

## H-O-H -> What Really Happened in Salem in 1692?

### **BACKGROUND:**

There are more than 850 legal documents and many other items written in 1692 by participants of the hysteria. Even though that number is not astronomical, we have more documentary evidence about the Salem trials than any other witchcraft outbreak.

It is true, however, that those who record events can, by chance or design, skew the facts to their understanding of them. And, those who were unable to record their side of events remain silent forever. Historians take the primary sources, acknowledging their incompleteness, and still attempt to find truths. Often, theories of why the witchcraft outbreak took place tell us more about the time in which the theorists write than about the events.

Most of the events of Salem—with regard to dates, people involved, and testimony given—are recorded. Motives, agendas, secret thoughts, and psychological quirks are very elusive.

Salem Village in 1692 was comprised of the present town of Danvers as well as most of the town of Middleton and the city of Peabody. According to research, the population of the village was approximately 550 people living in 90 houses scattered over an approximate 20-square mile area. Today the population of those three communities is approximately 70,000.

Salem Town proper, which had an area of approximately 80-square miles, had a population of 1,400 persons in 1692. Today the population is approximately 38,000.

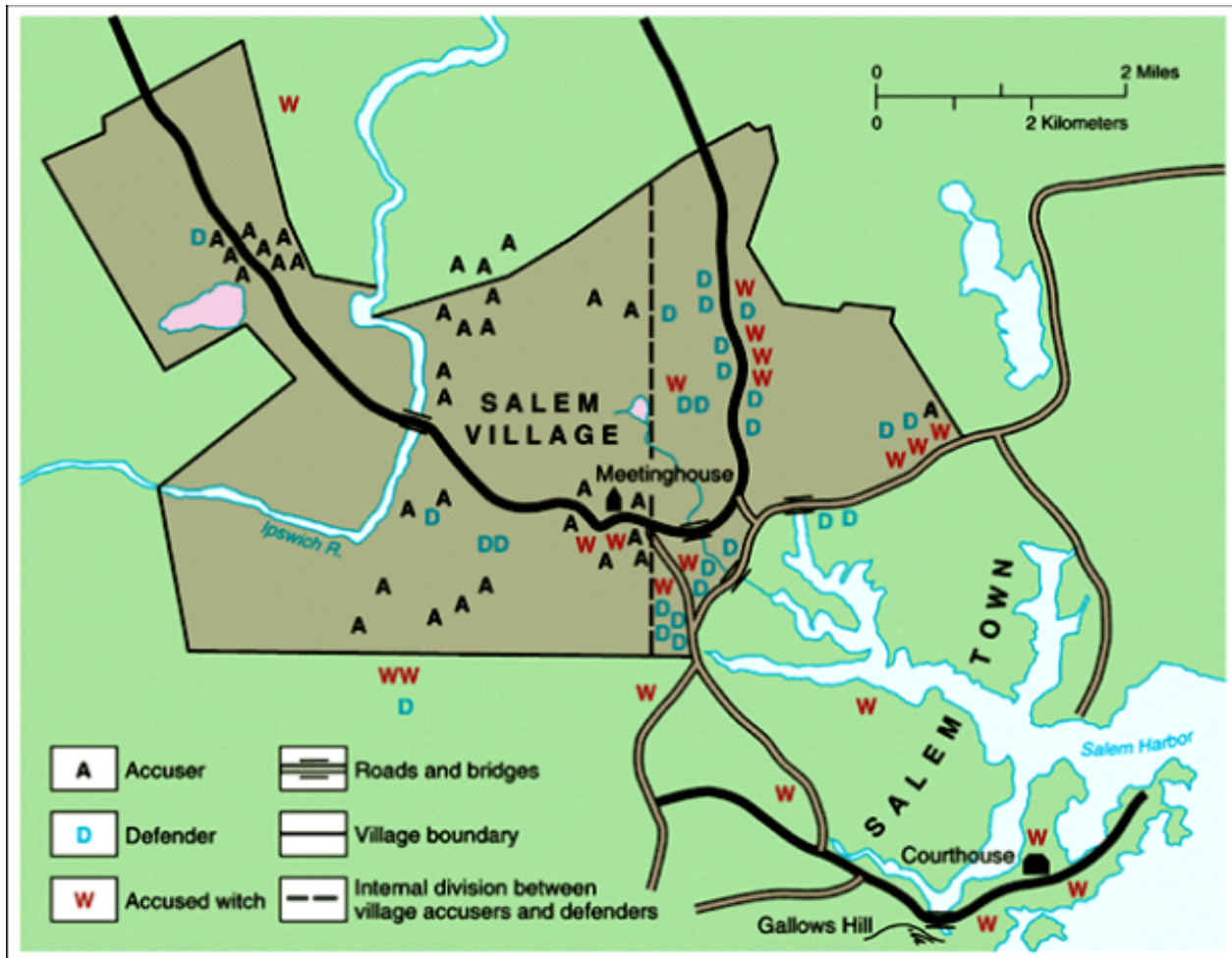
<b>Document #1</b>
<p><b><u>YEARLY EVENTS:</u></b></p> <p>1686 – Whole of New England thrown together under one government in the Dominion of New England.</p> <p>1688 – Glorious Revolution in England.</p> <p>1680s-1690s – Very cold winters, called by some “The Little Ice Age.”</p> <p>1689-1690 – Small-pox epidemic.</p> <p>1690 – Great Britain revokes the Massachusetts Bay Charter --&gt; this suspended the courts and abolished the longstanding Puritan theocratic state.</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">– Military expedition against Quebec ends in defeat.</p> <p>1691 – Indian attacks on border of Massachusetts at Billerica.</p> <p>1692 – Young people believed to be profaning the Sabbath.</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">-- Sir William Phips appointed governor of MA Bay and a new royal charter is created in which the governor, church, legislature, and courts are welded together in a single religious and civil governing body.</p>

## Document #2

Average Size of Salem Village Landholdings, 1640-1700 (in acres)

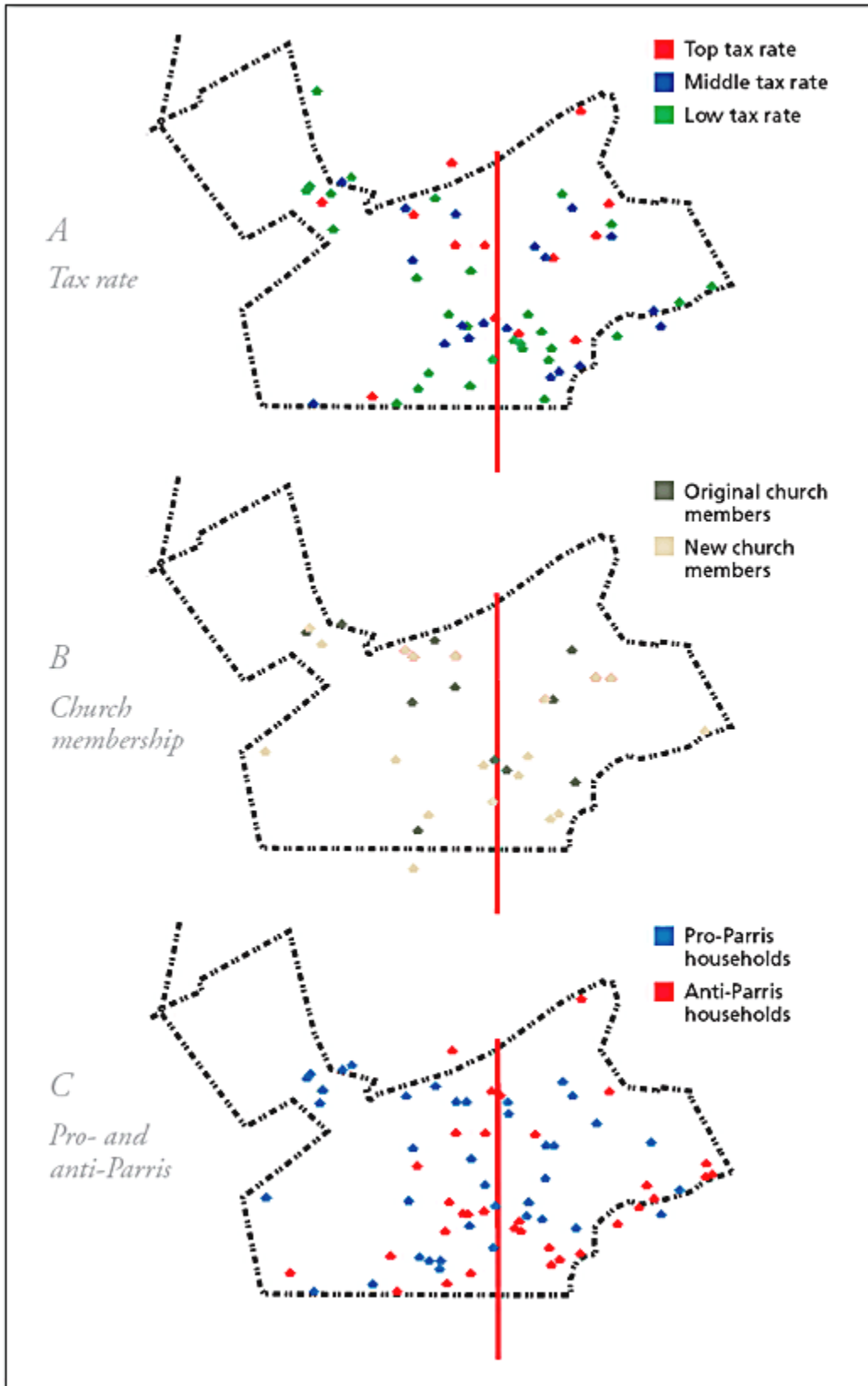
1640 - 180 acres
1650 - 220 acres
1660 - 235 acres
1670 - 185 acres
1680 - 155 acres
1690 - 125 acres
1700 - 113 acres

## Document #3



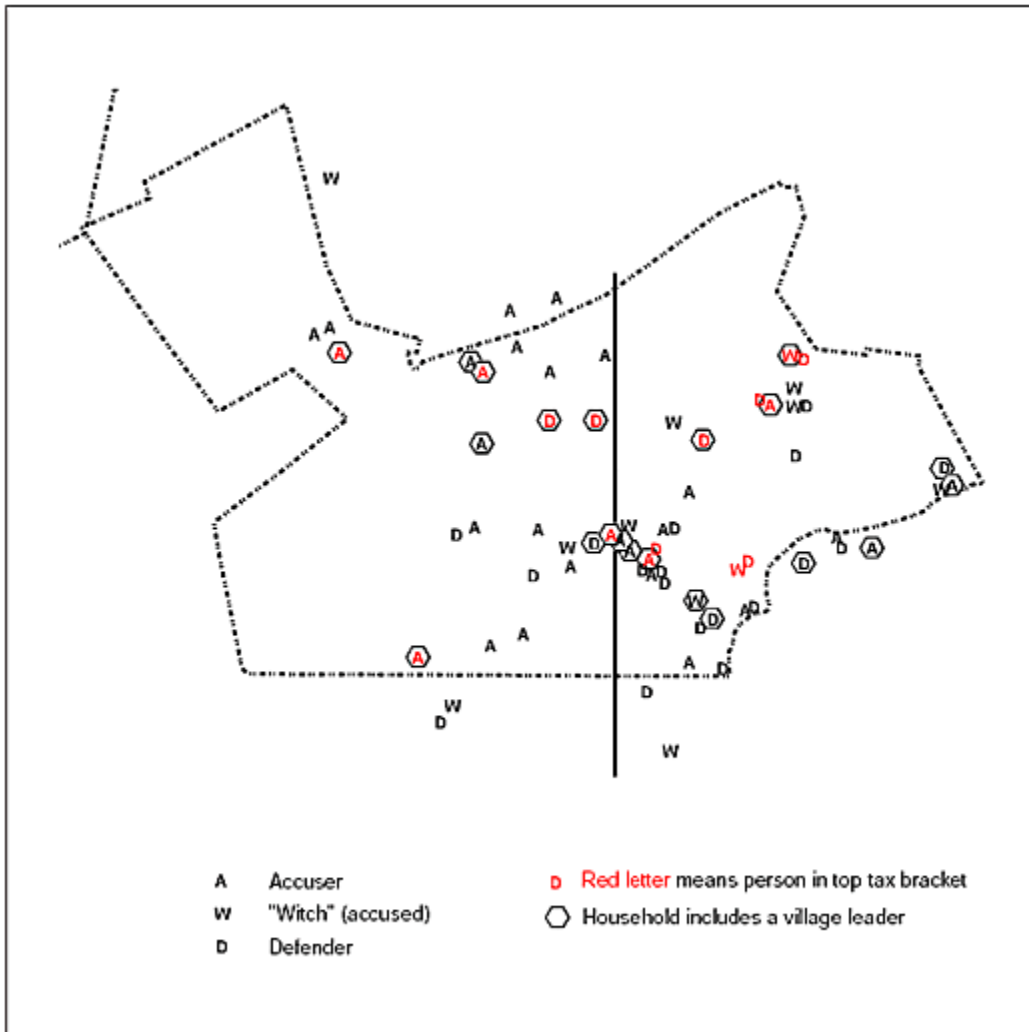
**Source:** Frontispiece to volume one of Charles W. Upham's *Salem Witchcraft*, 2 vols. (Boston, 1867).

Document #4



Source: Professor Benjamin C. Ray using a GIS computer software to plot Salem data on a map.

## Document #5



**Source:** Professor Benjamin C. Ray using a GIS computer software to plot Salem data on a map

## Document #6

Declension from the primitive foundation work, innovation in doctrine and worship, opinion and practice, an invasion of the rights, liberties and privileges of churches, an usurpation of a lordly and political power over God's heritage, a subversion of the gospel order, and all this with a dangerous tendency to the utter devastation of these churches, turning the pleasant gardens of Christ into a wilderness, and the inevitable and total extirpation of the principles and pillars of the congregational way; these are the leaven, the corrupting gangrene, the infecting spreading plague, the provoking image of jealousy set up before the Lord, the accursed thing which hath provoked divine wrath, and doth further threaten destruction.

**Source:** House of Deputies report on conditions in the Massachusetts Bay colony, 1670.

## Document #7

Occasioned by dreadful Witchcraft broke out here a few weeks past, and one Member of this Church, and another of Salem, upon public examination by Civil Authority vehemently suspected for she-witches, and upon it committed. John 6:70. "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a Devil." . . .

Doctrine: Our Lord Jesus Christ knows how many Devils there are in his Church, and who they are.

1. There are devils as well as saints in Christ's Church.
2. Christ knows how many of these devils there are.
3. Christ knows who these devils are.

Proposition 1: There are devils as well as saints in Christ's church. Here three things may be spoken to:

- (1) Show you what is meant here by devils;
- (2) That there are such devils in the church;
- (3) That there are also true saints in such churches.

(1). What is meant here by devils? "One of you is a devil." Answer: By devil is ordinarily meant any wicked angel or spirit. Sometimes it is put for the prince or head of the evil spirits, or fallen angels. Sometimes it is used for vile and wicked persons—the worst of such, who for their villainy and impiety do most resemble devils and wicked spirits. Thus Christ in our text calls Judas a devil: for his great likeness to the devil. "One of you is a devil": i.e., a devil for quality and disposition, not a devil for nature—for he was a man, etc.—but a devil for likeness and operation (John 8: 38, 41, 44—"Ye are of your father the devil.")

(2). There are such devils in the church. Not only sinners, but notorious sinners; sinners more like to the devil than others. So here in Christ's little Church. (Text.) This also Christ teacheth us in the parable of the tares (Matth. 13:38), where Christ tells us that such are the children of the wicked one—i.e., of the devil. Reason: Because hypocrites are the very worst of men—*corruptio optimi est pessimi*. Hypocrites are the sons and heirs of the devil, the free-holders of hell—whereas other sinners are but tenants. When Satan repossesseth a soul, he becomes more vile and sinful (Luke II: 24-26). As the jailer lays loads of iron on him that hath escaped. None are worse than those who have been good, and are naught; and might be good, but will be naught....

Proposition 2: Christ knows how many of these devils there are in his churches. As in our text there was one among the twelve. And so in our churches God knows how many devils there are: whether one, two, three, or four in twelve—how many devils, how many saints. He that knows whom he has chosen (John 13: 18), he also knows who they are that have not chosen him, but prefer farms and merchandise above him and above his ordinances (2 Tim. 4: 10). . . .

**Source:** Rev. Samuel Parris' sermon , "Christ Knows How Many Devils there Are", March 27, 1692.

## Document #8

On, Monday, the 21st. of March, the magistrates of Salem appointed to come to examination of Goodwife Corey. And about twelve of the clock they went into the meeting house, which was thronged with spectators. Mr. Noyes began with a very pertinent and pathetic prayer, and Goodwife Corey being called to answer to what was alleged against her, she desired to go to prayer, which was much wondered at, in the presence of so many hundred people. The magistrates told her they would not admit it; they came not there to hear her pray, but to examine her in what was alleged against her. The worshipful Mr. Hathorne asked her why she afflicted those children. She said she did not afflict them. He asked her, 'Who did then?' She said, 'I do not know; how should I know?'

The number of the afflicted persons were about that time ten, viz. four married women: Mrs. Pope, Mrs. Putnam, Goodwife Bibber, and an ancient woman named Goodall; three maids-. Mary Walcut, Mercy Lewes, at Thomas Putnam's, and a maid at Dr. Griggs's; there were three girls from nine to twelve years of age, each of them, or thereabouts, viz. Elizabeth Parris, Abigail Williams, and Ann Putnam.

These were most of them at Goodwife Corey's examination, and did vehemently accuse her in the

assembly of afflicting them, by biting, pinching, strangling, etc.; and that they did in their fit see her likeness coming to them, and bringing a book to them. She said she had no book. They affirmed she had a yellow bird that used to suck betwixt her fingers; and being asked about it, if she had any familiar spirit that attended her, she said she had no familiarity with any such thing, she was a gospel woman, which title she called herself by. And the afflicted persons told her ah, she was a gospel witch. Ann Putnam did there affirm that one day when Lieutenant Fuller was at prayer at her father's house she saw the shape of Goodwife Corey and she thought Goodwife N, praying at the same time to the Devil. She was not sure it was Goodwife N., she thought it was, but very sure she saw the shape, of Goodwife Corey. The said Corey said they were poor, distracted children, and no heed to be given to what they said. Mr. Hathorne and Mr. Noyes replied it was the judgment of all present they were bewitched, and only she, the accused person, said they were distracted.

It was observed several times that if she did but bite her underlip in time of examination, the persons afflicted were bitten on their arms and wrists and produced the marks before the magistrates, ministers, and others. And being watched for that, if she did but pinch her fingers, or grasp one hand hard in another, they were pinched, and produced the marks before the magistrates and spectators. After that, it was observed that if she did but lean her breast against the seat in the meeting house (being the bar at which she stood), they were afflicted. Particularly Mrs. Pope complained of grievous torment in her bowels as if they were, torn out. She vehemently accused said Corey as the instrument, and first threw her muff at her, but that not flying home, she got off her shoe, and hit Goodwife Corey on the head with it. After these postures were watched, if said Corey did but stir her feet, they were afflicted in their feet, and stamped fearfully.

The afflicted persons asked her why she did not go to the company of witches which were before the meeting house mustering. Did she not hear the drum beat? They accused her of having familiarity with the Devil, in the time of examination, in the shape of a black man whispering in her ear; they affirmed that her yellow bird sucked betwixt her fingers in the assembly; and, order being given to see if there were any sign, the, girl that saw it said it was too late now; she had removed a pin, and put it on her head, which was found there sticking upright.

... she denied all that was charged upon her, and said they could not prove her a witch. She was that afternoon committed to Salem prison; and after she was in custody, she did not so appear to them and afflict them as before.

**Source:** Deodat Lawson, clergyman, describing the accusations given to Rev. Samuel Parris by some of the "afflicted" girls on his first day in Salem Village, 1692.

## Document #9

Salem Aprill. 4<sup>th</sup> 1692

There Being Complaint this day made (Before us) by capt Jonat Walcott, and Lt Natheniell Ingersull both of Salem Village, in Behalfe of their Majesties for themselves and also for severall of their Neighbours Against Sarah Cloyce the wife of peter Cloyce of Salem Village; and Elizabeth Proctor the wife of John Proctor of Salem farmes for high Suspition of Sundry acts of Witchcraft donne or Committed by them upon the bodys of Abigail Williams, and John Indian both of Mr Sam parris his family of Salem Village and mary Walcott daughter of the abovesaid Complainants, And Ann Putnam and Marcy Lewis of the family of Thomas Putnam of Salem Village whereby great hurt and dammage hath beene donne to the Bodys of s'd persons above named therefore Craved Justice.

You are therefore in their Majest's names hereby required to apprehend and bring before us Sarah Cloyce the wife of peter Cloyce of Salem Village and Elizabeth proctor the wife of John Proctor of Salem farmes; on Munday Morneing Next being the Eleventh day of this Instant Aprill aboute Eleven of the Clock, at the publike Meeting house in the Towne, in order to their Examination Relateing to the premisses aboves'd and here of you are. not to faile Dated Salem Aprill 8<sup>th</sup> 1692

To George Herick Marshall of the County of Essex

John Hathorne  
Jonathan Corwin Assists

**Source:** Warrant for the arrest of Elizabeth Proctor and Sarah Cloyce (April 4, 1692).

### Document #10

JUSTICE: Ann Putnam, doth this woman hurt you?

PUTNAM: Yes, sir, a good many times. (Then the accused looked upon them and they fell into fits.)

JUSTICE: She does not bring the book to you, does she?

PUTNAM: Yes, sir, often, and saith she hath made her maid set her hand to it.

JUSTICE: Abigail Williams, does this woman hurt you?

WILLIAMS: Yes, sir, often.

JUSTICE: Does she bring the book to you?

WILLIAMS: Yes.

JUSTICE: What would she have you do with it?

WILLIAMS: To write in it and I shall be well.

PUTNAM TO MRS. PROCTOR: Did you not tell me that your maid had written?

MRS. PROCTOR: Dear child, it is not so. There is another judgment, dear child. (Then Abigail and Ann had fits. By and by they cried out, 'look you, there is Goody Proctor upon the beam. " By and by both of them cried out of Goodman Proctor himself, and said he was a wizard. Immediately, many, if not all of the bewitched, had grievous fits.)

JUSTICE: Ann Putnam, who hurt you?

PUTNAM: Goodman Proctor and his wife too. (Some of the afflicted cried, 'there is Proctor going to take up Mrs. Pope's feet—and her feet were immediately taken up.)

JUSTICE: What do you say Goodman Proctor to these things?

PROCTOR: I know not. I am innocent.

WILLIAMS: There is Goodman Proctor going to Mrs. Pope (and immediately said Pope fell into a fit).

JUSTICE: You see, the Devil will deceive you. The children could see what you was going to do before the woman was hurt. I would advise you to repentance, for the devil is bringing you out.

**Source:** The examination of Mrs. John Proctor as taken down by the Reverend Samuel Parris, 1692.

### Document #11

I believe, there never was a poor Plantation, more pursued by the wrath of the Devil, than our poor New-England. . . . It was a rousing alarm to the Devil, when a great Company of English Protestants and Puritans, came to erect Evangelical Churches, in a corner of the world, where he had reign' d without control for many ages; and it is a vexing Eye-sore to the Devil, that our Lord Christ should be known, and

own 'd and preached in this howling wilderness. Wherefore he has left no Stone unturned, that so he might undermine his Plantation, and force us out of our Country. First, the Indian Powawes, used all their Sorceries to molest the first Planters here; but God said unto them. Touch them not! Then, Seducing spirits came to root in this Vineyard, but God so rated them off, that they have not prevail' d much farther than the edges of our Land. After this, we have had a continual blast upon some of our principal Grain, annually diminishing a vast part of our ordinary Food. Herewithal, wasting Sicknesses, especially Burning and Mortal Agues, have Shot the Arrows of Death in at our Windows. Next, we have had many Adversaries of our own Language, who have been perpetually assaying to deprive us of those English Liberties, in the encouragement whereof these Territories have been settled. As if this had not been enough; the Tawnies among whom we came have watered our Soil with the Blood of many Hundreds of Inhabitants. . . . Besides all which, now at last the Devils are (if I may so speak) in Person come down upon us with such a Wrath, as is justly much, and will quickly be more, the Astonishment of the World....

Wherefore the Devil is now making one Attempt more upon us: an Attempt more Difficult, more Surprising, more snarl'd with unintelligible Circumstances than any that we have hitherto Encountered. . . . An Army of Devils is horribly broke in upon the place which is the center, and after a sort, the First-born of our English Settlements: and the Houses of the Good People there are fill' d with the doleful shrieks of their Children and Servants, Tormented by Invisible Hands, with Tortures altogether preternatural.

**Source:** Cotton Mather, 1692.

## Document #12



Convicted and Hanged: Bridget Bishop    George Burroughs    Martha Carrier    Martha Corey    Mary Easty  
 Sarah Good    Elizabeth Howe    George Jacobs, Sr.    Susannah Martin  
 Rebecca Nurse    Alice Parker    Mary Parker    John Proctor    Ann Pudeator  
 Wilmott Redd    Margaret Scott    Samuel Wardwell    Sara Wildes    John Willard

Pressed to Death with Stones: Giles Corey

Accused Who Died in Prison Before Execution: Sarah Osborn    Roger Toothaker    Lyndia Dustin  
 Ann Foster

(As many as thirteen others may have died in prison - sources conflict as to the exact number of prison deaths)

**Source:** Court records of the town of Salem, 1692.

**Document #13**

**Analysis Charts by Age & Gender**

**Accused Witches:**

Sex	Total	Marital Status	Male	Female	Total	Age	Male	Female	Total
Male	24	Single	8	29	37	Under 20	6	28	34
Female	110	Married	15	61	76	21 – 30	3	9	12
Total = 134		Widowed	1	20	21	31 – 40	3	8	11
		Total =	24	110	134	41 – 50	6	18	24
						51 – 60	2	33	35
						61 – 70	4	8	12
						over 70	0	6	6
						Total =	24	110	134

**Young Witches:**

Sex	Total	Marital Status	Male	Female	Total	Age	Male	Female	Total
Male	5	Single	5	23	28	Under 11	0	1	1
Female	29	Married	0	6	6	11 – 15	1	7	8
Total = 34		Widowed	0	0	0	16 - 20	1	13	14
		Total =	5	29	34	21 – 25	1	1	2
						26 – 30	0	1	1
						over 30	2	6	8
						Total =	2	27	34

**Witnesses:**

Sex	Total	Marital Status	Male	Female	Total	Age	Male	Female	Total
Male	53	Single	11	3	14	Under 20	3	2	5
Female	20	Married	39	16	55	21 – 30	9	6	17
Total = 73		Widowed	3	1	4	31 – 40	12	5	17
		Total =	53	20	73	41 – 50	14	5	19
						51 – 60	11	1	12
						61 – 70	2	1	3
						over 70	2	0	2
						Total =	53	20	73

**Source:** John Demos, "Underlying Themes in the Witchcraft of Seventeenth-Century New England," *American Historical Review*, Vol 75 (June 1970), pp. 1315-1316.

## Document #14

### Crimes the Accused Witches Were Convicted of Prior to 1692

Assaultive Speech	20
Theft	10
Lying	6
Sex Offenses	5
Physical Assault	4
Resisting Authority	2
Arson	1
Fraud	1
Unspecified	3

## Document #15

The elders and messengers of the churches—met in council at Salem Village, April 3, 1695, to consider and determine what is to be done for the composure of the present unhappy differences in that place,—after solemn invocation of God in Christ for this direction, do unanimously declare and advise as followeth:—

I. We judge that, albeit in the late and the dark time of the confusions, wherein Satan had obtained a more than ordinary liberty to be sifting of this plantation, there were sundry unwarrantable and uncomfortable steps taken by Mr. Samuel Parris, the pastor of the church in Salem Village, then under the hurrying distractions of amazing afflictions; yet the said Mr. Parris, by the good hand of God brought unto a better sense of things, hath so fully expressed it, that a Christian charity may and should receive satisfaction therewith.

II. Inasmuch as many Christian brethren in the church of Salem Village have been offended at Mr. Parris for his conduct in the time of the difficulties and calamities which have distressed them, we now advise them charitably to accept the satisfaction which he hath tendered in his Christian acknowledgments of the errors therein committed; yea, to endeavor, as far as 'tis possible, the fullest reconciliation of their minds unto communion with him, in the whole exercise of his ministry, and with the rest of the church (Matt. vi. 12-14; Luke xvii. 3; James v. 16)....

V. Having observed that there is in Salem Village a spirit full of contentions and animosities, too sadly verifying the blemish which hath heretofore lain upon them, and that some complaints brought against Mr. Parris have been either causeless and groundless, or unduly aggravated, we do, in the name and fear of the Lord, solemnly warn them to consider, whether, if they continue to devour one another, it will not be bitterness in the latter end; and beware lest the Lord be provoked thereby utterly to deprive them of those which they should account their precious and pleasant things, and abandon them to all the desolations of a people that sin away the mercies of the gospel (James iii. 16; Gal. v. 15; 2 Sam ii. 26; Isa. v. 4, 5, 6; Matt. xxi. 43).

VI. If the distempers in Salem Village should be (which God forbid!) so incurable, that Mr. Parris, after all, find that he cannot, with any comfort and service, continue in his present station, his removal from thence will not expose him unto any hard character with us, nor, we hope, with the rest of the people of God among whom we live (Matt. x. 14; Acts xxii. 18).

All which advice we follow with our prayers that the God of peace would bruise Satan under our feet. Now, the Lord of peace himself give you peace always by all means.

INCREASE MATHER, Moderator.  
JOSEPH BRIDGHAM.  
SAMUEL CHECKLEY.  
WILLIAM TORREY.  
JOSEPH BOYNTON.

NEHEMIAH JEWET.  
NATHLL. WILLIAMS.  
SAMUEL PHILLIPS.  
JAMES ALLEN.  
SAMUEL TORREY.

RICHARD MIDDLECOT.  
JOHN WALLEY.  
JER: DUMMER.  
EPHRAIM HUNT.

SAMUEL WILLARD.  
EDWARD PAYSON.  
COTTON MATHER.

**Source:** The conclusion of the Massachusetts Bay Elders, 1695.

### Document #16

"I desire to be humbled before God for that sad and humbling providence that befell my father's family in the year about '92; that I, then being in my childhood, should, by such a providence of God, be made an instrument for the accusing of several persons of a grievous crime, whereby their lives were taken away from them, whom now I have just grounds and good reason to believe they were innocent persons; and that it was a great delusion of Satan that deceived me in that sad time, whereby I justly fear I have been instrumental, with others, though ignorantly and unwittingly, to bring upon myself and this land the guilt of innocent blood; though what was said or done by me against any person I can truly and uprightly say, before God and man, I did it not out of any anger, malice, or ill-will to any person, for I had no such thing against one of them; but what I did was ignorantly, being deluded by Satan. And particularly, as I was a chief instrument of accusing of Goodwife Nurse and her two sisters, I desire to lie in the dust, and to be humbled for it, in that I was a cause, with others, of so sad a calamity to them and their families; for which cause I desire to lie in the dust, and earnestly beg forgiveness of God, and from all those unto whom I have given just cause of sorrow and offence, whose relations were taken away or accused.

[Signed]

This confession was read before the congregation, together with her relation, Aug. 25, 1706; and she acknowledged it.

*J. Green Pastor.*

**Source:** Ann Putnam's Confession, 1706.

### Document #17

....The original settlers had landed in a wilderness full of "wild beasts and wilder men,; yet sixty years later, sitting many miles from the nearest frontier in the prosperous seaboard town of Boston, Cotton Mather and other survivors of the old order still imagined that they were living in a wilderness—a territory they had explored as thoroughly as any frontiersmen. But the character of this wilderness was unlike anything the first settlers had ever seen, for its dense forests had become a jungle of mythical beasts and its skies were thick with flying spirits. In a sense, the Puritan community had helped mark its location in space by keeping close watch on the wilderness surrounding it on all sides; and now that the visible traces of that wilderness had receded out of sight, the settlers invented a new one by finding the shapes of this forest in the middle of the community itself.

And as the wilderness took on this new character, it seemed that even the Devil had given up his more familiar disguises. He no longer lurked in the underbrush, for most of it had been cut away; he no longer assumed the shape of hostile Indians, for most of them had retreated inland for the moment; he no longer sent waves of heretics to trouble the Bay, for most of them lived quietly under the protection of toleration; he no longer appeared in the armies of the Counter-Reformation, for the old battlefields were still and too far away to excite the imagination. But his presence was felt everywhere, and when the colonists began to look for his new hiding places they found him crouched in the very heart of the Puritan colony. Quite literally, the people of the Bay began to see ghosts, and soon the boundaries of the New England Way closed in on a space full of demons and incubi, specters and evil spirits, as the settlers tried to find a new sense of their own identity among the landmarks of a strange, invisible world.

**Secondary Source:** "The Witches of Salem Village" by Kai T. Erikson in *American Experiences, Vol. 1* (edited by Randy Roberts and James S. Olson, Scott, Foresman \* Co., 1986), pg. 34.