

What Were The Salem Witch Trials

Salem witch trials

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The Salem witch trials were a series of hearings and prosecutions of people accused of witchcraft in colonial Massachusetts between February 1692 and May 1693. More than 200 people were accused. Thirty people were found guilty, nineteen of whom were executed by hanging (fourteen women and five men). One other man, Giles Corey, died under torture after refusing to enter a plea, and at least five people died in the disease-ridden jails without trial.

Although the accusations began in Salem Village (known today as Danvers), accusations and arrests were made in numerous towns beyond the village notably in Andover and Topsfield. The residency of many of the accused is now unknown; around 151 people, nearly half that were accused, were able to be traced back to twenty-five different New England communities. The grand juries and trials for this capital crime were conducted by a Court of Oyer and Terminer in 1692 and by a Superior Court of Judicature in 1693, both held in Salem Town (the regional center for Salem Village), where the hangings also took place. It was the deadliest witch hunt in the history of colonial North America. Fourteen other women and two men were executed in Massachusetts and Connecticut during the 17th century. The Salem witch trials only came to an end when serious doubts began to arise among leading clergymen about the validity of the spectral evidence that had been used to justify so many of the convictions, and due to the sheer number of those accused, "including several prominent citizens of the colony".

In the years after the trials, "several of the accusers – mostly teen-age girls – admitted that they had fabricated their charges." In 1702, the General Court of Massachusetts declared the trials "unlawful", and in 1711 the colonial legislature annulled the convictions, passing a bill "mentioning 22 individuals by name" and reversing their attainders.

The episode is one of colonial America's most notorious cases of mass hysteria. It was not unique, but a colonial manifestation of the much broader phenomenon of witch trials in the early modern period, which took the lives of tens of thousands in Europe. In America, Salem's events have been used in political rhetoric and popular literature as a vivid cautionary tale about the dangers of isolation, religious extremism, false accusations, and lapses in due process. Many historians consider the lasting effects of the trials to have been highly influential in the history of the United States. According to historian George Lincoln Burr, "the Salem witchcraft was the rock on which the [New England] theocracy shattered."

At the 300th anniversary events held in 1992 to commemorate the victims of the trials, a park was dedicated in Salem and a memorial in Danvers. In 1957, an act passed by the Massachusetts legislature absolved six people, while another one, passed in 2001, absolved five other victims. As of 2004, there was still talk about exonerating or pardoning all of the victims. In 2022, the last convicted Salem witch, Elizabeth Johnson Jr., was officially exonerated, 329 years after she had been found guilty.

In January 2016, the University of Virginia announced its Gallows Hill Project team had determined the execution site in Salem, where the 19 "witches" had been hanged. The city dedicated the Proctor's Ledge Memorial to the victims there in 2017.

Elizabeth Hubbard (Salem witch trials)

the primary instigator of the Salem Witch Trials. Hubbard was 17 years old in the spring of 1692 when the trials began. In the 15 months the trials took

Elizabeth Hubbard was an American female who is best known as the primary instigator of the Salem Witch Trials. Hubbard was 17 years old in the spring of 1692 when the trials began. In the 15 months the trials took place, twenty people were executed.

Martha Carrier (Salem witch trials)

of being a witch during the 1692 Salem witch trials. Martha Allen was born about 1650 to Andrew Allen (or Allin) (1623–1690), one of the original 23

Martha Carrier (née Allen; about 1650 – 19 August 1692) was a Puritan accused and convicted of being a witch during the 1692 Salem witch trials.

John Proctor (Salem witch trials)

landowner in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. He and his wife Elizabeth were tried and convicted of witchcraft as part of the Salem Witch Trials, whereupon

John Proctor (9 October 1631 – 19 August 1692) was a landowner in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. He and his wife Elizabeth were tried and convicted of witchcraft as part of the Salem Witch Trials, whereupon he was hanged.

Mary Warren (Salem witch trials)

(c. 1674 — c. 1710) was an accuser and later confessed witch during the 1692 Salem witch trials. She was a servant for John and Elizabeth Proctor. Renouncing

Mary Ann Warren (c. 1674 — c. 1710) was an accuser and later confessed witch during the 1692 Salem witch trials. She was a servant for John and Elizabeth Proctor. Renouncing her claims after threats of beating from her master, she was later accused and arrested for allegedly practicing witchcraft herself, after which she again became afflicted and accused others of witchcraft. Her life after the trials is unknown.

Cultural depictions of the Salem witch trials

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Cultural depictions of the Salem witch trials abound in art, literature and popular media in the United States, from the early 19th century to the present day. The literary and dramatic depictions are discussed in Marion Gibson's *Witchcraft Myths in American Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2007) and see also Bernard Rosenthal's *Salem Story: Reading the Witch Trials of 1692*

Ann Putnam

at age 12, at the Salem Witch Trials of Massachusetts during the later portion of 17th-century Colonial America. Born 1679 in Salem Village, Essex County

Ann Putnam (October 18, 1679 – 1716) was a primary accuser, at age 12, at the Salem Witch Trials of Massachusetts during the later portion of 17th-century Colonial America. Born 1679 in Salem Village, Essex County, Massachusetts Bay Colony, she was the eldest child of Thomas (1652–1699) and Ann (Née Carr) Putnam (1661–1699).

She was friends with some of the girls who claimed to be afflicted by witchcraft and, in March 1692, proclaimed to be afflicted herself, along with Elizabeth Hubbard, Mary Walcott, Mercy Lewis, Abigail Williams, and Mary Warren. Putnam is responsible for the accusations of 62 people, which, along with the accusations of others, resulted in the executions of twenty people, as well as the deaths of several others in prison.

She was a first cousin once removed of Generals Israel and Rufus Putnam.

Witch hunt

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A witch hunt, or a witch purge, is a search for people who have been labeled witches or a search for evidence of witchcraft. Practicing evil spells or incantations was proscribed and punishable in early human civilizations in the Middle East. In medieval Europe, witch-hunts often arose in connection to charges of heresy from Catholics and Protestants. An intensive period of witch-hunts occurring in Early Modern Europe and to a smaller extent Colonial America, took place from about 1450 to 1750, spanning the upheavals of the Counter Reformation and the Thirty Years' War, resulting in an estimated 35,000 to 60,000 executions. The last executions of people convicted as witches in Europe took place in the 18th century. In other regions, like Africa and Asia, contemporary witch-hunts have been reported from sub-Saharan Africa and Papua New Guinea, and official legislation against witchcraft is still found in Saudi Arabia, Cameroon and South Africa today.

In contemporary English, "witch-hunt" metaphorically means an investigation that is usually conducted with much publicity, supposedly to uncover subversive activity, disloyalty, and so on, but with the real purpose of harming opponents. It can also involve elements of moral panic, as well as mass hysteria.

Giles Corey

accused of witchcraft along with his wife Martha Corey during the Salem witch trials in the Province of Massachusetts Bay. After being arrested, Corey refused

Giles Corey (bapt.Tooltip baptized 16 August 1611 – 19 September 1692) was an English-born farmer who was accused of witchcraft along with his wife Martha Corey during the Salem witch trials in the Province of Massachusetts Bay. After being arrested, Corey refused to enter a guilty or not guilty plea. He was subjected to torture in the form of peine forte et dure, dying after three days of being crushed. Because Corey refused to enter a plea, his estate passed on to his sons instead of being seized by the Massachusetts colonial government.

Corey is believed to have died in the field adjacent to the prison that had held him, in what later became the Howard Street Cemetery in Salem, Massachusetts, which opened in 1801. His exact grave location in the cemetery is unmarked and unknown. There is a memorial plaque to him in the nearby Charter Street Cemetery.

Abigail Williams

was among the first of the children to accuse their neighbors of witchcraft in 1692; these accusations eventually led to the Salem witch trials. In early

Abigail Williams (born c. 1681, date of death unknown) was an 11- or 12-year-old girl who, along with nine-year-old Betty Parris, was among the first of the children to accuse their neighbors of witchcraft in 1692; these accusations eventually led to the Salem witch trials.

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