wives, as single women. They do not ordinarily go undescribed. Tituba is described neither as a widow, as a single woman,

or as a wife. Obviously enough, her status as servant or slave places her in a special category. Why not record her as a married woman? The answer is murky and beyond the scope of the inquiry here. The issue centers on what a slave marriage meant in 1692 in Massachusetts Bay Colony. The absence of any reference to Tituba as married in legal documents from 1692 and later suggests that the "marriage" seen by Cary and Hale may have meant something very different from the marriages of Cary and Hale to their own wives. So we do not know for sure if Tituba had any voluntary connection to John Indian. Neither do we know if Tituba lived with John Indian as man and wife in the same sense



Tituba teaches Betty Parris, Abigail Williams, and other children their first lessons in witchcraft. This, however, is a myth. (From Henrietta D. Kimball, *Witchcraft Illustrated* [Boston: George A. Kimball, Publisher, 1892].)

that Cary and Hale did with their wives. Therefore, Tituba remains elusive regarding her origin or the nature of her relationship with John Indian (5).

That notwithstanding, there has been scholarly speculation in abundance as to who she was, most recently from Elaine Breslaw and Peter Charles Hoffer (6). Breslaw has also offered an argument regarding the offspring of Tituba and John Indian. Whether accurate or not, Breslaw's case is speculative, as is both her case and Hoffer's for Tituba's ethnicity. Breslaw argues that Tituba was from Barbados and of Indian ethnicity, but Hoffer argues that she was of African ethnicity. Each argument relies on the etymology of her name. By this connection, Breslaw sees her as an Arawak Indian while Hoffer sees her as a Yoruban African. Although each work has much useful material, the etymological argument is useless. Nobody knows how Tituba received her name. Although Breslaw speculates on a document carrying a similar name, the document does not in any way address her ethnicity, nor is it clear that it refers to Tituba. Even if we could validate that document irrefutably as referring to Tituba and learn who gave her the name, we would still not have hard evidence as to her ethnicity. We need better evidence to learn her ethnicity. Whoever named her might have had a multitude of possible reasons for the choice.

Yet, we have good reason to believe that in a cultural sense her ethnicity, to a degree, is known. That is, the legal documents of her day do define her as "Indian." Whether that means an "Indian" from Barbados or from elsewhere remains unproven and unknown. However, the persistence of that identification can assure us that she was not "African" by the cultural definitions of her time. The legal documents made clear distinctions between "Indians" and "Negroes"

and others in the community were defined as "negro," thus we have strong evidence that New Englanders made this ethnic distinction (7). Tituba is consistently defined as an "Indian" and never as a "Negro." That distinction, however, does not tell us much of anything about the place of her origin, nor does it rule out the possibility that she had some African or some Caucasian connection. We only know that if we believe that race is culturally constructed, then we have a 100 percent certainty that she was "Indian." This does not mean, however, that Tituba could not have been biologically connected to someone from Africa. Such an analysis is beyond the reach of normal scholarship. To settle this kind of matter would require the discovery of her bones and DNA testing. Short of that, we know that the culture made the distinction between her as an Indian and others as "Negroes."

In spite of our uncertainty about Tituba, it remains possible to tell what hard evidence about her exists and to note the myths that have evolved from that evidence. Early in 1692 Tituba was

accused of witchcraft. She underwent sustained questioning in response to that accusation, eventually confessing to witchcraft and telling stories about others involved in witchcraft, without naming them. As far as we can tell from the surviving documents, she dropped out of the picture after her confession, except for a court appearance in 1693. She went to jail, probably remaining there until May 1693 when she was brought before the judicial system and released. What happened to her after that is unknown. The historical Tituba disappears.

Tituba then enters the world of myth, as does most of Salem. Probably the first overtly fictional work to treat Tituba came in 1828 when John Neal published *Rachel Dyer* and described her as "a woman of diabolical power" (8). But the modern myth of Tituba begins in the mind of Charles W. Upham. When Upham first wrote of Tituba in 1831 in his *Lectures on Witchcraft, Comprising a History of the Delusion in Salem in 1692*, referring to her as an

old Indian woman, he offered no dramatic creation of myth. However, in the book that followed in 1867, *Salem Witchcraft*, Upham created the narrative from which almost all accounts of Tituba would follow (9). Upham introduced the notion that Tituba had brought frightening tales of witchcraft from her homeland. More pointedly, Upham created the image of Tituba and a circle of girls participating in narratives that "inflamed the imaginations of the credulous" (10). This "circle" and this image of Tituba telling stories, took hold powerfully in American imagination, popular and scholarly. There is no authority for this ever having happened. No contemporary document carries the story invented in the nineteenth century.

From time to time scholars have cited Hale as they make a speculative leap to tell the story of magic and a "circle" of girls. Chadwick Hansen, for example, cites the following from Hale, connecting it to the girls originally claiming affliction:

I knew one of the afflicted persons who (as I was credibly informed) did try with an egg and a glass to find her future husband's calling, till there came up a coffin, that is, a specter in likeness of a coffin. And she was afterwards followed with diabolical molestation to her death, and so died a single person—a just warning to others to take heed of handling the Devil's weapons lest they get a wound thereby.

Another, I was called to pray with, being under sore fits and vexations of Satan. And upon examination I found that she had tried the same charm, and after her confession of it and manifestation of repentance for it, and our prayers to God for her, she was speedily released from those bonds of Satan (11).

The inference in citing this passage is that the cured person was Elizabeth Parris, daughter of the Reverend Parris and one of those



In this scene, Tituba holds up a mirror for Mary Warren in which she sees Tituba's father, an "Obi man" in San Salvador who practices harmful witchcraft by melting a wax figure representing the person. Tituba explains, "That is the way the Obi men destroy the people they dislike! That is the way someone is wasting and consuming you." (From Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, "Giles Corey of Salem Farms," in *The Poetical Works of Longfellow*. [Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1902] p. 727.)

originally afflicted, and that the other was her cousin, Abigail Williams, also of the Parris household. Conceding that “we have no way of being sure” that these were the two, Hansen then goes on to invoke the “[t]radition . . . that they were assisted in their occult experiments by Tituba” (12).

Hansen is not alone in making this link between Hale and Tituba. In fact, this statement, referred to by many, represents by far the strongest piece of “evidence” for such a link. Yet there is nothing there. Hale never connects his egg and glass story to Tituba, nor to those involved in the initial outbreak. To find stories of various kinds of attempts at “magic” in 1692 is a pretty easy task. The documents published in Boyer and Nissenbaum’s *Salem-Village Witchcraft* contain numerous anecdotes of such magic, and they contain specific references to people practicing them who were clearly not among the initial accusers or afflicted (13). So to find one example of unnamed people, and to tie that example to an unnamed woman, Tituba, tells us much more about the mythic connection of Tituba and a circle of girls than it tells us about historical events. It impresses upon us the powerful image of Tituba as the precipitating person of the Salem events, a dark icon of American mythology.

The myth of this dark woman merges with another myth, that of Eve as the originator of sin and death (14). Or one may think of the unleashing of evil into the world in the Sumarian myth of *Gilgamesh* or in the familiar story of Pandora’s Box. The pains of the world come from the action of a woman, and Tituba has been cast in American myth as fulfilling this role. Yet the myth, in America, playing on national prejudices, goes another step in merging this progenitor of sin and death with a cultural wish to place her outside of “mainstream” America and into the darkness of our racial prejudices. An “Indian” as she surely was to her contemporaries, who with good reason feared the indigenous population with whom they fought bloody wars. But as they became subjugated and the threat to the expanding European civilization subsided, the “Indian” as scapegoat became less interesting. Gradually, as America came to grapple with the institution of slavery, through some combination of guilt, fear, and hatred, the scapegoat, the new “Eve,” transformed from “Indian” to “half-Indian” to “Negro,” as Tituba is seen in her most famous incarnation, Arthur Miller’s *The Crucible*, in which the common myth has been solidified for modern times. The “Negro” weaves her spells on the vulnerable passions of weak young females, and the tragedy of Salem is unleashed. Eve, in her dark guise, reemerges.

But oddly enough, this fiction of Tituba gets appropriated to an opposite end in *I, Tituba*, where Maryse Condé tells a tale from Tituba’s side—one of passion, beauty, and rebellion. Yet in giving voice to this remarkable character, Condé appropriates the fictions of race and magic to give us an heroic, triumphant figure. Myth extends to more myth—in Miller and Condé toward high art and away from Upham’s invented history, as art may reasonably do. Shakespeare reminds us of this. Yet we should no more try to know the historical Richard III from Shakespeare than we should try to know the historical Tituba from Miller or Condé. In art and cultural imagination she endures. The identity of this woman who has so captured our imagination remains mostly unknown. From the obscurity of history, she remains for us to fashion. □

Endnotes

1. Robert Calef, *More Wonders of the Invisible World* (1700), in George Lincoln Burr, *Narratives of the Witchcraft Cases 1648-1706* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1914), 343.
2. *Ibid.*, 351.
3. *Ibid.*, 413.
4. Elaine Breslaw, *Tituba, Reluctant Witch of Salem: Devilish Indians and Puritan Fantasies* (New York and London: New York University Press, 1996); Maryse Condé, *Moi, Tituba, Sorcière . . . Noir de Salem* (Paris: Mécure de France, 1988).
5. I have discussed aspects of this issue and others relating to Tituba in “Tituba’s Story,” *The New England Quarterly*, Vol. LXXI (June 1998): 190-203.
6. Peter Charles Hoffer, *The Devil’s Disciples: Makers of the Salem Witchcraft Trials* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).
7. See, for example, the case of Mary Black in *The Salem Witchcraft Papers*, ed., Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum (Da Capo Press, 1977) Vol. I, 113-114.
8. John Neal, *Rachel Dyer: A North American Story* (Portland, ME: Shirley & Hyde, 1828), 75.
9. Charles Wentworth Upham, *Salem Witchcraft; with An Account of Salem Village, and a History of Opinions on Witchcraft and Kindred Subjects*, 2 vols. (New York: F. Ungar Publishing Company, 1957), II: 2-3.
10. Upham, II, 2.
11. Chadwick Hanson, *Witchcraft at Salem* (New York: George Braziller, 1969), 55-56.
12. *Ibid.*, 56.
13. Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, *Salem Village Witchcraft* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publ., 1972).
14. I have written elsewhere on this mythic connection. See my *Salem Story: Reading the Witch Trials of 1692* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), particularly the chapter, “Dark Eve,” 10-31.

Bernard Rosenthal is professor of English at Binghamton University and author of *Salem Story: Reading the Witch Trials of 1692* (1993). He is currently editing an edition of legal documents pertaining to the Salem witch trials.



In this scene from Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s “Giles Corey of Salem Farms,” Tituba is depicted as an old Native American woman speaking with Cotton Mather. (From Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, “Giles Corey of Salem Farms,” in *The Poetical Works of Longfellow* [Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1880], 723.)



In contrast, Tituba is an African American, played by Charlayne Woodard, in Arthur Miller’s 1996 film, *The Crucible*.

Matilda Joslyn Gage: A Nineteenth-Century Women's Rights Historian Looks at Witchcraft

Mary E. Corey

When for "witches," we read "women," we gain a fuller comprehension of the cruelties inflicted by the church upon this portion of humanity (1).

Although the nineteenth-century women's rights movement is most closely associated with its efforts on behalf of woman suffrage, leaders like Matilda Joslyn Gage and Elizabeth Cady Stanton were intensely interested in the ways in which women's roles had been constructed at a time when most asserted God had ordained woman's role. Clearly, challenging that assertion was behind this interest in what Susan B. Anthony referred to as their "church diggings." Their commitment to this challenge resulted in two important nineteenth-century texts, the better known collaborative effort of Stanton, Gage, and other like-minded women, the *Woman's Bible*, and Gage's *Woman, Church and State*. A close reading of this second text offers readers an opportunity to appreciate Gage's stunning insights into the witchcraft era as well as her concerns as a nineteenth-century suffragist historian.

Characterized as, "perhaps the most important of all nineteenth century feminist historians" (2), Matilda Joslyn Gage can truly be considered one of our first women's historians. As such, one of her greatest contributions was her understanding that women need a usable past. From her first speech at the Syracuse Convention in 1852, through her years publishing the National Woman Suffrage Association's newspaper, the *National Citizen and Ballot Box*, and cowriting and editing the first three volumes of the *History of Woman Suffrage* with Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, Gage offered that usable past to women of her day and to future generations, convinced that it would change their lives.



The culmination of a lifetime of research was her *magnum opus*, *Woman, Church and State*, published in 1893, in which she traced the "tendency of Christianity from the first to restrict the liberty women enjoyed under the old civilizations." She knew that it would not be comfortable history. "I expect savage attacks," she wrote to her son shortly after its publication, but she knew that women could not forge a better future without an understanding of the root causes for their disabilities (3). She addressed her book to all who "dare seek Truth for the sake of Truth. To all such it will be welcome, to all other aggressive and educational" (4). Absolutely fearless in her analysis of the great wrongs perpetrated against women by the church, she asserted that none was more appalling than the centuries in which hundreds of thousands of women were persecuted as witches and that this tradition was transplanted to the American colonies (5). The great strength of her analysis was in its unblinking look at the victims. Anticipating modern feminist historiography by nearly a hundred years, Gage argued in 1893 that all other interpretative considerations paled in light of the overwhelmingly gender-specific nature of the persecutions (6).

For forty years, in broadsides, speeches, petitions, and resolutions, suffragists associated with the National Woman Suffrage Association assailed the authority of the church and argued against its influence in the laws circumscribing women's rights. They quickly identified the influence of religious dogma on the civil codes at the root of their political, social, and economic disabilities. Certainly, some of the most strenuous attacks on their reform came from the churches.

What compelled women like Gage and Stanton to research the treatment of women at the hands of the church and to reinterpret the Bible? Both were responding to a conservative trend that spawned a profusion of Christian churches and associations determined to undermine the liberal principles of republican government and blur the separation of church and state with Sunday observance laws, the abolition of civil marriage ceremonies, federal laws restricting divorce, and a proposed constitutional amendment changing the Preamble to recognize "Almighty God as the source of all power and authority in civil government, . . . and the Bible as the standard to decide all moral issues in political life" (7). That a good share of the support for these laws came from women, many of them newly-minted suffragists determined to use the vote to support such changes, made it imperative that they be educated to the history of the church with regard to women (8). The centrality of the doctrine of "the fall" and the centuries of persecution for witchcraft were critical to Gage's analysis.

Although Gage's estimates of the dimensions, nine million victims, of this holocaust have been modified by more recent scholarship, her analysis retains its radical edge. Moreover, its central insight as to the gendered nature of this crime has gained rather than lost currency. Beginning with the European experience, Gage asserted the doctrine of "the fall" was not peripheral to church teachings but positioned firmly within the core doctrines of the church. Those doctrines taught that "woman was under an especial curse and all restrictions placed upon her were . . . just punishment for having caused the fall of man." Because "woman was held to be unclean" even marriage came under fire. "Married priests, more than celibates, were believed subject to infestation by demons" through their close relationship with women, thus justifying the establishment of the celibate clergy. This had important consequences. "First: The doctrine of woman's inherent wickedness and close relationship with Satan took on new strength. And, second: Canon law gained full control of civil law" (9). Together these doctrines allowed the church to solidify its power and commit the "foulest crimes against woman." No episode in the history of the church, according to Gage, better illustrated the disaster to woman of "the fall dogma" than the witch-hunts of the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries. She noted:

First: That women were chiefly accused.

Second: That men believing in woman's inherent wickedness . . . ascribed all of her idiosyncrasies to witchcraft.

Third: That the clergy inculcated the idea that woman was in league with the devil, and that strong intellect, remarkable beauty, or unusual sickness were in themselves proof of this league (10).

Looking at the scope of these European witchcraft trials, Gage did not doubt that "as soon as a system of religion was adopted which taught the greater sinfulness of woman, the persecution for witchcraft became chiefly directed against women" (11). Her evidence: the definitive handbook on witchcraft, the *Malleus Maleficarum*, written in 1486 by leading inquisitors Heinrich Kramer and Jakob Sprenger. After nearly a century of pressure from the Dominicans to gain inquisitorial power to prosecute witchcraft, Pope Innocent VIII relented and overturned the Canon Episcopi which specifically denied the reality of witches and forbade persecution of those accused of it. Among the questions the *Malleus* purports to address are, "Why is it that women are chiefly addicted to evil superstitions? Why is superstition chiefly found in women?" The answers, "When a woman thinks alone, she thinks evil. They are more credulous. . . . They have slippery tongues . . . the natural reason is that she is more carnal than a man . . . those among ambitious women are more deeply infected . . . she is a liar by nature" (12). For Gage it was clear that "every kind of self-interest came into play in these accusations of witchcraft against women: greed, malice, envy, hatred, fear, the desire of clearing one's self from suspicion, all became motives." She pointed out that the special targets were women of accomplishment, especially learned women and women physicians, though "the old, the insane, the bed-ridden, and the idiotic, also fell under condemnation." And, no one could deny, she asserted, that the European trials were very profitable. "Trials for witchcraft filled the coffers of the church, as whenever conviction took place, the property of the witch and her family was confiscated to that body. The clergy fattened upon the torture and burning of women." She concluded that, "wherever the light of civilization has not overcome the darkness of the church, we find woman still a sufferer from that ignorance and superstition which under Christianity teaches that she brought sin into the world" (13).

Turning her attention to the American colonies, Gage contended: "[they] adopted all the unjust provisions of European



Elizabeth Cady Stanton (at left), author of *The Woman's Bible*, is pictured with her close friend and colleague, Susan B. Anthony. (Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, [112].)

Christianity as parts of their own religion and government. Fleeing from persecution, the Puritans yet brought with them the spirit of persecution in the belief of woman's inferiority and wickedness . . . [along with] the dunking stool for women who too vigorously protested against their wrongs, and the 'scarlet letter' of shame for the woman who had transgressed the moral law, her companion in sin going free. With them also came a belief in witchcraft." Noting the spotless reputations of the condemned, "especially Rebecca Nurse, Martha Corey, and Mary Easty, aged women conspicuous for their prudence, their charities and all domestic virtues," she pronounced the Puritan executions barbarous (14).

If woman's position had improved during the past hundred years she concluded, "it [was] not due to the church, but to the printing press, to education, to freethought, and other forms of advancing civilization." The church and its influence in the civil law had offered little to women, nor had it ever been the leader in great reforms. Gage reminded her readers that "during the anti-slavery conflict, the American Church was known as the 'bulwark of American slavery.' Its course continues the same in every great contest with wrong" (15).

Nineteenth-century women, struggling against powerful foes, the church among them, to expand women's rights could undoubtedly draw connections between themselves and the kinds of women who had been prosecuted, persecuted, and perished at the hands of the church in centuries past. Gage revealed just such a sense of urgency and immediacy when she wrote in 1893 that the "witchcraft period of New England [was] scarcely two hundred years since. . . ." It had only been ten years earlier, in 1883, that the descendants of Rebecca Nurse had gathered to honor her and dedicate a plaque with the names of the forty persons who "at the hazard of their own lives [had] testified to the goodness and piety of Mrs. Nurse" (16).

Her interpretive lens saw the very real possibility of encroachments by the church that could again result in dire consequences for women, should they be successful. It certainly seemed possible to her when she tried to donate a copy of *Woman, Church and State* to her local high school library in Fayetteville, New York. After presenting it to the school board, one of its members, Thomas W. Sheedy, sent it to Anthony Comstock, noted crusader against all known forms of vice. Comstock sent it back with this admonition, ". . . [I will] prosecute any school board that puts it in their library!" He proclaimed:

The incidents of victims of lust told in this book are such that if I found a person putting that book indiscriminately before the children, I would institute a criminal proceeding against them for doing it.

Gage responded to his charges in an interview saying: I look upon him as a man who is mentally and morally unbalanced, not knowing right from wrong, or the facts of history from "tales of lust." Being intellectually weak, Anthony Comstock misrepresents all works upon which he presumes to pass judgment, and is as dangerous to liberty of speech and of the press as were the old inquisitors, whom he somewhat

resembles Buddha declared the only sin to be ignorance. If this be true, Anthony Comstock is a great sinner (17).

Gage could dismiss Comstock easily and thought the publicity was "all right splendid for the book." She even hoped it would "get [it] into the Papal *Index Expurgatorius*," the Catholic Church's list of condemned books. She and Stanton, however, were less sanguine over their dismissal by fellow suffragists. The rejection of Stanton's *Woman's Bible* "repudiated not only Stanton but with her an entire generation of progressive feminists thinkers as [the suffragists] entered into the twentieth century. In a perverse way Stanton was proven right, 'Religion mattered too much to too many' to receive the sort of fearless critique for which she [and Gage] called" (18).

Woman, Church and State was Matilda Joslyn Gage's attempt to connect the dots of women's history. She argued there were important connections between the core doctrines of the church, the excesses of the witchcraft trials, and the everyday excesses of both church and state in controlling and circumscribing women's rights, responsibilities, and powers. A century later the core of her analysis still resonates as we continue to struggle with the legacy of Salem.

On 31 October 2001, Governor Jane M. Swift of Massachusetts exonerated the last five women hung in Salem during the witch-hunts of 1692. Without family to represent them, they were overlooked in the general exoneration of 1711, and another two hundred seventy years passed before Bridget Bishop, Susannah Martin, Alice Parker, Wilmott Reed, and Margaret Scott were finally exonerated. Shari Kelley Worrell, eight times great-granddaughter of Susannah Martin, whom Cotton Mather dubbed one of the most "impudent, scurrilous, wicked creatures in the word," declared, "I want to make sure that people know she [Martin] was not a witch. History will now record her as being what she really was" (19). As Gage put it so long ago, "When for 'witches,' we read 'women,' we gain a fuller comprehension of the cruelties inflicted by the church upon this portion of humanity." □

Endnotes

1. Matilda Joslyn Gage, *Woman, Church and State*, 1893, reprinted (Watertown, MA: Persephone Press, 1980), 129.
2. William Leach, *True Love and Perfect Union* (New York: Basic Books, 1980), 162.
3. Gage, *Woman, Church and State*, 7. And Gage to Thomas Clarkson Gage, 11 July 1893.
4. Gage, *Woman, Church and State*, iii.
5. The church, as used in the speeches and other writings of suffragists like Gage and Stanton, refers to the mainline Protestant denominations and the Catholic Church. Many of the more liberal churches of the time including the Quakers, Unitarians, Universalists, and others actually offered them places to meet and hold conventions and supported their cause.
6. Carol F. Karlsen, *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman: Witchcraft in Colonial New England* (New York: Norton, 1987); Elizabeth Reis, *Damned Women: Sinners and Witches in Puritan New England* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997) and Reis, ed. *Spellbound: Women and Witchcraft in*

Do we “fire them up”? Students Helping Teachers Evaluate Teaching

Merrill Watrous

Writers and researchers in the fields of human behavior and cognition have suggested that for individuals to be able to hear and to heed criticism it must be couched in positive terms. Some say that to attend to a single correction, a student should at the same time hear that he has done as many as five things right. Others say that three compliments are enough to balance one criticism. For teachers, the validity of either conclusion is irrelevant. We simply do not have time to count, record or categorize what we say or write as we communicate with our students, and yet we are aware that constant criticism, like false praise, is unproductive. So, in my own teaching I took to heart a technique called the “compliment sandwich” that I first read about in Daniel Gartrell’s *The Guidance Approach to the Encouraging Classroom* (Albany, NY: Delmar Publishers, 1997). It is so easy to think about surrounding a suggestion for growth with two encouraging remarks that preservice teachers as well as experienced teachers quickly learn to use this tool with their own students and with one another.

I wanted the students in my Foundations of Education classes to practice using this form of encouragement in as many different venues as possible, so I asked them to compose a written “sandwich” in letters addressed to me which were part of their final writing assignments. As in most colleges and many high schools today, my students evaluate my teaching and that of my colleagues on a regular basis with a set of expert designed questions on scantron-ready answer sheets. What do I learn from these surveys when they are returned to me? Not much. It is true that after answering a number of multiple choice questions, students are asked if they want to write a sentence or two about what they liked or disliked about the classes being reviewed. If I generally find these responses less than enlightening, perhaps it is because students usually rush to complete the forms and because the questions asked in the forms are not specific to my classes or my teaching. Typical responses in the past have included: “This class rocked,” or “I didn’t deserve that ‘C’ last term.” These questionnaires may help the college to evaluate my work in a global sense, but they add little to my understanding of how I should proceed as a teacher.

I want to grow as a practitioner of my craft, and I want my students to help me grow. They are the ones who see my shortcomings most clearly; they observe what I fail to notice. So, not too

long ago, I decided to shorten my final essay exam from two hours to one hour and to use the time remaining in the exam period to personally bid farewell to students I had worked with for as many as five classes (two seminars and three practicum experiences). The shorter final exam form was less stressful for my students; they were pleased with the change and so receptive to my request for a letter which would help me in my process of self evaluation. I asked students to take some time, at home, to reflect upon the time we had spent together and to use the compliment sandwich format they were familiar with in their letters. I asked them to begin and end their letters with brief paragraphs about what worked for them

in my classes and then to write what did not work for them—or worked less well—in the middle of their letters. I explained that the first and last paragraphs could be thin gruel indeed but that I would not accept any letter without its meaty middle. I not only asked for constructive criticism, I required it.

As I read through my students’ letters, after I finished grading their exams, I highlighted everything I wanted to remember. (If you want to try this idea in your classes but fear your students may worry that what they write will influence their grades, just check the papers in and send the stack with a student to the office to be held for you until grades have been entered.) I then reflected upon my students’ letters during the first quiet days of the term break and made two lists: practices to continue and practices to consider adding to or changing. The first time I tried this, I finished in a timely manner and was able to write a group letter back to my students, detailing exactly what they had taught me in their letters. I have not had time to do this every term, but each term so far I have taken a copy of the new class syllabus and annotated it according to students’ suggestions which I have taken to heart. Though I have taught for over twenty years, the notes I take from my students’ letters continue to fill pages. I carry my students’ letters with me for days after I first open them. I find reading and rereading them to be valuable as I gain some distance from the classes that have just concluded.

So, what is it that my students have taught me? Some students’ comments are highly individualistic, but since we succeed or fail as teachers one student at a time that makes them no less significant. I taught one older man awhile ago who made tremendous sacrifices to be in my class. He worked the night shift before volunteering in a classroom on the days our classes met and he had

Invite your students to help you grow, and you will not regret issuing the invitation.

to sprint across the college campus from the parking lot to arrive at my classroom door on time. He was usually on time, but he found when he walked through the door that things were already happening. (I am usually short on time so I arrive early and begin to interact with those students who come early immediately.) Though Bill never missed anything vital, he often *felt* late and told me so in his compliment sandwich letter. I learned from him to “start” class in an obvious way after the before class socializing and business period has ended—to pause and begin once again formally and explicitly.

Often students tell us things we know intuitively but have not yet taken time to consider or to process in a mindful manner.

When two or more students cover the same ground, we must pay particular attention to their concerns. My classes meet for too few hours, which is all about credit hours, transfer credits, tuition, and how the teaching practicums are designed. The structure of my program is decided for me; my response to that structure is not. Students tell me they wish my classes were longer and met more often. I tell them I cannot really

do anything about that, but one student admonished me this term to “talk less about the clock,” and that I can do. My intensity made her anxious and she told me so. I know my K-12 colleagues suffer from the same time pressures I do in the face of standardized and AP test preparation. We are all perhaps too aware of the clock and of the calendar. Though awareness in and of itself may be positive, hypersensitivity in this regard is less than positive. Do anxious students learn efficiently? Should anxious teachers strive to attain some measure of serenity? This one is trying!

Sometimes what we are proudest of in our teaching is more problematic than we realize. What I learn from the compliment part of the compliment sandwich letters can be as humbling as what I learn from students’ suggestions for growth. Parker J. Palmer, in *Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher’s Life* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1998), writes that the lines which describe our greatest strengths as teachers and those which describe our greatest weaknesses as teachers intersect at many points. I know this to be true. I am an energetic and enthusiastic teacher and I love my work, but I also tend to overwhelm students and throw too much at them at once. Knowing this about myself and doing something about this knowledge are two different matters entirely. My syllabus is ten pages long every term—detailed and specific and even illustrated in a seasonal fashion. Three students this term asked me to add an “At A Glance” page to the syllabus, a reduced calendar that all could follow easily. (One gracious student even made me a model!) How wise they were to recommend this to me; upon reading their letters for the first time I put such a calendar

together before the week was out. Others asked that we spend even more time in classroom conversation. I see the rightness of this request as well. I say I honor discussion and I do plan for it as a part of every class session, but when I am rushed to “cover” material, I know I end up lecturing far more than I intend to every term.

One way I learn from the compliment sections of my students’ letters is by noting what my students do not say as well as what they do say. Almost every student writes about the teacher-student relationship and how efforts expended to affirm and strengthen that relationship are never wasted. The hours I spend writing letters of recommendation for my students are never mentioned because it is expected. The minutes I spend dashing off monthly

birthday cards are always mentioned because it is unexpected. Students appreciate time spent in building community and ask for more of this. My students work in study groups that meet during and after class; many asked me to help them form relationships with students outside of these groups. Is all of this part of my job as a teacher? Of course it is. Whatever we teach—history, English, or the art of teaching itself—we teach people as well

as subjects. No matter how well versed we are in our own fields, if we fail to communicate effectively, we fail to teach.

Passion is what students seem to care about most. “Simply speaking, Merrill, you fire me up!” Autumn wrote this term. But passion for a subject is not enough to sustain a teacher. We must also care passionately about our students. “From the first moment I stumbled into your office, I’ve had the feeling you believed in me,” Christi noted—and she was right! I only hope that the students who follow her will always find this to be true.

When a teacher invites her students to write to her with only a personal growth agenda in mind, she will hear from students who project a quiet persona in class. “I know I didn’t really talk a lot in class but that’s because I was too busy thinking and pondering and listening. There were days that I remember being so focused on your stories that I would forget there were twenty other students around me.” When Jessica wrote this, she reminded me that there are many paths to learning; some of us are effusive and outspoken, but others of us are reflective and introspective. We pay lip service to both styles as teachers, but we often have to work a little harder to connect with the quiet ones in our classes.

Quiet and assertive students alike discussed my comments. Sometimes we spend hours responding to student work and wonder sadly if the time we spent really made a difference in anyone else’s life. Kendra wrote to me, “After every test or assignment, I looked forward to reading your helpful suggestions

Whatever we teach—history, English, or the art of teaching itself—we teach people as well as subjects. No matter how well versed we are in our own fields, if we fail to communicate effectively, we fail to teach.

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▼ **Woodward** / From page 38

murder, there must be two witnesses to the act of murder in order to convict. How shall it be with cases such as this?

Day Two: Is it possible for the devil to appear as a specter using the face of an innocent person, thus leading us to condemn the wrong person for witchcraft?

Day Three: Does the fact that a crude and uneducated person foretold a future event, or revealed a secret, provide proof that they have had familiarity with the devil?

6) The minister responds to each day's questions with a modern interpretation of the answers given in the ministers' response (Gershom Bulkeley's response on page 42).

7) The judge polls the jury for their current feelings and then continues the case till the next day.

8) At the end of class the judge becomes teacher again, reprises the learning goals of the class, and sets the stage for continuation of the trial in the next class.

9) On the final day of testimony, the judge summarizes the accumulated evidence, and then asks the whole class (except Harrison) to render a final verdict in the case. This case ends if she is acquitted. If she is convicted, the judge invokes his privilege to

overturn the verdict, and in a compromise verdict, Harrison is freed but must move out of Connecticut to New York. □

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Walter W. Woodward is an Assistant Professor of Colonial American History at Dickinson College. His prior experience as the Director of Education at Plimoth Plantation, the living history museum of seventeenth-century Plymouth Colony, has given him a deep appreciation for the power of reenactments as a teaching tool.

Objects in the Classroom

Laurel Thatcher Ulrich

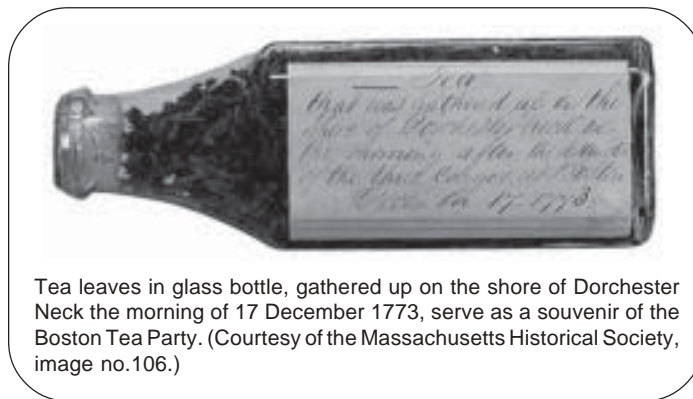
I know from my own experience that bringing objects into a classroom can enhance learning. Over the past twenty-five years, I have used dozens of ordinary objects to provoke attention, focus discussion, illustrate processes, and enlarge students' understanding of how things change. Object-centered lessons work with learners of all ages. I have used similar techniques with summer workshops for public school teachers, in museum lectures, with my daughter's fifth-grade class, and in graduate and undergraduate classes at the college and university levels.

Recently, a museum curator and I introduced an undergraduate seminar at Harvard called "Confronting Objects/Interpreting Culture." It is a pretty sophisticated course with lots of reading in material culture method and the philosophy of art, but our central approach can be adapted anywhere. We insist that students take as much

time as possible to really look at an object carefully and deliberately before anyone is allowed to impose an interpretation. Watching our students puzzle over an unfamiliar shape or form, we restrain our own comments. Students soon learn how to move from the known to the unknown as they

puzzle over revealing scars and cracks or try to imagine how something may have been made or used. Last year, toward the end of the semester, one of our students confessed that he had used the same technique in a high school history class he was student teaching. He told us that when he organized a class around an artifact, he was able to engage students who had been silent most of the semester.

Among my favorite teaching artifacts are a three-legged iron skillet, a faded and worn baby quilt from the 1930s, a brass cow bell, a pile of women's hats from the 1950s, a T-shirt from the Mashantucket Pequot Museum, a doily made by my Aunt Fleda, and a reproduction Chinese Chippendale teapot. My own collection is heavy on textiles and on domestic artifacts, but the same approach can be adapted to almost anything a teacher might find—World War II memorabilia, political buttons, even a manual typewriter. The keys are to find objects that are multivalent and that show change over time. Fortunately, that is not difficult. Virtually everything made by human hands carries more than one story and anything that has survived for even a few years is likely to show evidence of change.



Tea leaves in glass bottle, gathered up on the shore of Dorchester Neck the morning of 17 December 1773, serve as a souvenir of the Boston Tea Party. (Courtesy of the Massachusetts Historical Society, image no.106.)



At left: "The Able Doctor or America Swallowing the Bitter Drought." In this political cartoon, men force a defenseless woman to drink, which symbolizes the British government forcing American colonists to accept the tea tax. (Paul Revere, June 1774. Image courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society.)

My best example is the lecture I give on the Boston Tea Party. I begin with an actual teapot—a reproduction Chinese Chipendale tea pot that was a prop in the film *A Midwife's Tale* (1997).

I can spend an entire hour, with the students' participation, exploring themes and issues related to that teapot. We talk about trade, consumption, growing class differences in colonial Boston, tea drinking rituals, Chinese porcelain, the East Indian company, taxes, urban riots, and finally the memory of the Boston tea party. As Al Young explained in *The Shoemaker and the Tea Party* (1999), it was not until the 1830s that Bostonians began to refer to that highly destructive action on Boston's wharves as a "tea party."

One could do a similar lecture using a nineteenth-century patchwork quilt (almost any quilt) to discuss the expansion of cotton cultivation, the impact of slavery, the emergence of fabric printing technology, industrial labor relations, the cult of domesticity, and once again the uses of historical memory. Physical objects not only enliven interest, but they also help students connect broad historical changes to ordinary people. Focusing on artifacts also makes students more aware of the world in which they live, opening their eyes to the many ways that historical forces shape their own seemingly mundane lives. A Nike® sneaker, for example, tells stories about the history of sports, modern mass consumption, advertising, globalization, and changing notions of gender and health.

Other objects demonstrate the ways in which meanings can be transformed through the unfolding of later events. A T-shirt sold at the Mashantucket Pequot museum, for example, has an imprint of the famous 1630s engraving of the English assault on the Pequot fort at Mystic. Reproductions of the engraving often appear in textbooks to show the almost genocidal fury of the Puritan conquest. In a Harvard University core course on "Inventing New England," I use it to provide discussion of the many ways contemporary Indian groups are rewriting New England's history.

With teenagers, nothing is quite so effective in demonstrating change over time as an outmoded fashion, especially when connected with images from once-trendy magazines or now faded yearbooks. But with inquisitive students, a seemingly humdrum object from another century can also be effective. I once kept a group engaged for more than an hour looking at an old bed sheet. To be sure, it was a pretty interesting bed sheet, at least to me, though it did not reveal its secrets easily. At first glance it did not look like much at all. In fact, it probably came from someone's rag bag. On closer examination, however, the fabric seemed cooler to the touch than the cotton sheets most of us know. The fabric was heavier, too, and there were tiny overcast stitches down the center that showed it had been constructed from two narrower pieces of

fabric. Hand-stitched hems on either end confirmed its origins in a pre-industrial economy of homespun. This was a linen sheet, the fabric surely handwoven, perhaps in New Hampshire where I found it. But that was not the end to its history. Bisecting the handstitched seam was another, much bulkier than the first and clearly stitched by machine. After awhile, students figured out that at some point in its long life, someone had cut out the worn center of a homespun sheet and stitched it back together, using a sewing machine—a device not widely marketed until the 1850s. This sheet had been used for at least two generations, perhaps more.

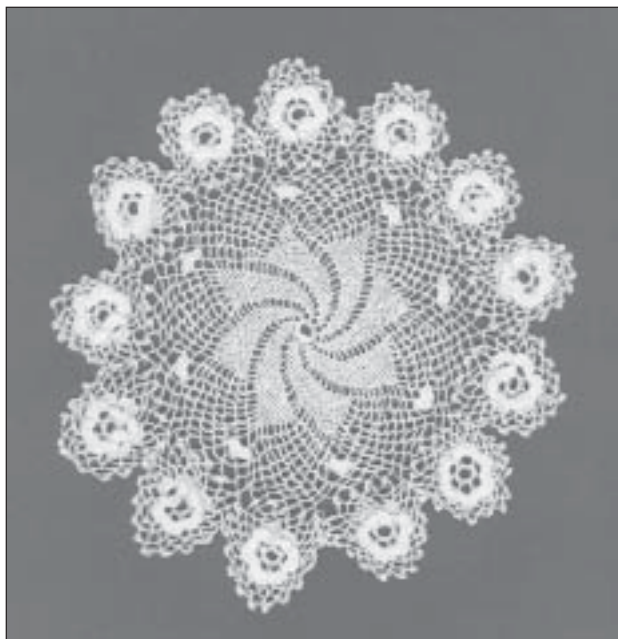
When used as primary sources, artifacts can transform rather

than merely illustrate our understanding of broad historical processes like "industrialization" or the "rise of gentility." For me, the discovery of New England "rose blankets" had such an effect. While I was studying them for a chapter in *The Age of Homespun* (2001), I began using a very humble example of such a blanket (picked up for very little money at a Maine antique store) in teaching. This object is effective in a small class because it is both very simple and at the same time intriguing. It is clearly homespun but it has a curious design embroidered in the corner. I get students talking about it, puzzling over it, developing hypotheses about its origins or maker, then I very gradually begin introducing other materials—probate inventories, stories about agricultural fairs, pictures of early maps, and so on, until they begin to see the connections between the object and larger

themes in transatlantic and early American culture. My New England rose blanket reveals in its very fabric the connection between local production, or homespun, and international markets (English rose blankets were highly commercial products marketed everywhere in the world), and between agriculture, environmental change, republicanism, and domesticity. (See "Amanda Winter's Blanket" at the Author's Desktop, <<http://www.randomhouse.com/knopf/authors/ulrich/desktopnew.html>> for more on this and other artifacts.)

Object-centered lessons are most effective when students can do their own looking. It is not enough to just show things from the front of the room. But even in circumstances where the curriculum allows little leisure for inclass exploration, object-centered explorations are possible. In large lecture courses, I have often assigned object-centered as well as document-centered final projects. If I have modeled many modes of investigation in the classroom and provided clear instructions, students can often follow through on their own.

I discovered this quite by accident one year as I was teaching a large lecture course on women's history. Looking for a way to unify a set of readings that I thought might fly apart, I used my Aunt Fleda's hand-crocheted doily to hold together a lecture on



The author brings her Aunt Fleda's hand-crocheted doily to class to discuss the varieties of feminism. (Image courtesy of Laurel Thatcher Ulrich)

varieties of twentieth-century feminism. Working snippets of my Aunt Fleda's biography into the discussion, I showed students how a seemingly simple object might provoke radically different interpretations. Was Aunt Fleda a victim of "the feminine mystique" or a participant in a complex "female culture"? I used the raised roses in its design to provoke questions about the persistence of sexual symbolism over time. The cotton thread took the class on a journey from field to factory to parlor, raising issues of race and class. As a finale, I pulled out a second doily, brand-new and almost identical, which I had purchased for \$1.25 at a gift shop in Connecticut. The label—"Made in China"—carried us beyond the United States to readings on globalization and international feminism.

▼ **Corey** / From page 53

America (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1998).

7. Gage, "The Dangers of the Hour," *Woman's National Liberal Union Convention*, 1890, reprinted in Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, ed., *Man Cannot Speak For Her, Key Texts of the Early Feminists* (New York: Praeger, 1989), 340-70.
8. The Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) had opposed woman suffrage until the early 1880s when its new leader, Frances Willard, convinced the membership of the vote's usefulness in advancing their cause. The group is well known for its temperance mission but it also supported writing its particular brand of Christianity into the United States Constitution. At the sixteenth WCTU Convention, the following resolution, that seems to contradict itself, was passed: "While discountenancing all union of church and state, we do affirm our belief that God in Christ is the King of nations and as such should be acknowledged in our government and His word made the basis of our laws." The WCTU also shared members with other associations seeking similar ends, such as the National Reform Association. This group ratified the following as the preamble to their constitution:
Believing that Almighty God is the source of all power and authority in civil government;
That the Lord Jesus Christ is the Ruler of nations; and that the revealed will of God is of Supreme authority in civil affairs . . . and perceiving the silence of the United States Constitution.
In this respect is used as an argument against all that is Christian in the usage and administration of our government . . . we pledge ourselves to God and to one another to labor for the and herein set forth.
9. Gage, "The Dangers of the Hour," 32
10. *Ibid.*, 112, 117.
11. *Ibid.*, 97.
12. Heinrich Kramer and Jakob Spenger, *Malleus Maleficarum*, trans. Rev. Montague Summers (New York: Dover, 1971) 41-47.
13. Gage, "The Dangers of the Hour," 105-107, 128.
14. *Ibid.*, 157.
15. *Ibid.*, 244.
16. *Ibid.*, 161 (emphasis mine), 159.
17. Matilda Joslyn Gage to her son Thomas Clarkson Gage, August 3, 1894.
18. Ellen Carol DuBois, review of Kathi Kern's *Mrs. Stanton's Bible*, in *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 107 (February 2002): 216-17.
19. Nicholas Wapshott, "Justice at last for witches of Salem," *Times Newspapers*, Ltd. 3 November, 2001 and Nancy C. Rodriguez, "Legislature exonerates last Salem 'witches,'" *Eagle-Tribune*, 1 November 2001.

Mary E. Corey is an assistant professor of history and social studies education at the State University of New York at Brockport. She is the author of Matilda Joslyn Gage, Woman Suffrage Historian (1996), a reviewer for H-Net/Women on topics in nineteenth-century women's activism and the woman's suffrage movement, and a contributor to The Encyclopedia of Social Movements.

To my delight, many students were able to find objects in their own family histories that helped them pull together material for their final project in a similar way. In retrospect, of course, there is nothing magical about the use of artifacts. They are just another kind of historical evidence. Teachers who enjoy using primary documents should not be afraid to expand their repertoire into the material world. □

Laurel Thatcher Ulrich is Professor of Early American History at Harvard University and the Pulitzer Prize winning author of A Midwife's Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard Based on her Diary (1991) and, more recently, The Age of Homespun: Objects and Stories in the Creation of An American Myth (2001).

▼ **Watrous** / From page 55

and encouraging comments that marked the sides of my papers." Of course I knew that comments were important before reading Kendra's letter. I have read studies that tracked student growth from paper to paper according to the kind and amount of written teacher response that was given. It is almost intuitively obvious that the more we give to students of ourselves, the more they will learn. And yet, I still like to read that my students appreciate my efforts in this regard. Teachers are human. We need to hear what we are doing right, just like our students do. When we design and use instruments for feedback like the compliment sandwich letter, we experience firsthand the benefits of written encouragement. Beth wrote that she was unsure she had "all that teaching takes." How many experienced teachers harbor that same fear? Ask your students from time to time for substantive feedback. It is risky. They will not expect it, but by encouraging your students to give you this gift, you allow them to create a legacy of response for those that will follow. Invite your students to help you grow, and you will not regret issuing the invitation. □

Merrill Watrous teaches the Foundations of Education and supervises preservice practicums at Lane Community College in Eugene, Oregon. As an adjunct professor at Pacific University Graduate School of Education, she teaches classes on writing, reading, and writing through children's literature. She published a book on the teaching of writing and has written widely for a number of teaching journals and magazines.

Upcoming OAH Annual Meetings

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| 2004 | Boston, Massachusetts, 25-28 March
Marriott Copley Place |
| 2004 | OAH Regional Meeting: 8-11 July, Atlanta
Georgia State University |
| 2005 | San Francisco, 31 March-3 April
San Francisco Hilton |
| 2006 | Washington, D.C., 19-22 April
Hilton Washington |
| 2007 | Minneapolis, Minnesota, 29 March-1 April
Hilton Minneapolis and Minneapolis
Convention Center |
| 2008 | New York City, 28-31 March
Hilton New York |

Elusive or Illuminating: Using the Web to Explore the Salem Witchcraft Trials

Stephanie R. Hurter

One of the twenty “witches” executed during the Salem witchcraft trials, Martha Corey’s frustrated cry, “Ye all are against me,” underscores the plight of innocent men and women who endured the 1692 hysteria. Corey’s reputation as an outspoken woman with reservations about the trials quickly attracted suspicion. A complex web of psychological, economic, religious, and social tensions shroud the trial of Martha Corey and countless others in an aura of mystery. For educators, the episode offers rich possibilities for engaging students in a gripping historical narrative while teaching historical thought and method. Teachers looking for websites to teach students about the Salem trials, however, may empathize with Corey’s frustration. A general Google search for “Salem Witchcraft Trials,” brings up more than thirty thousand hits representing sites from the scholarly—University of Virginia’s digital archives—to the surreal—eerie personal homepages with dancing flames. The following is an introduction to four genres of websites—primary source, gateway, educational resource, and interactive—that offer specific materials and approaches for making interaction with the Salem witchcraft trials on the web fruitful.

Primary Source Sites

One of the tremendous benefits of the World Wide Web is access to primary sources. Of the many websites dealing with Salem, “The Salem Witch Trials: Documentary, Archive, and Transcription Project” at <<http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/salem/witchcraft/>>, sponsored by the Electronic Text Center at the University of Virginia (UVA), represents the most useful and thorough. It provides full-text versions of the trial transcripts, an extensive contemporary narrative of the trials, and pamphlets and excerpts of sermons by Cotton Mather, Robert Calef, and Thomas Maule. The site also offers four rare books, written in the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries about the witchcraft scare. Another distinguishing feature is that it provides access to over five hundred documents from significant archival collections like the Essex County Court Archives. Supporting materials, such as images, maps, and literary texts further contextualize and illuminate the primary source documents. From the home page, viewers may browse through archival records, search a document via the Table of Contents, or skim an index of names of accused as well as those who gave testimony, signed petitions, or offered bail money for the release of the falsely indicted. Moving beyond

the home page, the structure becomes less clear as the navigation bar changes from page to page, even disappearing altogether further into the site. These difficulties aside, each section allows students to explore the events in a multi-sensory format. “The Salem Witch Trials” site offers students and teachers alike access to primary sources for exploring the 1692 hysteria.

“Famous American Trials: Salem Witchcraft Trials 1692,” at <<http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/salem/salem.htm>>, is part of a larger “Famous Trials” website created by Douglas Linder of the University of Missouri, Kansas City, Law School. Another quality location for primary sources, Linder’s website combines original documents, images, and biographies to make this site “a springboard to new knowledge and insights about trials.” His introductory essay includes links to biographies of key figures in the trial such as accused witches, judges, accusers, and clergy. Transcribed primary documents surrounding the witch trials include the Reverend Cotton Mather’s *Memorable Providences*, a pamphlet that details an episode of supposed witchcraft by a woman named Goody Glover; an arrest warrant from 1692; seven transcripts of examinations and trial records for accused witches; and a sample death warrant. The site offers links to eight related websites and a bibliography of twenty-two scholarly books and articles as well as two videos on witchcraft. Linder has also created a mini-*Jeopardy* game that reviews the fundamental facts of the trials. This site has no index, but is small enough to navigate easily. Although the olive green and fire engine red design leaves much to be desired, the site is ideal for researching basic information on the Salem witchcraft trials.

Gateway Sites

The fact that sites from Wiccan practices to Salem psychoanalysis emerge with web searches on Salem’s history can be a deterrent from assigning web-based homework. One way to avoid nondiscriminating web engines is by sending students to gateway sites—sites with topically organized links to reputable web pages. “Seventeenth Century New England” <<http://www.ogram.org/17thc/index.shtml>> is a gateway site about the seventeenth century with a particular emphasis on the Salem Witchcraft Trials. Margo Burns, novelist and professor at the University of New Hampshire as well as descendant of accused witch Rebecca Nurse, offers more than two hundred thirty-five annotated links, including primary sources, bibliographies, references for young readers,

teaching materials, and museum links. "I have paid special attention to include links to resources for young people who are working on projects for school," writes Burns. In addition to links, Burns provides documents from the trials, an annotated bibliography, and a discussion of historical inaccuracies in Arthur Miller's well-known play *The Crucible* and the 1996 film version. Because of her wider interest, students can access materials to help them understand the trials within the world of seventeenth-century New England. Because the site is checked regularly for dead links, it can be a valuable gateway to web resources on seventeenth-century American cultures, religions, and social life. The organization also speeds searches and makes research more rewarding. For those who wish to encourage independent research by students, Burns's site offers the liberty of allowing students to explore without wasting time looking at personal websites that may contain questionable historical materials.

Lesson Plans Online

For those interested in teaching aides, "TeacherServe" at <<http://www.nhc.rtp.nc.us/tserve/eighteen/ekeyinfo/salemwc.htm>>, from the National Humanities Center, maintains an excellent section titled, "Divining America: Religion and the National Culture." Within this section, Christine Leigh Heyrman, professor of history at the University of Delaware has contributed an article "Witchcraft in Salem Village: Intersections of Religion and Society," that provides helpful direction for teachers. Addressing current scholarship on the Salem witch trials, she notes useful texts for history survey classes and insightful suggestions for encouraging classroom discussion. Throughout the essay, all references to books are linked to brief reviews. This essay is part of a larger section on religion that contains interesting suggestions for teaching about seventeenth-century Puritanism.

Many of the teacher support sites on the web address the Salem events from a literary perspective, utilizing *The Crucible*. An interesting site that harness the unique interactivity and multi-sensory opportunities afforded on the web is "Dramatizing History in Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*" at <http://edsitement.neh.gov/view_lesson_plan.asp?id=440> from EdSitement, a site supported by the National Endowment for the Humanities. This site provides detailed syllabi that explain how to encourage students to read primary sources from the UVA site and use them to think through the main issues in Salem. It also includes ideas for directing class discussion and worksheets for students to complete when reading materials online.

Interactive Sites

For those looking for stimulating sites that students can peruse independently, National Geographic Society and Discovery Channel both have solid history-based interactive websites. Engaging graphics and personalized interactive narratives draw students into the drama where they are encouraged to reflect on the significance of the witchcraft hysteria. National Geographic Society's "Salem Witchcraft Hysteria" at <<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/features/97/salem/>> casts the viewer as an accused "witch" of Salem. Through a combination of viewer directed clicks and video-like moving displays, viewers must decide whether to admit their guilt and accuse other "witches" or to resist the pressure and maintain their innocence. A black background and large red font, accented by eerie images, helps transform the event from static history to realistic experience. The site also includes a question-and-answer section that addresses more specialized questions.

The Discovery Channel site, "Salem Witch Trials: The World behind the Hysteria" at <<http://school.discovery.com/schooladventures/salemwitchtrials/>> contains visually appealing contextualizing essays that address the people and causes behind the hysteria. The brief nature of each essay and biography makes web reading more comfortable and provides younger students with a good foundation for grasping the basic story line and main actors. The most interactive feature of the site is a



The Salem Witch Trials website at <<http://school.discovery.com/schooladventures/salemwitchtrials/>>.

QuickTime movie that vividly details the events of the trials, and which can be easily downloaded for classroom presentation. The creators have also provided a short list of resources and ideas for using the website for educational purposes.

Fascination with the Salem witch trials has spread to the web. While issues of historical causation remain mysterious, finding and adapting web-based resources need not be so elusive. Access to primary source, gateway, educational resource, and interactive sites reveals just a few of the growing benefits of using the web in the classroom. While at times the web may appear impenetrable and frustrating to those who desire to harness its educational possibilities, Martha Corey's cry of desperation need not be yours. □

Stephanie Hurter is a doctoral student at George Mason University where she works in the Center for History and New Media as a graduate research assistant. Stephanie has authored articles for a Explore PA History! She also assists in the incorporation of new media into undergraduate level history classes and the development of history based websites. This fall she will be presenting workshops on American history websites at the Virginia Conference for Social Studies.

The 2003 OAH Tachau Award Winner

Gwen Moore

Every year, the Organization of American Historians sponsors the Mary K. Bonsteel Tachau Precollegiate Teaching Award to recognize the contributions made by precollegiate teachers to improve history education. The award memorializes the career of Mary K. Bonsteel Tachau, University of Louisville, for her pathbreaking efforts to build bridges between university and precollegiate history teachers. Kim Ibach, this year's recipient of the Mary K. Bonsteel Tachau Precollegiate Teaching Award, exemplifies the best in history teaching. With over a decade of classroom instruction to her credit, Kim personifies the kind of creativity and innovation that inspires colleagues and motivates students.

Kim teaches at Kelly Walsh High School in Casper, Wyoming, the second largest city in the state. With a student population of 1,100, she has a full menu of classes, teaching sophomores and juniors in Advanced Placement history, world history, United States history, Wyoming history, modern American studies, and sociology. She has established a reputation as a demanding teacher, a fact that does not seem to deter students from flocking to her classes, because in their estimation, "She makes history interesting, relevant, and fun." Inventive methods and techniques, combined with an infectious love of history, account for much of the attraction and the enthusiasm. She eschews textbooks in favor of immersion in primary source documents, and she often goes beyond the classroom in search of "living" history. When Kim does introduce secondary sources, her choices are apt to be not only challenging but unconventional. She has used, for instance, James Allen's *Without Sanctuary* (2000)—the searing collection of lynching photography—because she wants her students to not only develop the skills to think critically, but also to "feel the history" and "feel the struggle of the people who came before them."

This practice of history, notes Kim, empowers students and expands horizons. She taps into that excitement and heightened

interest by providing students with meaningful high school experiences that can seamlessly transfer to the college classroom. She takes her students to the University of Wyoming twice a year to conduct research and attend lectures. With a Masters Degree in history from the University of Wyoming, Kim is an adjunct at

Casper College, and her students are eligible for college credit. As far as tests, true and false, multiple choice, and identification questions are jettisoned for the more subjective essay questions that students are likely to encounter in college.

All of this immersion in the serious stuff of history does not preclude fun. Offsite sessions and out of class assignments are customary. Her classes anxiously anticipate the end of semester brunch at a local restaurant at which each student arrives in character and in costume as one of the founding fathers to debate and discuss the complexities of establishing a new nation. Ultimately, she insists, "I want my kids to live what I teach," and she believes that serious scholarship and accessible, engaging history are not mutually exclusive: "I like to play with ideas and I'm always changing things. I approach each day with the goal of playing with history and playing with the kids."

Kim has a lifelong fascination with history. Applying for the Tachau on a lark, she

nearly "fell to the floor" when she received a terse two sentence email message that she had won the award. "In public education accolades are few and far between," she intoned. "I am very honored and very blessed." A sentiment that is no doubt echoed by students and fellow teachers at the good fortune of having Kim Ibach on the faculty of Kelly Walsh.

For more detailed information about the Tachau Award and how to apply, please visit the OAH website at <<http://www.oah.org/activities/awards/tachau/>>. □



Kim Ibach

Gwen Moore is the Education Coordinator at the Organization of American Historians and a graduate student in the history department at Indiana University.

Scholarships to the 2003 Oral History Association Annual Meeting

The Oral History Association (OHA) announces the availability of scholarships to attend the 2003 Annual Meeting at the Hyatt Regency Bethesda, Bethesda, MD, 8–12 October 2003. The OHA has set aside \$1,500 for program participants and \$2,500 for nonparticipants and encourages students, independent researchers, community historians, and members of underrepresented groups to apply. Requests may not exceed \$500 and must be used only for workshops, conference meals, and travel-related expenses. The OHA's Diversity and International Committees will offer additional scholarships for presenters. All winners will receive complimentary registration in addition to the scholarships. The deadline for applications is **31 July 2003**. Information and the application form may be found under "Annual Meetings, Conference Registration" then "Bethesda" at the OHA website <<http://www.dickinson.edu/oha/>>. □

NEH Landmarks of American History Workshops

The Division of Education Programs of the National Endowment for the Humanities announces a new grant program for Landmarks of American History: Workshops for Teachers. A part of the "We the People" initiative, the Landmarks of American History workshops is a series of intensive, one-week, residence-based workshops for groups of fifty or more school teachers that will take place at or near significant American historical sites. Eligible applicants include museums, libraries, cultural and learned societies, state humanities councils, colleges and universities, schools and school districts. Collaborative programs are encouraged. For more information, please visit <<http://www.neh.gov/grants/guidelines/landmarks.html>>. The deadline for proposals is **15 August 2003**. □

NCHE 2003 Conference on History and Biography: The Individual and Historical Change

On 16-18 October, the National Council for History Education (NCHE), along with the other Partnership for History Education organizations—Smithsonian's National Museum of American History Behring Center, National History Day, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, The History Channel, California Department of Education, and The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History—will sponsor a national conference on History and Biography: The Individual and Historical Change in conjunction with the NCHE annual conference in Pasadena, CA. The Los Angeles conference, held at the Wilshire Grand Hotel, will highlight the finding, writing, and teaching of biographical content, along with strategies and tactics for teaching these skills in a variety of settings, and will feature presentations for elementary and middle school teachers. Nationally known speaker and author Dennis Denenberg, professor emeritus at Millersville

University of Pennsylvania, will deliver the keynote address, "Individuals and Historical Change: Heroes Every Elementary and Middle School Student Should Meet." David Kennedy, the keynote speaker at the NCHE annual conference in Pasadena, and will include such sessions as "Individuals Who Have Shaped Cities," and "Three Scientists Who Have Shaped History: Galileo, Newton, and Einstein." Although there is no charge for those attending the Pasadena Conference, pre-registration for the History and Biography conference in Los Angeles is required. For more information, visit <<http://www.history.org/nche/>>. □

Harriet Jacobs Papers Website

The Harriet Jacobs Papers has launched a new website that includes information about Jacobs, her family, and her circle of reformers, as well as the scope and significance of her papers and ephemera. As a fugitive slave, Jacobs wrote the landmark American slave narrative *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, Written by Herself* (Boston 1861, London 1862). Jacobs and her family were also actively involved in reform movements before, during, and after the Civil War. According to the web site: "The Harriet Jacobs Papers Project is designed as a lasting contribution to the ongoing study of the ways in which racism and slavery, and the struggle against racism and slavery, have shaped American culture and continue to shape American life." For more information about the project and to view the site, visit <<http://www.harrietjacobspapers.org/>>. □

Teaching the JAH

In its latest installment, W. Fitzhugh Brundage uses the work of African American artist Meta Warrick for the Jamestown Tercentennial Exposition to suggest how her creative impulses drew from a tradition of black life-studies. "Teaching the JAH" delivers teaching packages, each of which features an article from the print journal, along with supporting documents that demonstrate how it might be used in the U.S. history survey course. For more information, visit <<http://www.indiana.edu/~jah/teaching/>> to view this and other installments. □

"We The People Bookshelf"

As a part of the the National Endowment for the Humanities's "We the People" initiative, the "We the People Bookshelf" focuses on classic books for K-12 readers. Every year, the NEH, guided by librarians, historians, and experts on children's literature, select books that encourage young readers to explore the ideas and ideals of America. Although titles reflect a variety of topics and time periods, the NEH will select books that share a common theme. This year's theme is "courage." For a complete list of the books, please visit <<http://www.wethepeople.gov/>>. □

BUILDING A LASTING LEGACY

FOR THE STUDY OF U.S. HISTORY

Since our founding in 1907, OAH has promoted U.S. history teaching and scholarship, while encouraging the broadest possible access to historical resources and the most inclusive discussion of history. We encourage you to consider making a financial gift to OAH to strengthen our advocacy for the profession, increase our outreach efforts, and improve our services to historians.

Contributions to the general endowment generate support for OAH's ongoing activities. Endowment gifts can also be earmarked for the *OAH Magazine of History*, *Talking History Radio Show*, and *Journal of American History*.

Or gifts can be made to:

- **OAH Prize Fund**, which provides cash awards and other expenses for the twenty prizes promoting excellent teaching and research, or
- **Fund for American History**, which makes possible new initiatives in historical inquiry, teaching, and professional development.

For more information on annual giving or remembering OAH and its many initiatives in your estate plans, please visit <www.oah.org> or contact development manager Leslie A. Leasure <development@oah.org> phone (812) 856-0742



Call for Papers

PRACTICING AMERICAN HISTORY IN THE SOUTH

OAH Southern Regional Conference • Atlanta, Georgia • 8-11 July 2004

In summer 2004, OAH in conjunction with Georgia State University Department of History and the Georgia Association of Historians will present its second regional conference.

The meeting, on the Georgia State campus, takes as its special charge a desire to reach members and other historians and graduate students who find it difficult to attend the national meeting held in the spring each year. Atlanta is a convenient, central location in the Southeast and the conference will benefit from the relatively inexpensive lodging and services offered by Georgia State University. Considerable attention will be devoted to professional development and the practice of history both in classrooms and in public settings in the South.

In keeping with recent OAH program practices, we encourage formats that promote discussion and participation, for example, roundtables and debates with up to five panelists. We also recommend that panelists discuss rather than read their papers, in an effort to increase dialogue with the audience. Although session proposals are preferred, we welcome individual paper submissions. We also welcome volunteers to chair or comment at sessions, as assigned by the Program Committee.

Deadline for proposals:

1 August 2003

See <www.oah.org/meetings/2004regional> for more information.

