



Gardner's Beacon

CAPE ANN AND SALEM PLANTER



Thomas Gardner Society

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The Salem area in 1692 was not a peaceful place. There was much confusion; accusations were being cast about; jurors were busy trying to figure out who was guilty or not. On 22 Sept of that year, eight New Englanders, who had been accused and convicted of witchcraft, were hung. Altogether in that year, twenty persons lost their lives.

1692 was the last year of executions, as the governing bodies put the brakes on the madness. Well, that was somewhat delayed, as the governing bodies got it started to begin with. Eventually, the accused were exonerated, though some had to be so cleansed posthumously. Families received compensation for the damages to their lives. It was not until 1992 that all of the executed were exonerated, by name.

After 1692

Life went on. Over the years, families of those involved intermarried. Hence, we find people living today who are descendants of many types of participants at the 1692 events.

The ordeal faced by Salem residents has always been in the American mind since that time. It is almost part of the national psyche. Too, much has been written over the years, including major pieces of literature and scholarly analysis. The Corwin House still stands and represents the ordeal.

But, do we now understand any better the underlying causes than before? Have the costs been truly calculated?



In 1987, a group was formed in California for women descendants of the accused, called The Associated Daughters of Early American Witches (ADEAW), to allow member to honor their ancestors' lives. ADEAW has a list of ancestors collected from successful applications to the group and will allow other ancestors who are not on the current list to be proven. In 2007, a group was formed for descendants of those who participated in the trials.

Memorials

During the Witches Trial TerCentenary, in 1992, the Witches Trial Memorial near Salem's Charter Street Cemetery was dedicated. In this memorial garden, there are stone seats for each of those executed in 1692; each seat is etched with a name.

The newsletter is sponsored by the Thomas Gardner Society (ThomasGardnerSociety.org).

Recently, the memorial in Salem was closed for renovation. The re-opening ceremony of the memorial in Salem was held in September of 2012.

ADEAW members attend the re-opening event. The ADEAW President General presented a memorial wreath of rosemary.

Over the years, families had built memorials, as well. One example is the Rebecca Nurse memorial that was erected in Danvers in 1885. Samuel Gardner's (2nd generation) in-laws led the unsuccessful attempt to free Rebecca.

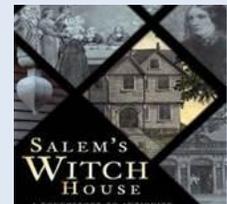
A reappraisal of Salem's Witch House—by John Goff

Globally famed as America's "Witch City," Salem increasingly attracts visitors who come here to learn more about the tragic events of 1692. Our city of 40,000 people now draws about 1 million people annually from all corners of the earth—folks who come, at least initially, to see our Salem Witch Museum, Salem Witch Trials Tercentenary Memorial, Salem Witch Dungeon Museum, and many other "witch" themed attractions.

But has Salem's principal preoccupation with "witch" matters distorted our views of American history---and our understanding of very old sites and features all around us? Is there also a latent Anglo-centrism and Anglo-favoritism in our history books and records that blinds us to other early contributions made by other groups, other than the English...people like the French, and the Native Americans?

Between 2003 and 2008, I worked extensively with Salem Preservation Inc. to restore Salem's beloved Pioneer Village in Forest River Park. My primary motivations for doing this were tied to the appreciation that our early First Period colonial history was important. Yet of equal importance, it was necessary to start seeing the land beneath and near Pioneer Village as something much older---and something that spoke to early Native American and French Fur Trade chapters in our history.

In 2008-2009, I turned my gaze to another beloved Salem landmark, our so-called "Witch House," and decided to work to broaden its appreciation by writing and publishing Salem's Witch House: A Touchstone to Antiquity. If you have not yet seen or read this history, please do so---and let me know what you think. As expected, the history I wrote does provide a fairly simple narration of most of the key events that transpired here in Salem in 1692.





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Yet I wrote the "Touchstone to Antiquity" book to do something else as well: show how the roots of Essex Street that runs near the Witch House---and some archaeological artifacts that have been found beneath that street---survive and speak to us from times long, long ago...when Salem and this corner of Massachusetts were parts of a greater Native seasonal summer homeland, and fish processing place, called "Naumkeag." Salem's Witch House: A Touchstone to Antiquity describes how Naumkeag, Essex Street, and the Witch House evolved...and changed over several centuries...before a Colonial Revival impulse in the 1940s led to the landmark's restoration to a (mostly) 17th century appearance.

Please come to Salem, and please enjoy all of our history ---as well as all of our historic sites. But while doing so, please also keep in mind that this place is truly ancient---and "began" long before the English language was ever spoken---or written---on these shores. Kutaputash...i.e. Thank You!

The victims of 1692 events

Imagine yourself in those times, as an observer. Many do this; do we not see a continual fascination with the ordeal and the theme of witches? Too, is there not an annual dress-up event (All Hallows Eve), related to the hallowed and to souls? And, Salem capitalizes on the event and provides daily ways for visitors to be preoccupied with the theme.



But, imagine being there as one of the players of which there were several types. For example, do we know the terror of the soon-to-be-hung? Well, perhaps, there may not have been terror.

Take Giles Corey as an example. He showed with his mettle when he was pressed to death. Pressed? Yes, he had huge rocks piled upon him. For what did he undergo this? He was crushed as punishment for not acknowledging the Court's order for him to appear and testify. Yes, he said, "forget it," when he was summoned. Giles questioned the right of the Court to order him thusly. His appearance at court would have been to testify against himself about his involvement with witchcraft. Giles had no Fifth Amendment available to him.

He had no terror, either. As Giles lay beneath the stones, his mindset took him above the fray of the little people. Of course, he had pain and anguish, being a living human. But,

when asked to recant, Giles said: *more stone*. Those doing the deed let him languish, in agony, for several days. Yet, Giles did not capitulate. His friend, John Gardner, was ordered to get Giles to change his mind, but John was unable to do so. "man of iron" is what one historian wrote of Giles.

The victims were not terrorized, necessarily. English history is full of examples of those who went to their death with grace (Grace of God, if you would). There are too many to mention, but we can look at one earlier example in New England. That is, Mary Dyer was hung in 1661 for no other offence than not being a Puritan.



Other players

Imagine, too, the other players. Take the judges, please. They were motivated how? Ego? Self-righteousness? Trying to impress the new Governor? Then, we cannot go much further without having to mention the ministers. Many of the clergy were against the whole thing. John Wise and Francis Dane come to mind. John Wise knew the thing to be the wage of idiocy. Francis Dane tried to assist the accused in their defense.

Were there Reverends for the prosecutor? Yes, some of these were right in the fray and stoking the fire. The judges had support from Harvard, for example; from there came words about the Devil and his minions acting on people, leading them astray, and so forth. We had clergy in court. We had them at the executions. One was reciting Scripture (albeit with emptiness, would you not say?) to the hapless accused who was about to have her, or his, neck broken.

Yes, there was a man who was hanged, Samuel Wardwell.

About the clergy, don't we now think of their role in executions as being one to bring comfort to the prisoner? What comfort came from Noyes as he prattled on in the area of the hanging tree, one has to ask?

What were the motivations of all of these other people? Much has been written, but do we really understand what it was like? Some of the participants later wrote of their sorrow at having been pulled into their bullying stance. Many of the jurors apologized. Jurors?

Imagine, again. The Court and its roles stand out. It had been given power by a new Governor. Was Phips disingenuous? What law was the Court to uphold? This seems a little fuzzy, and that may have made the roles of the clergy a little more



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prominent. The Church, no doubt, was more than willing to weigh in on this matter. And what was the Court? Judges, jurors, witnesses and more.

Bullying?

Does not a lot of this seem to be like modern day bullying?

There are other roles to consider, as we see with Miller's play. For instance, we had the sheriffs and other man-handlers. There were accused who were not executed. Some of these died in jail. Many of the accused spent long, uncomfortable time in a jail cell. There were accused who won freedom by bowing to the Court.

Imagine this! There were on-lookers; some of these were jurors. Other on-lookers may have had more prurient motivations as the women were examined physically. Were there rational Puritans? Yes, many tried to soothe matters, tried to counter the madness, attempted to restore



sanity, and more. Many people offered assistance to the accused.

Imagine the families. We would need to consider not just the immediate family, but think of the in-laws and the friends. In some cases, several people from the same family were accused, even executed.

Causes?

What, exactly, was the problem behind all of this? Was it fascination with the supernatural that is as old as man? Playing on this interest with what might be called witchcraft (can be characterized several ways) was not new, either. The Old Testament has several references with regard to sorcery, for instance. So, whatever were the dynamics, they were not something new; however several factors have been considered.



The whole Puritan mindset seemed to lead to this type of oppression. Essentially, neighbors were expected to be the conscience of their neighbor. Bully tactics were an issue, too, which seems to be an old human trait. Accusers might have been motivated by a need for power or attention. And, they may have found this method convenient as it rewarded their participation.

Some modern views point to the cool, wet weather which may have caused foodstuffs to be contaminated. For instance, ergot plays tricks with the cognitive system. The early accusers were young persons who would have been more susceptible. Later, we saw property seekers come out of the woodwork. Or, there were those who wanted to act out a grudge. We saw this with widows, even with young children, losing their property. The sheriffs, in particular, were able to appropriate the property of others.

Through all this, the Gardners seemed to have emerged intact, as in not being actively involved. We took a brief look at that last year. For now, we can remember young Ruth Gardner who was married to one of the judges. Her parents had been run out of town for being Quakers. How did she fare through these trying times?

Those in all of the above-mentioned roles left descendants who represent them, currently. The reality of New England forced, through time, periodic intermarriage between families, because, after the initial thrust of immigrants, England shut off the spigot of people. The result was development of modern cousins who may have several lines back to those in all of the 1692 roles. In many cases, the lines may be indirect, as we may see that it was great-aunt or great-uncle who was involved. So, there were some, sometimes many, family connections.

The theme of Salem, in 1692, may be about the loss of connections, especially links to civility and to the necessity for shared experience. Somehow, one has to think that we have not learned all of the lessons, hence we can expect to have periodic look backs.

In remembrance:

- Sarah Good - executed
- Elizabeth Howe -executed
- Mary Parker – executed
- ...
- Mary (Perkins) Bradbury - accused
- Grace (Pratt) Dutch - accused
- Esther (Dutch) Elwell - accused
- Sarah (Noyes) Hale – accused
- Sarah Hawkes - accused
- Mary (Clements) Osgood – accused
- ...

We are inviting contributions of articles in regard to the Thomas Gardner families.
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