

Witchcraft Trials: The New York Experience

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All would be disserved if history were scrubbed clean of its gruesome chapters. Neither could we learn from the past, nor would we have a truthful enough picture to try to improve upon.

Witchcraft trials exemplify some of our darkest eras. In their wake, they left a long trail of misery and injustice. Fortunately, a good many records exist. In this article, we look at the history of witchcraft in general, and, in particular, the New York cases—of which there were only a handful. We then explore why New York, unlike New England, had so few witchcraft episodes.

Witchcraft beliefs have been with us as far back as recorded history (and no doubt even before that.) In the Code of Hammurabi, dating from the eighteenth-century BC, the second of the 282 laws states, “*If a man charge a man with sorcery, and cannot prove it, he who is charged with sorcery shall go to the river; into the river he shall throw himself, and if the river overcome him, his accuser shall take to himself his house. If the river show that man to be innocent, and he come forth unharmed, he who charged him with sorcery shall be put to death.*”¹

The beliefs existed in ancient Egypt. Though “magic” was mainly used to protect or heal, Egyptian rulers also inscribed names of foreign enemies and Egyptian traitors on clay pots, tablets, or figurines of bound prisoners. These objects were then burned, broken, or buried in cemeteries, in the belief that this would weaken or destroy the enemy.² In ancient Greece and Rome, the population recognized witchcraft by way of mythical figures, herbs, curse tablets, sacrifice, magical papyri, and the like.³

Over the centuries, witchcraft prosecutions often invoked the Bible, as a command or as a gauge for punishment. Exodus 22:18 cautions “Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live,” and Deut. 18: 9-14 says “Let no one be found among you who sacrifices their son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead is detestable to the Lord.” Leviticus 20:27 states “A man also or woman that hath a familiar spirit, or that is a wizard, shall surely be put to death: they shall stone them with stones: their blood shall be upon them.”

¹ For a timeline on witchcraft over the centuries, see online at <https://www.dcba-pa.org/pdfs/eventAds/Witchcraft%20Trials%20Timeline.pdf>; See, also, *The Salem Witchcraft Papers Verbatim Transcriptions of the Court Records In three volumes*. Edited by Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum; see, generally, Leo Ruickbie, *Witchcraft out of the Shadows, A History* (2004); Jeffrey B. Russell, *Witchcraft in the Middle Ages* (1972).

² BBC History, online at https://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/egyptians/magic_01.shtml.

³ See Lindsay C. Watson, *Magic in Ancient Greece and Rome* (2019).

In Gothic history, we read of Filimer, king of the Goths (c.145–197) who found among his people certain witches, whom he called in his native tongue *Haliurunnae*. He expelled them and compelled them to wander in solitary exile.⁴

In the writings of St. Augustine (354–413) we read: “*Hence then when a soul is vehemently moved to wickedness, as occurs mostly in little old women, according to the above explanation, the countenance becomes venomous and hurtful, especially to children, who have a tender and most impressionable body. It is also possible that by God’s permission, or from some hidden deed, the spiteful demons co-operate in this, as the witches may have some compact with them.*” St. Augustine characterized all magic as demonic, regardless of intent, as it diverted people from the true God.⁵

Over the centuries, there were several tests for discerning witchery.

In a trial by water, we read that “The scientific and proper method of preparing the witch is by tying her right thumb to her left great toe, and *vice versâ*, and this ordeal had this simplicity: If the putative witch sank well, she was innocent [as the water accepted her].” Presumably, if she sank, thus establishing innocence, she would be fished out before she drowned. If she swam or floated, meaning the water rejected her, she could be ill-treated till she died, or she was *ipso facto* a confessed witch.

Another was to weigh the accused witch against the church Bible. She was conducted to the parish church, where “*she was stript of all her cloathes to her shift and under-coat, and weighed against the Bible, and if she out-weighed it, she was to be honourably acquitted of the charge.*”⁶ Communities sometimes called upon professional witch-finders.⁷

There also had been theological plantings. In a Papal Bull of 1484, Innocent VII declared belief in witchcraft, condemned it, and dispatched inquisitors to Germany to try witches. In 1486, he persecuted one of the chief exponents of Renaissance Platonism, Pico della Mirandola, by condemning his theses and prohibiting his defense.⁸

That year, picking up on the cue, Jacob Sprenger (1436/1438–1495), dean of the University of Cologne in Germany, and Heinrich Kraemer (1430–1505) professor of theology at Austria’s University of Salzburg, and inquisitor in the Tirol region of Austria, wrote *Malleus Maleficarum* (the hammer of witches), a legal and theological document regarded as the standard handbook on witchcraft, including its detection and its extirpation, until well into the 18th century. The authors dedicated the book to the implementation of Exodus 22:18: “You shall not permit a sorceress to live.”

⁴ Jordanes, *The Origin and Deeds of the Goths*, online at <https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/14809/pg14809-images.html>.

⁵ THIRD ARTICLE [I, Q. 117, Art. 3] online at <https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/17611/pg17611-images.html>. See also Brian P. Levack *St Augustine: Demonic Power in Early Christianity* in *The Witchcraft Sourcebook* (2015) at 27.

⁶ John Ashton, *The Devil in Britain and America* (1896) at 196 Online at <https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/44412/pg44412-images>.

⁷ C. L’Estrange Ewen, *Witch Hunting and Witch Trials* (1929) at 69. Online at <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=inu.39000005906743&seq=93>.

⁸ <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Innocent-VIII>.

Between roughly 1450 and 1750, secular, inquisitorial, and ecclesiastical courts across continental Europe, the British Isles, and the American colonies tried approximately 110,000 people for the crime of witchcraft, executing around 60,000. Of those tried and executed, 75 to 80 per cent were women.⁹

In discussing witchcraft cases, one hesitates to use the term “jurisprudence,” but the judges and the participants—including even some of the accused—believed in the procedures, just as we believe in constitutional due process and equal protection under law.¹⁰ Being accused could prove fatal, depending on the proclivities of the jurors and magistrates, not to mention the motivations of the accuser. The line between healers (sometime called “cunning women”) and witches was blurry. A woman might one day administer potions or roots that healed, but she could be turned upon and accused if the ill person worsened or died.

Witchcraft accusations could be made almost freely, out of rancor or even whim, though sometimes restrained by defamation lawsuits, or the threat of one. But that defense depended on the resourcefulness and financial condition of the accused and was unavailable to the most vulnerable.¹¹

⁹ Lara Apps and Andrew Gow, *Male Witches in Early Modern Europe*. (2003) at 25; Brian P. Levack, *Possession, Witchcraft, and the Law in Jacobean England*, 52 Wash. & Lee. L. Rev. 1613, 1614 (1995).

¹⁰ See, generally, Moyer, Paul B. “Introduction: *The Devil in New England*.” *Detestable and Wicked Arts: New England and Witchcraft in the Early Modern Atlantic World*, 2020, at 172-191.

¹¹ See, e.g., online at; see, also, Elizabeth R. Purdy *Salem Witch Trials*, online at <https://firstamendment.mtsu.edu/article/salem-witch-trials/>; see also, Brie D. Sherwin, *Hocus Pocus: Modern-Day Manifestations of Witch Hunts*, 19 Nw. J. L. & Soc. Pol'y 1 (2023); L. Joe Dunman, *The Devil in Recent American Law*, 39 Pace L. Rev. 929, 931 (2019) citing Richard Godbeer, *The Devil's Dominion: Magic and Religion in Early New England* 15 (1994). Defamation suits brought by men to vindicate women far outnumbered suits brought by women themselves, however, perhaps because “an attack on the virtue of a single woman put no husband's reputation at stake,” and husbands had standing to pursue defamation remedies under the doctrine of coverture. Donna J. Spindel, *The Law of Words: Verbal Abuse in North Carolina to 1730*, 39 Am. J. Legal. Hist. 1, 33 (1995); see, generally, as to wealth and status as protections Moyer, Paul B. *Detestable and Wicked Arts: New England and Witchcraft in the Early Modern Atlantic World*, 2020, at 30, JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7591/j.ctvrs9084.5>. Accessed 5 Mar. 2025.

Witchcraft in England

In England, witchcraft episodes go back at least to *the Act against Conjurations, Witchcrafts, Sorcery and Inchantments* passed by Henry VIII (1491–1547) in 1541/1542.¹²

In that act, magical practices disruptive to the realm were “*demyde accepted and adjudged Felonye*, punishable by death and forfeiture of goods and chattels.” It aimed to outlaw magic with “unlawfull intente or purpose” and the named examples in the Act, such as to “waste consume or destroy any person” or “provoke any persone to unlawfull love.”¹³

Queen Elizabeth I (1553–1603), Henry VIII’s daughter, ascended the throne in 1558. Five years later, the Parliament passed the statute of 1563,¹⁴ the *Act agaynst Conjuracons Inchantments and Withecraftes*, which formally criminalized witchcraft and imposed the death penalty in certain circumstances—an enactment fundamental to English witch-trials.¹⁵

England’s major player in the field of witchcraft, however, was James I (James VI of Scotland) (1566–1625), as he was King of England when New England was first settled.

Over the centuries, there surely were skeptics, but most knew enough to be quiet about it, lest they go against the tide and, perhaps, get into big trouble. Reginald Scot (1538–1599), an Englishman and member of Parliament, emerges as one of the few who had the nerve, and the station, to debunk—or at least try to debunk—the prevailing belief.¹⁶ As we shall see, this did not please James I.

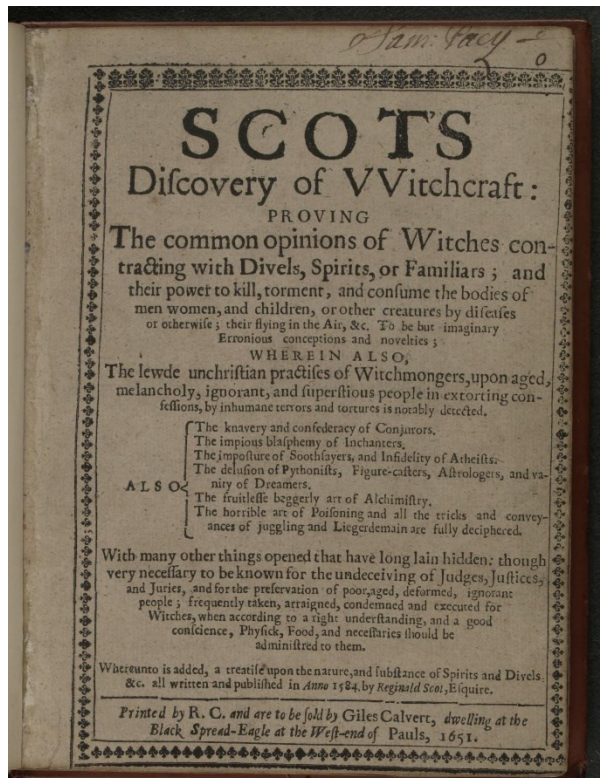
¹² 33 Hen. VIII c. 8; For centuries, magic was the preserve of the Church and its courts. In 1542 (33 Hen VIII c.8) the first English Witchcraft Act defined witchcraft, making it a crime punishable by death and within the jurisdiction of the civil courts. It was repealed in 1547, but restored by an Act against Conjurations, Enchantments and Witchcrafts 1562 (5 Elizabeth I, c. 16). The 1604 Witchcraft Act (1 Jac 1 c.12) remained on the statute books until repealed in 1736. The 1736 Witchcraft Act (9 Geo 2 c.5) imposed fines or imprisonment on anyone found guilty of claiming magical powers. Provision in the 1824 Vagrancy Act (5 Geo 4 c. 83) made fortune-telling, astrology and spiritualism became punishable offences. The 1951 *Fraudulent Mediums Act* repealed and replaced the 1736 Act. The 1951 Act was itself repealed by the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008 (S.I. 2008/1277).

¹³ UK Parliament, online at <https://archives.blog.parliament.uk/2020/10/28/which-witchcraft-act-is-which/>.

¹⁴ 5 Elizabeth 1 c.16; See, generally, Christine A. Corcos, *THE SCRYING GAME: THE FIRST AMENDMENT, THE RISE OF SPIRITUALISM, AND STATE PROHIBITION AND REGULATION OF THE CRAFTY SCIENCES*, 1848-1944, 38 Whittier L. Rev. 59 (2017).

¹⁵ History of Parliament, online at <https://historyofparliament.com/2019/11/05/origins-of-1563-witchcraft-act/>.

¹⁶ See, also, Thomas Potts and James Crossley, *Remains, Historical & Literary Connected with the Palatine Counties of Lancaster and Cester*, Vol. VI.M.DCCC.XLV. Online at <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/18253/18253-h/18253-h.htm#:~:text=Surely%20the%20blood%20of%20men,of%20the%20lives%20of%20men.%22&text=%22He%20doth%20make%20some%20show,a%20test%20of%20gentlemanly%20propriety.>



1. Reginald Scot's *Scot's Discovery of Witchcraft...* (1584).
Library of Congress, Rare Book & Special Collections Division,
92245413.

Scot's book was published when William Shakespeare (1564–1616) and Christopher Marlowe were both 20 years old. Perhaps Shakespeare was aware of the debate when he wrote *Hamlet* in 1603 [*Ay, that incestuous, that adulterate beast, With witchcraft of his wit*] and *Macbeth*, circa 1606 (*"Double, double, toil and trouble; Fire burn, and cauldron bubble."*), as well as *Henry the Eighth*, Act 3 Scene 2:

CHAMBERLAIN.

My lords, you speak your pleasures.

What he deserves of you and me I know

What we can do to him—though now the time

Gives way to us—I much fear. If you cannot

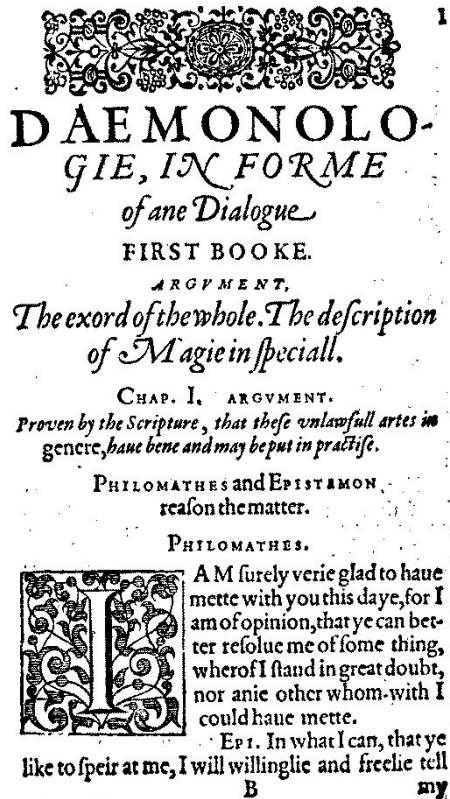
Bar his access to th' King, never attempt

Anything on him, for he hath a witchcraft

Over the King in 's tongue.

There is *Dr. Faustus* (1604) by Christopher Marlowe (1564–1593) a model for Broadway's *Damn Yankees* (selling one's soul to the devil to win the pennant).

Witchcraft in New England



2. Thanks to Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

Witchcraft investigations, prosecutions, trials, and executions were a part of life in mid-to-late 17th Century New England.¹⁷ If we see America as having been settled in three regions (New England, New York/Middle Atlantic, and the South), we learn that the witchcraft phenomenon took place principally, but not entirely, in Massachusetts and Connecticut.

The South was not without witchcraft episodes. For example, about two dozen such trials took place in Virginia between 1626 and 1730, ranging from civil defamation suits to criminal accusations.

Virginia's first case of witchcraft involved a charge against Goodwife Joan Wright before the General Court at Jamestown in 1626, with Governor George Yeardley presiding. The outcome of the case remains unknown.

Alice (Else) Young of Windsor, Connecticut may have been the first in New England to suffer death based on witchcraft charges in 1647—decades before the famous witchcraft

trials of Salem, Massachusetts in 1692. New England authorities conducted 42 trials resulting in 18 convictions and 15 hangings between 1638 and 1670.¹⁸ Historically, most, but not all, witchcraft prosecutions were against women.¹⁹

New York was not spared, but had far fewer events than New England, including several interesting ones covered in this article. In his classic work on the history of witchcraft, Wallace Notestein, bracketing the era, has chosen a period of about 160 years from 1558 to 1718 as the witchcraft epoch.²⁰

¹⁷ See, generally, John P. Demos, *Entertaining Satan, Witchcraft and Culture in Early New England* (1982).

¹⁸ Paul B. Moyer, *Detestable and Wicked Arts, New England and Witchcraft in the Early Modern Atlantic World* (2020); For a list of victims of Connecticut witch trials see <https://connecticutwitchtrials.org/victims/>.

¹⁹ Lara Apps, and Andrew Gow, *Male Witches in Early Modern Europe*. Manchester University Press, 2003. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt155j84b>.; Historian Allen Putnam states that there exists—in the handwriting of the judge before whom she was tried—a summary of the evidence adduced against Margaret Jones, of Charlestown, Mass. who, in 1648, was tried, condemned, and executed in Boston for the crime of witchcraft; Allen Putnam, *Witchcraft of New England Explained by Modern Spiritualism* (1881). Online at <https://www.mirror-service.org/sites/ftp.ibiblio.org/pub/docs/books/gutenberg/3/6/3/1/36312/36312-h/36312-h.htm>.

²⁰ For a timeline on witchcraft over the centuries, see online at <https://www.dcba-pa.org/pdfs/eventAds/Witchcraft%20Trials%20Timeline.pdf>; See, also, *The Salem Witchcraft Papers Verbatim Transcriptions of the Court Records In three volumes*. Edited by Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum; see,

Why did American witchcraft prosecutions erupt in 17th century New England?²¹ One explanation may be that, for its early settlers, life in New England was bound up in both theology and danger. They faced peril from Native American and French forces, and from punishing winters, disease, and the prospect of failure and starvation. They saw strange or unaccountable events as evidence of human sinfulness or the wrath of God. This environment created the perfect storm for a belief in witchcraft.²² As Professor George L Kittredge observes, “we can hardly regard it as an accident that the Salem witchcraft marks a time when the Colony was just emerging from a political struggle that had threatened its very existence.”²³

Another explanation brings in England’s King James I (James VI of Scotland) who reigned from 1566 to 1625. He played a pivotal role in that it secularized investigation, trial, and punishment, by shifting it from the Church to the courts of England. For James, witchcraft was an obsession.²⁴ As a colony of Great Britain, New England carried with it the cultural and legal underpinnings of the English, and of the Crown. When the King proclaims, people listen up. His loathing for witchcraft may have been exacerbated by the events surrounding his wedding to Anne of Denmark.

In 1597, he published *Daemonologie*, affirming witchcraft and proclaiming that witches must be put to death.²⁵ The action of King James I/VI was pivotal, in that it secularized investigation, trial, and punishment, by shifting it from the church to the courts in England.

It all seems to have been exacerbated by events surrounding his marriage to Anne of Denmark. In 1589, he waited for his betrothed to set sail across the North Sea. Having learned that a storm had battered her fleet, he set out to sail across the stormy seas to fetch her himself. The storm forced him to retreat to Scotland, shores but eventually he made it to Oslo in November, where

generally, Leo Ruickbie, *Witchcraft out of the Shadows, A History* (2004); Jeffrey B. Russell, *Witchcraft in the Middle Ages* (1972).

²¹ Estimates vary as to the extent of Salem’s witchcraft experience: Richard Latner, *The Long and Short of Salem Witchcraft: Chronology and Collective Violence in 1692* *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 42, No. 1 (Fall, 2008). Richard Godbeer lists 156 accused witches, basing his tally upon the documents provided in Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum’s edited collection, *The Salem Witchcraft Papers: Verbatim Transcripts of the Legal Documents of the Salem Witchcraft Outbreak of 1692*, (3 vols., New York, 1977). He notes that many others were accused informally. Mary Beth Norton calculates that legal action took place against “at least 144 people, while Marilynne Roach lists 191 people accused of witchcraft in and around 1692. Roach’s standard for inclusion is broad; her list contains, for example, those only “named” in testimony but whose fate is unrecorded. See Godbeer, *Devil’s Dominion*, 179, 238-42; Norton, *Devil’s Snare*, 3-4, 217 n.2; Roach, *Salem Witch Trials*, Appendix.

²² J. Moriarty, *Wonders of the Invisible World: Prosecutorial Syndrome and Profile Evidence in the Salem Witchcraft Trials*, 26 *Vt. L. Rev.* 43, (2011); See, also, David Hackett Fischer, *Albion’s Seed*, at 128.

²³ George Lyman Kittredge, *Notes on Witchcraft: Reprinted from the Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, Vol XVIII (1907); Online at <https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/70895-images.html>. See, also, Barbara Rosen, *Witchcraft in England*, 1558- 1618 (1969) 53-58; at <https://courses.washington.edu/hsteu305/English%20WC%20statutes.PDF>.

²⁴ Tracy Borman, *Witches James I and the English Witch Hunts* (2014) at 31; Tracy Borman, *Why was King James VI and I obsessed with witch hunts?* online at <https://www.historyextra.com/period/stuart/shakespeares-macbeth-and-king-jamess-witch-hunts/>.

²⁵ <https://archive.org/details/kingjamesfirstdm00jame/page/n49/mode/2up>.

they were wed.²⁶ He blamed the treacherous sea voyages on witchcraft.²⁷ Though the practice of witchcraft itself emerged as part of Danish culture as early as 1100, witch-hunting hysteria peaked during the 16th and 17th centuries, when the Protestant Reformation was in full force.²⁸ In *Daemonologie* (1597), the King attacked those who did not share his belief in witchcraft, particularly Reginald Scot (1566–1625). King James I/VI ordered all copies of Scot's book burned.²⁹

The fearefull aboundinge at this time in this countrie, of these detestable slaves of the Devill, the Witches or enchaunters, hath moved me (beloved reader) to dispatch in post, this following treatise of mine, not in any wise (as I protest) to serve for a shew of my learning & ingine, but onely (mooved of conscience) to preasse thereby, so farre as I can, to resolve the doubting harts of many; both that such assaults of Sathan are most certainly practized, & that the instrumentes thereof, merits most severly to be punished: against the damnable opinions of two principally in our age, wherof the one called SCOT an Englishman, is not ashamed in publike print to deny, that ther can be such a thing as Witch-craft: and so mainteines the old error of the Sadducees, in denying of spirits.

As England was growing out of its witchcraft era, it found new soil in America. The last witchcraft death sentence in England was pronounced in 1685.³⁰ Just when the flame of witchcraft subsided in England, it ignited in America, where the witchcraft trials in Salem peaked in 1692–1693.³¹

²⁶ Alan Stewart, *The Cradle King*, (2003) at 111.

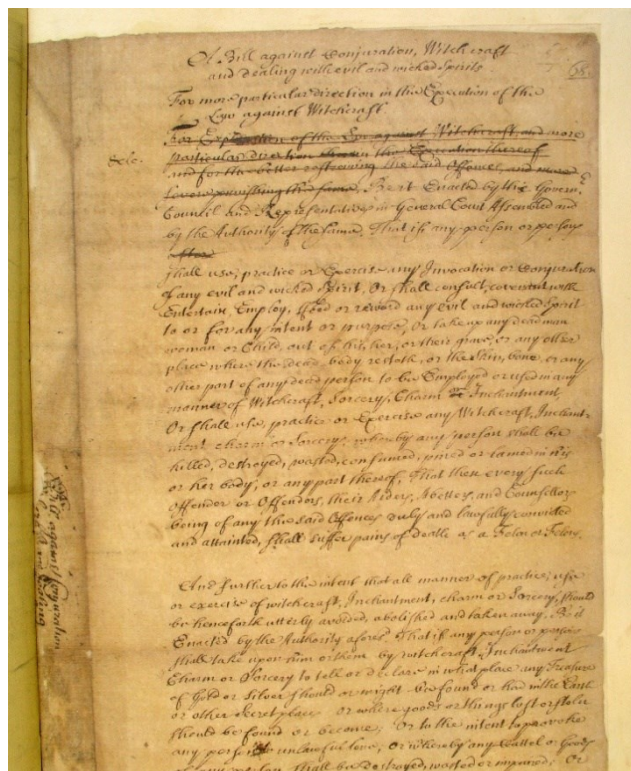
²⁷ For more on James, see Wallace Notestein, *A History of Witchcraft in England from 1558 to 1718, Chapter V* (2015); see online at <https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/31511/pg31511-images.html>; See, also, Steven Veerapen, *The Wisest Fool, The Lavish Life of James VI and I* (2023).

²⁸ From Smithsonian Magazine Online at <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/new-exhibition-rewrites-story-nordic-witch-trials-180976205/>, Jimmy Fyfe for the *Copenhagen Post* in 2016; See, also, Cole M. Robert *förgörning to trolldom: A History of Danish Witchcraft and Magic* (Union College Thesis 2019) online at <https://digitalworks.union.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3383&context=theses&extension=efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://digitalworks.union.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3383&context=theses>; Henningsen, Gustav. "Witchcraft in Denmark." *Folklore*, vol. 93, no. 2, 1982, pp. 131–37. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1259933>. Accessed 31 Dec. 2024.; See, also Alinda Damsma, *Another royal encounter for the Woman of Endor: 1 Samuel 28 as a proof text in King James VI's Daemonologie* Online at <https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/10140264/1/Pre-published%20version.pdf>.

²⁹ Tracy Borman, *Witches James I and the English Witch Hunts* (2014) at 52.

³⁰ Tracy Borman, *Witches James I and the English Witch Hunts* (2014) at 236. For James's attack see Online at <https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/25929/pg25929-images.html>.

³¹ Frances Diane Robotti. *Chronicles of Old Salem* (1948) at 30.



3. Massachusetts Archives Collection. 135:68, A Bill against conjuration, witchcraft and dealing with evil and wicked spirits. SC1/series 45X. Massachusetts Archives. Boston, Massachusetts.

The Massachusetts witchcraft statute of 1692 reads:

That if any person or persons shall use...any Evil and wicked Spirit, or shall Consult..., any Evil and Wicked Spirit to ..take up any [persons] out of ..;their Grave...or the Skin, Bone, or any other part of any Dead Person to be ...used in any manner of Witchcraft...whereby any person shall be [harmed] ..That ...such... Offenders..., shall suffer pains of Death

The statute was effective, and deadly.

Frederick Drake reports that there were over 95 incidents involving colonial people with witchcraft *before* 1692, leading to at least 83 trials between 1647 and 1691, in which 22 people were executed and many others suffered banishment, whipping, and financial loss.³² Of these, most were in Massachusetts and Connecticut, but some were in Virginia, New Hampshire, and Maryland, and one was in New York (Long Island).³³

³² Drake, F. "Witchcraft in the American Colonies, 1647-62." *American Quarterly*, vol. 20, no. 4, 1968, pp. 694–725. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2711403>. Accessed 3 Dec. 2024.

³³ The following from Encyclopedia Virginia online at <https://encyclopediaofvirginia.org/entries/witchcraft-in-colonial-virginia/#:~:text=Most%20of%20Virginia's%20colonial%20Dera,or%20property%20by%20supernatural%20means.> In criminal witchcraft cases, Virginia courts adhered to England's witchcraft law, a 1604 statute passed under James I called "*An Act against Conjurat[i]on Witchcraft and dealing with evil and wicked Spirits.*" ...The most famous witch trial in colonial Virginia is the case of Grace Sherwood, accused by her neighbors in 1698 of having "bewitched their piggis to death and bewitched their Cotton"; later that year another neighbor claimed that "the said Grace came to her one night and rid [rode] her and went out of the key hole or crack of the door like a black Catt." The rumors and accusations continued until 1706, when Sherwood stood trial before the General Court. The justices decided to use the water test to determine her guilt or innocence, binding her hands and feet and throwing her into a body of water. A defendant who sank was presumed innocent, because the water—a pure element—had accepted him or her; a defendant who floated was presumed guilty. Sherwood floated. She was convicted and imprisoned, but by 1714, she had been released.

Sherwood's case reflects how reluctant Virginia authorities were to execute convicted witches. English law prescribed harsh punishments for witchcraft, the most extreme being "paines of deathe," but no person accused of the crime in colonial Virginia was executed.

The last witchcraft trial on record in Virginia took place in 1730, five years before Parliament repealed the English statute against witchcraft. Justices charged the accused, a woman named Mary, with using witchcraft to find lost items and treasure. She was convicted and whipped thirty-nine times. This was likely the last criminal case of witchcraft tried in any of the mainland colonies. For a New Hampshire case, see Cheryl Lassiter, *The Mark of Goody Cole, a Tragic and True Tale of Witchcraft Persecution From the History of Early America*. See, also, Lane Library online at <https://history.lanememoriallibrary.org/hampton/biog/goodycoleph1938.htm> for accounts of Jane Walford and Eunice (Goody) Cole. For Maryland cases, see Witkowski, Monica C., "*Justice Without Partiality*":

New Hampshire legislated against witchcraft in 1679: “If any Christian, soe called, be a witch, y’t is, hath or consulted w’th a familiar spirit, he or they shall be put to death.”³⁴ No one however was put to death.

As for Connecticut:

[92] CAPITAL LAWES ESTABLISHED BY THE GENERALL COURT,
THE FIRST OF DECEMBER, 1642,

1. Yf any man after legall conuiction shall haue or worship any other God but the Lord God, he shall be put to death. Deu : 13. 6, & 17. 2 : Ex : 22. 20.

2. Yf any man or woman be a witch (that is) hath or consulteth wth a familliar spirit, they shall be put to death. Ex : 22. 18 : Lev : 20. 27 : Deu : 18. 10, 11.

4. Above, Detail from *The Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut, Prior to the Union with New Haven Colony May 1665...*, showing the law against being a witch established in December, 1642. From: John M. Taylor, *The Witchcraft Delusion in Colonial Connecticut 1647-1697* (1974) at 23 Massachusetts, Connecticut, and New Haven, early in their history enacted these capital laws.

In 1635 it was Maryland’s turn. Its Assembly adopted the English Witchcraft Act of 1604. South Carolina adopted it in 1712, followed by Delaware in 1719.³⁵

Having recognized that Massachusetts carries a prominent name in the history of American

witchcraft, Professor Kittredge reminds us that in terms of proportionality, Massachusetts does not loom large. Interestingly, the Salem prosecutions came to an end when the girls accused the wife of Massachusetts William Governor Phips (1651–1695) of being a witch. This proved too much for the Governor, who in 1693 put an end to such accusatory testimony.³⁶

Matthew Hopkins, England’s Witch-finder General, had brought at least two hundred to the gallows from 1645 to 1647.³⁷

Women and the Law in Colonial Maryland, 1648-1715 (2010). Dissertations (2009 -). Paper 27.

http://epublications.marquette.edu/dissertations_mu/27.

³⁴ From online at <https://www.dcba-pa.org/pdfs/eventAds/Witchcraft%20Trials%20Timeline.pdf>.

³⁵ See 1604: 1 James I c.12: *An Act against Conjuration, Witchcraft and dealing with evil and wicked Spirits*, online at <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/early-modern-witch-trials/an-act-against-witchcraft/>.

³⁶ See, Penn Today, *Possessed, The Salem Witch Trials*, online at <https://penntoday.upenn.edu/news/possessed-salem-witch-trials>; see, also, UMKC Famous trials online at <https://famous-trials.com/salem/2035-sal-bphi>. Douglas O. Linder lists a Chronology of Events Relating To The Salem Witchcraft Trials from <https://famous-trials.com/salem/2075-asal-ch> in which there are some dates pertinent to this article: Salem was settled in 1629, and in 1641 English law made witchcraft a capital crime. In 1688 Cotton Mather published *Memorable Providences, Relating to Witchcrafts and Possessions*, In May 1692 Increase Mather and Sir William Phipps, the newly elected governor of the colony, arrive in Boston. They bring with them a charter ending the 1684 prohibition of self-governance within the colony. On June 15, 1692 Cotton Mather writes a letter requesting the court not use spectral evidence as a standard and urging that the trials be speedy. The Court of Oyer and Terminer pays more attention to the request for speed and less attention to the criticism of spectral evidence. In 1692 the Reverend Increase Mather, President of Harvard College and father to Cotton Mather, denounces the use of spectral evidence, and in 1693 Governor Phipps orders that spectral evidence no longer be admitted in witchcraft trials and prohibits further arrests, releases many accused witches, dissolves the Court of Oyer and Terminer, and the General Court establishes a Superior Court to try remaining witches. Further, Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed, The Social Origins of Witchcraft* (1974) at 7 note that in June 1692, the Court of Oyer and Terminer held its first session in Salem Town. The first trial resulted in a death sentence for Bridget Bishop, hanged on June 10, 1692.

³⁷ Within the political and religious chaos that reigned throughout the period of the *English Civil Wars*, one previously unheard of Matthew Hopkins emerged. Records of his early career in the art of witch- hunting appears to stem from when he moved to Manningtree, Essex in 1644. He believed that there were several witches regularly

In Scotland there were a large number of victims. Kittredge continues: “On the Continent many thousands suffered death in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.” Mannhardt reckons the victims from the fourteenth to the seventeenth century at millions, and half a million is thought to be a moderate estimate. These figures, says Kittredge, “help us to look at the Salem Witchcraft in its true proportions, as a very small incident in the history of a terrible superstition.”³⁸



6. Matthew Hopkins, England's Witchfinder General. Thanks to Division of Rare Book and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.



5. Nicolai Remigii *Daemonolatria* (Demonolatriy). Frankfort, 1596. As Attorney General of Lorraine, 1581-1591, Remy conducted many trials, boasting that he personally condemned to death 900 witches, and earned the sobriquet “Scourge of Witches.” Thanks to Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

practicing their dark arts close to his home and apparently began his career as a witch-finder after he overheard various women discussing their meetings with the Devil in March 1644. Of the 23 women accused of witchcraft, four were said to have died in prison with 19 later convicted and hanged. See Historic UK online at <https://www.historic-uk.com/HistoryUK/HistoryofEngland/Matthew-Hopkins-WitchFinder-General/>.

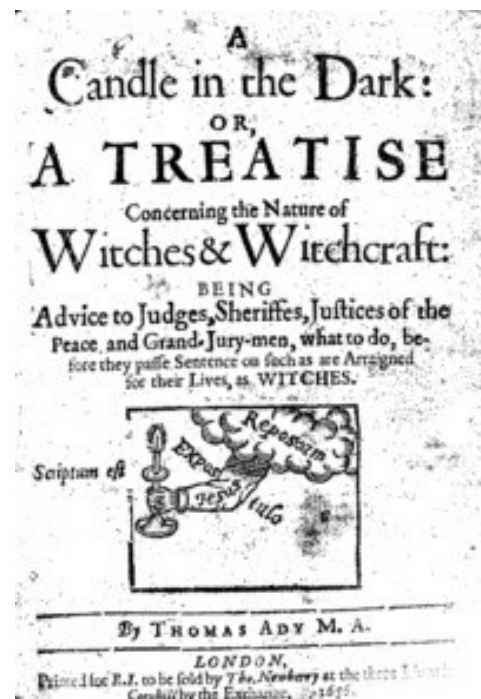
³⁸ GEORGE LYMAN KITTREDGE, *NOTES ON WITCHCRAFT* REPRINTED FROM THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE AMERICAN ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY VOLUME XVIII (1907); ONLINE AT [HTTPS://WWW.GUTENBERG.ORG/CACHE/EPUB/70895/PG70895-IMAGES.HTML](https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/70895/pg70895-images.html).



7. Thanks to Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

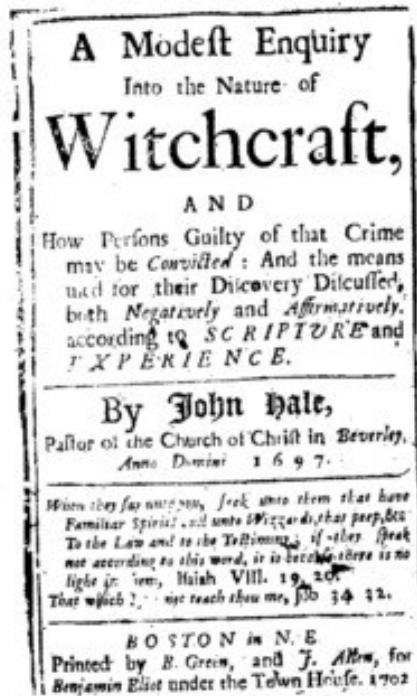
Between 1647 and 1663 in New England, 79 people were accused of witchcraft, 13 of whom were named during the first outbreak in Hartford in 1662–63. Of these 79, some 33 appear to have been tried as witches, and 15 were found guilty and hanged. Of the 79 accused, 61 were female, as were 13 of the 15 executed.

Nine of the 19 men accused, and both of the men who were hanged, were married to women who were witches. Several of the women, all Quakers, were banished without trials.³⁹



8. *A Candle in the Dark: or, A Treatise Concerning the Nature of Witches and Witchcraft: Being Advice to Judges, Sherifffes, Iustices of the Peace, and Grand-Jury-men, what to do, before they passe Sentence on such as are Arraigned for their Lives as Witch*

³⁹ Carol F. Karlsen, *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman* (1987) at 20; Brian P. Levack, *Possession, Witchcraft, and the Law in Jacobean England*, 52 Wash. & Lee L. Rev. 1613, 1614 (1995) [Both ecclesiastical and secular authorities declared witchcraft to be a crime, and somewhere between 100,000 and 200,000 persons, the great majority of them women, were tried for this offense between 1450 and 1750. More than half of those tried were executed, usually by burning at the stake.] In 1620, Katharina Guldenmann Kepler, mother of Johannes Kepler was jailed on witchcraft charges, see online at <https://www.aps.org/apsnews/2015/08/kepler-mother-imprisoned-witchcraft>.



9. *A Modest Enquiry into the Nature of Witchcraft, and How Persons Guilty of that Crime may be Convicted: And the means used for their Discovery Discussed, both Negatively and Affirmatively, according to Scripture and Experience. By John Hale, Pastor of the Church of Christ in Beverley, [Mass]Anno Domini 1697.*

Thanks to Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

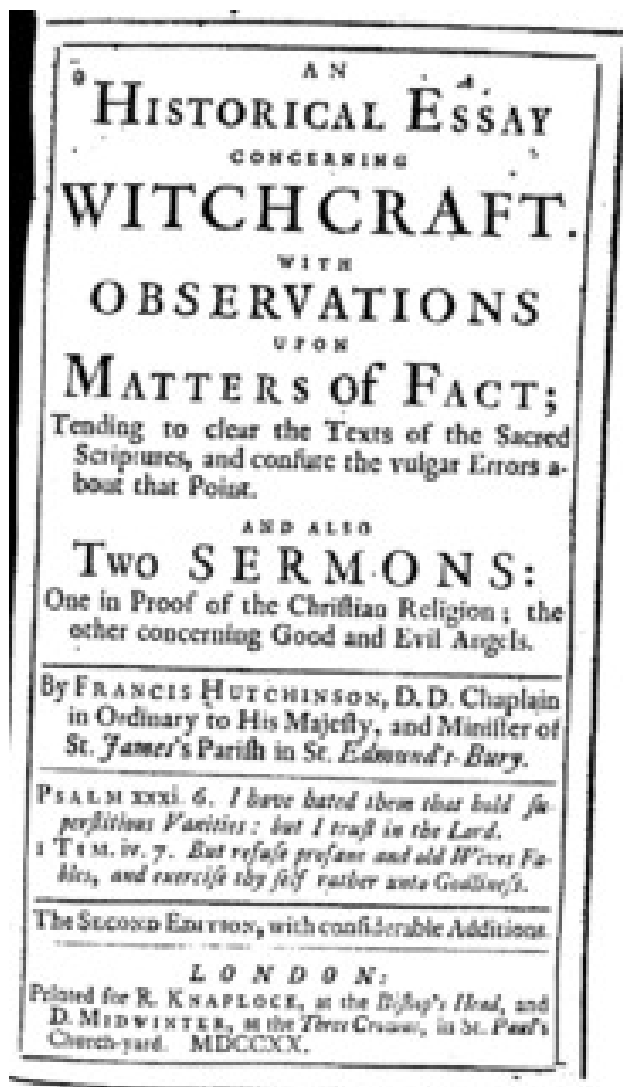
One of the remarkable facets of the witchcraft era was the uniformity of belief. We might suppose that the judges (and many of the accusers) were convinced of witchcraft, but we are struck by the large number of persons who had publicly confessed that they had entered into a league with Satan. No doubt, some of these confessions were coerced, as an accused could avoid hanging by “admitting” malefaction, and promising to atone or reform. But others—we know not how many—bought into the charges, believing them valid.

All of this produced a profound effect upon the public mind. Accusers ascribing ailments or misfortunes to witchery increased in number, owing to the inflamed state of imagination in the community, not to mention those with a malicious disposition to wreak vengeance upon enemies or to settle scores. The prisons in Salem, Ipswich, Boston, and Cambridge, were crowded, and the population was fearful.⁴⁰

Eventually they subsided in America as well. A book in 1718 by Francis Hutchinson (1661–1739) dealt witchcraft a final, deadly blow, as it was presumably widely read and influential.⁴¹

⁴⁰Charles W. Upham, *Salem Witchcraft*, Vol.II.1867, pp. 249-250). Online at <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/17845/old/salem2-htm.html>.

⁴¹Malcolm Gaskill *Witchfinders* (2005) at 281.



10. Thanks to Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

The DEDICATION.

Truth in it, very much upon the Account of one ill translated Text of Scripture. If the same Notions were to prevail again, (and Superstition is never far off) no Man's Life would be safe in his own House; for the fantastick Doctrines that support the vulgar Opinions of Witchcraft, rob us of all the Defences that God and Nature have plac'd for our Security against false Accusations. For in other Cases, when wicked or mistaken People charge us with Crimes of which we are not guilty, we clear ourselves by shewing, that at that time we were at home, or in some other Place; about our honest Business: But in Prosecutions for Witchcraft, that most natural and just Defence is a mere Jest; for if any wicked Person affirms, or any crack'd brain Girl imagines, or any lying Spirit makes her believe, that she sees any old Woman, or other Person pursuing her in her Visions, the Defenders of the vulgar Witchcraft tack an imaginary, unprov'd *Compact to the Deposition,*

A 4

Hutchinson's dedication says it all: "The fantastic doctrines that support the vulgar opinions of witchcraft, rob us all of the defenses that God and nature have placed for our security against false accusation."

The Dutch

The Dutch were far less absorbed by witchcraft. During the late Middle Ages, the number of witchcraft trials and executions in the Netherlands was among the lowest in Europe.⁴² Debunking witchcraft, Johann Weyer/Wier (1515–1588) of the Netherlands wrote the influential work *De Praestigiis Daemonum et Incantationibus ac Venificiis* ('On the Illusions of the Demons and on Spells and Poisons'; 1563). Balthasar Bekker, (1634–1698), also of the Netherlands, wrote against witchcraft beliefs in his *De Betoverde Weereld* (1691). They were able to do this without incurring the anger of the rulers, let alone being punished for their views.

The Dutch renunciation of witchcraft found a home in parts of New York. During the witchcraft era, New York was divided into English New York (Long Island) and Dutch New York (New

⁴² See <https://www.infocusexpat.com/expat-news/witch-trials-in-the-netherlands>; Nachman Ben Yahuda, *The European Witch Craze of the 14th to 17th Centuries: A Sociologist's Perspective* 86 American Journal of Sociology, No. 1, July 1980 online at <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2778849?seq=1>.

York City and Albany). Knowing that witchcraft never really caught on in New York, save for a very few episodes on Long Island, it is fair to ask: why so? The short answer is that the Dutch had no stomach for it, at least as far as prosecuting the accusations.⁴³ The few that did occur took place on Long Island, a locale to which New Englanders emigrated.

The long answer is much the same, but with interesting reasons.⁴⁴

Three stand out: 17th century Dutch New York was settled as a commercial enterprise, whose population was taken not by religion, but by commerce. Second, Dutch New York abided, if not fostered, a remarkable diversity that cut against theological conformity. The diversity continued, so that in 1687 New York Governor Thomas Dongan would report:

*New York has first a Chaplain belonging to the Fort of the Church of England, secondly, a Dutch Calvinist; thirdly a French Calvinist; fourthly a Dutch Lutheran. Here be not many of the Church of England, a few Roman Catholics, abundance of Quaker preachers, men and women especially. Singing Quakers, Ranting Quakers, Sabbatarians, Antisabbatarians, some Anabaptists, some independents, some Jews; in short of all sorts of opinions there are some, and the most part of none at all.*⁴⁵

Third, was the role of Governor Joseph Dudley (1647–1720), a colonial administrator who had been chief of council to New York Governor Henry Sloughter (?–1691). A Harvard College graduate, he studied theology under Increase Mather (1639–1723).⁴⁶

On October 5, 1692, as New England was in the throes of its witchcraft mania, Governor Dudley, perhaps skeptical but surely circumspect, addressed a letter to four prominent New York clergymen, asking them about witchcraft. Three were ministers of Dutch origin, Henricus Selyns/Selijns (1636–1701), domine of the Dutch Church in Breuckelen (Brooklyn); Godefridus Dellius, (1654–1738), also of the Dutch Reformed Church; and Rudolphus Varich/Van Varich/Varick (1645–1694), of Dutch extraction. The fourth was Pierre Peiret, minister of the French church.⁴⁷

His questions were in Latin, as were the answers. Here is a brief taste of it:

⁴³ Haefeli, Evan, *Dutch New York and the Salem Witch Trials: Some New Evidence*, Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society; Worcester, Mass. Vol. 110, Iss. 2, (Oct 20, 2000): 291 online at <https://www.americanantiquarian.org/proceedings/44539518.pdf>.

⁴⁴ See generally Wilfred B. Talman, *Witchcraft in New Netherland*, Halve Maen, Vol 21 No. 4 Oct. 1946; Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer, 1 *History of New York in the Seventeenth Century* (1909) 203.

⁴⁵ *Governor Dongan's Report on Religion in the Province of New York, 1687*, *The American Catholic Historical Researches*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (OCTOBER, 1901), pp. 175-176; <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44374259>; See, also, Bonomi, Patricia U. *A Factious People: Politics and Society in Colonial New York*. 1 ed. Cornell University Press, 2014. Project MUSE, <https://muse.jhu.edu/book/43885>.

⁴⁶ See, Historical Pamphlet Number 1, *Governor Joseph Dudley*, (1903) online at <https://ia800902.us.archive.org/29/items/historicalpamphl110gove/historicalpamphl110gove.pdf>; See, also, <https://www.wikitree.com/wiki/Dudley-494>.

⁴⁷ See, Howard G. Hageman, *Domines and Witches*, De Halve Maen, Vol. 63, Issue 1, 1990, 4-6; Haefeli, Evan, *Dutch New York and the Salem Witch Trials: Some New Evidence*, Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society; Worcester, Mass. Vol. 110, Iss. 2, (Oct 20, 2000): 277.

De veneficio questiones Reuerendissimis a Belgio et gallia Theologis propositae. Apud N. Ebor. 5 octob. 1692. 1. An concedatur quasdam per omnes aetates a primo hominis lapsu a Deo derelictas ita efse, vt fe Daemonis Seruitio (quo facilius mali tiam aduersus sodales perp?tent) penitus d?dissent, vulgo ven?ficas appel latse.

For full questions and answers, see Appendix One.

In the first two questions Dudley asks, in essence, if witchcraft exists. The ministers answered that it can exist, as the devil satisfies the lusts of man.

The third question asks whether, in order to convict of witchcraft, it is necessary to prove previous malice, to which the ministers responded that previous malice is irrelevant.

The fourth was the clincher: whether the spectre or apparition of one who has previously neither shown malice nor made threats, is sufficient for a just conviction of a witch—to which the ministers said flatly, it is not enough. It is not too much to say that this answer went a long way to rule out witchcraft in Dutch New York.⁴⁸

We can only imagine how many lives they saved by that declaration.⁴⁹

We do not know whether the answers were written by one minister or by collaboration. Importantly, however, all four, renowned and respected, subscribed to the answers. They surely appreciated the importance of their response and that it could affect peoples' lives.

Interestingly, Cotton Mather (1663–1728), in a June 16, 1692 letter, also concluded that spectral evidence should be insufficient to convict someone of witchcraft:

Letter of COTTON MATHER, on Witchcraft, presented to the Literary and Historical Society, by the Honorable Chief-justice SEWELL

S^r:

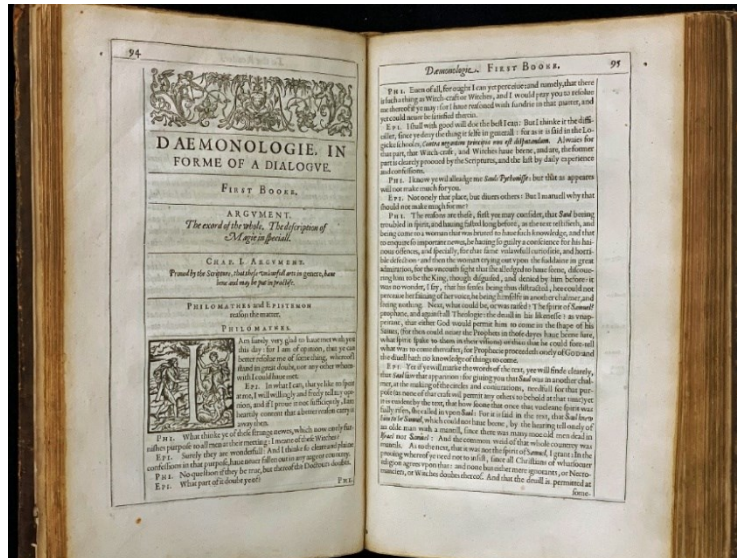
You would know whether I still retain my opinion about y^e horrible Witchcrafts among us, and I acknowledge that I do.

*I do still Think That when there is no further Evidence against a person but only This, That a Spectre in their shape does afflict a neighbour, that Evidence is not enough to convict y^r of Witchcraft. That the Divels have a natural power which makes them capable of exhibiting what shape they please I suppose nobody doubts, and I have no absolute promise of God that they shall not exhibit mine.*⁵⁰

⁴⁸ With thanks to Christian Kinsella, *Thinking Outside the Bay: The New York Ministers and the Salem Witch Trials* (2020) online at <https://ecommons.cornell.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/47fb1e49-3997-4bef-9a8a-69e83735fcf3/content>.

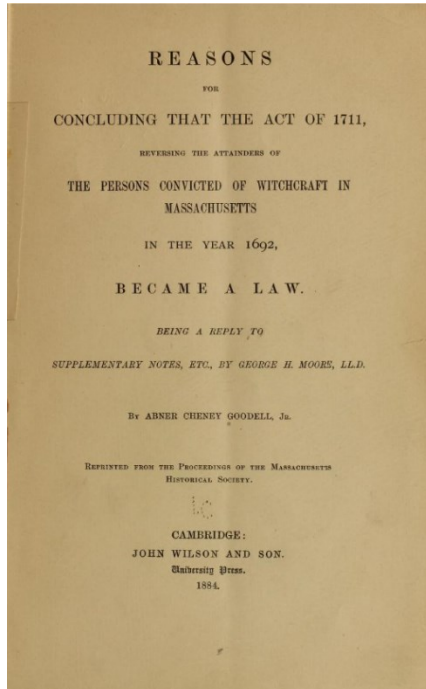
⁴⁹ With special thanks to Jaap Jacobs, who furnished me with this extraordinary set of questions and answers.

⁵⁰ CHARLES W. UPHAM, *SALEM WITCHCRAFT AND COTTON MATHER. A REPLY*. (1869) online at <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/26978/26978-h/26978-h.htm>



11. James I, King of England. *The works of the most high and mightie prince, Iames, by the grace of God King of Great Britaine, France and Ireland, defender of the faith, &c.* London: Printed by Robert Barker & Iohn Bill, printers to the Kings most excellent Majestie, 1616.

Massachusetts Reverses Field



12. Library of Congress.

In 1711, several years after the witchcraft mania reached its apex in Salem, the Massachusetts state legislature appears to have reversed the attainders (imposing a forfeiture without trial) of the persons convicted of witchcraft in 1692.⁵¹

In 1957, three centuries after the witchcraft peak, the General Court of Massachusetts issued a statement to the descendants of some of the witches who were executed. It read, “*The General Court of Massachusetts declares its belief that such proceedings, even if lawful under the Province Charter and the law of Massachusetts as it then was, were and are shocking, and the result of a wave of popular hysterical fear of the Devil in the community.*” Chapter 122 of the Acts of 2001 went on to exonerate five other women.⁵²

Note the language *even if lawful* at the time. The very lawfulness of witchcraft trials made them especially pernicious. Connecticut issued a similar exoneration in 2023.⁵³

⁵¹ [https://www.loc.gov/resource/gdcmassbookdig.reasonsforconclu00godd/?sp=7&st=single&r=-0.727,0.2.453,1.583,0](https://www.loc.gov/resource/gdcmassbookdig.reasonsforconclu00godd/?sp=7&st=single&r=-0.727,0.2.453,1.583,0;); See, also, *Further Notes on the History of Witchcraft in Massachusetts, Containing Additional Evidence of the Passage of the Act of 1711, for Reversing the Attainders of the Witches; also, Affirming the Legality of the Special Court of Oyer and Terminer of 1692: with a Heliotype Plate of the Act of 1711, as Printed in 1713, and an Appendix of Documents, etc.* By Abner Cheney Goodsell, Jr. online at <https://digital.library.cornell.edu/catalog/witchcraft131>. The language is as follows: “Be it Declared and Enacted... That the several Convictions, Judgements and Attainders against the said [named individuals]...Be and hereby are Reversed, Made and Declared to be Null and Void... as if no such Convictions, Judgments or Attainders had ever been had or given. ...” BOSTON: Printed by B. Green, Printer to His Excellency the GOVERNOUR and COUNCIL. 1713.” online at <https://tile.loc.gov/storage-services/service/rbc/rbpe/rbpe03/03304000/03304000.pdf>

There appears to be some question as to whether the act became law, as revealed by the pamphlet arguing and concluding that it did become law. See the arguments online at <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.32044010320026&seq=21>

⁵² Mass. Gov. Online at <https://www.mass.gov/doc/resolves-of-1957-chapter-145/download>. The Massachusetts legislature later passed a bill in 2001 that added even more names to the resolves of 1957, as the “certain other persons for witchcraft.”

⁵³ Connecticut Legislature Act online at <https://cga.ct.gov/2023/TOB/H/PDF/2023HJ-00034-R00-HB.PDF>.

The New York Episodes: Goody (Elizabeth) Garlick

For the first of the New York trials, we begin with Lion Gardiner (1599–1663), who figures in the witchcraft trial of Elizabeth Blanchard (Goody) Garlick (1620–1696) in East Hampton, Long Island in 1657.⁵⁴

Gardiner was among the first of the English settlers, arriving in eastern Long Island when the English colony was under the jurisdiction of Connecticut. He settled Gardiner's Island in 1637, and purchased the island—originally based on a grant from England's King Charles I—from the Montaukett Tribe after having supported them during the Pequot War.⁵⁵ There is still a Gardiner's Island in East Hampton today.

A family Bible reveals:

*In the year of our Lord, 1635, the 10th of July, came I, Lion Gardiner and Mary my wife from Worden, a town in Holland, where my wife was born, ... We came from Worden to London, and from there to New England, and dwelt at Saybrook fort four years—it is at the mouth of Connecticut river—of which I was commander, and there was born to me [among other children] a daughter, named Elizabeth, the 14th September, 1641, she being the first child of English parents that was born there.*⁵⁶

At the time, in *Daemonologie* (1597), the King attacked those who did not share his belief in witchcraft, particularly Reginald Scot (1566–1625).

Some 34 families lived in East Hampton, along opposite sides of Main Street, near the burial ground and the Presbyterian Church. The village was only ten years old, and its residents were still struggling to find their way as a new world community. Slander lawsuits and accusations were all too common, and the atmosphere created a ripe setting for the witchcraft proceedings against Goody Garlick in 1657.⁵⁷

We do not know her exact age, but historians estimate her to have been around 50 years old, with two grown children.⁵⁸ She was married to Joshua Garlick, a miller whom Gardiner had

⁵⁴ Loretta Orion, *It Were As Well to Please The Devil as Anger Him: Witchcraft in the Founding Days of East Hampton*. The name Goody is short for goodwife, a married woman, except those of the upper class. See, also, Moyer, Paul B. "Introduction: The Devil in New England." *Detestable and Wicked Arts: New England and Witchcraft in the Early Modern Atlantic World*, Cornell University Press, 2020, at 36, JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7591/j.ctvrs9084.5>. Accessed 5 Mar. 2025.; See, also, <https://www.familysearch.org/library/books/viewer/552829/?offset=408281#page=287&viewer=picture&o=info&n=0&q=>.

⁵⁵ Gardiner's Island, five square miles in the Town of East Hampton, exists today, still owned by the family See online at <https://www.rdlgfoundation.org/history.php#:~:text=The%20island%20is%20run%20today,heir%20in%20the%20Gardiner%20family.>; see, also, <https://www.curbed.com/2022/11/gardiniers-island-end-hamptons-feud-documentary.html>; For more about Lion Gardiner, touching as well on the witchcraft prosecution of Elizabeth Garlick, see <https://denneyhomeplace.wordpress.com/2018/11/16/remember-our-ancestors-lion-gardiner-1st-lord-of-the-manor/>.

⁵⁶ <https://www.wikitree.com/wiki/Gardiner-158>.

⁵⁷ George Dewan, *Goody Garlick*, online at https://www.nysarchivestrust.org/application/files/7915/6520/4235/archivesmag_fall2005.pdf.

⁵⁸ Demos, John. *Entertaining Satan: Witchcraft and the Culture of Early New England*. (1982), at 233.

signes within halfe a yeaere after the Death of the sd Child except it shall please god to Disable him by war or fier and in witnese of all & every of the prmises each party have Interchangeably sett to their hands the Day & yeaere first above Written.

ARTHUR HOWELL.

Sealed & Delivered
in prsence of vs

Tho: Topping
John: Herbert
Thomas Sayr.

EASTHAMPTON febr: ye 24th 1657.

BOOK 2, page 60.—Goodwife Simons Deposed before John Mullford John hand Thomas Backer.

The Depont Declareth yt on ye last Day of ye week wen Arthur Howells wife lay sick about 10 of the clock she being at arthur howells house his wif beinge sick he was on ye one side of ye bedd & she on ye other & she heard Arthurs wife say send for garlick & his wife & she Answered yt wn she went to call her husband from garlicks wn he was A threshinge yt he laughed and Jeared mee she said I went cryinge and because I cried Garlick laught and Jeared mee ah said she he is a good one & yn she said send for goodie Garlick this she spake 3 times together. I asked wt would you have with her & she said I could teare her in peices and yn ye Depont saith she asked her whie she would send for goodie Garlick & she Answered yt she was a duple tounge woman and she asked saying did you not see her last night stand by the bed side readie to pull me in peeces and she prickt me with pins she prickt me wth pins & soe a 3d time: the Depont alsoe saith yt befor this ye first Day yt she was sick: yt she goeing to see her she tould her yt she saw a black thinge,

employed.⁵⁹ Gardiner's daughter, Elizabeth (1641–1658), married Arthur Howell. She had known Goody Garlick since their days in Lynn, MA.⁶⁰

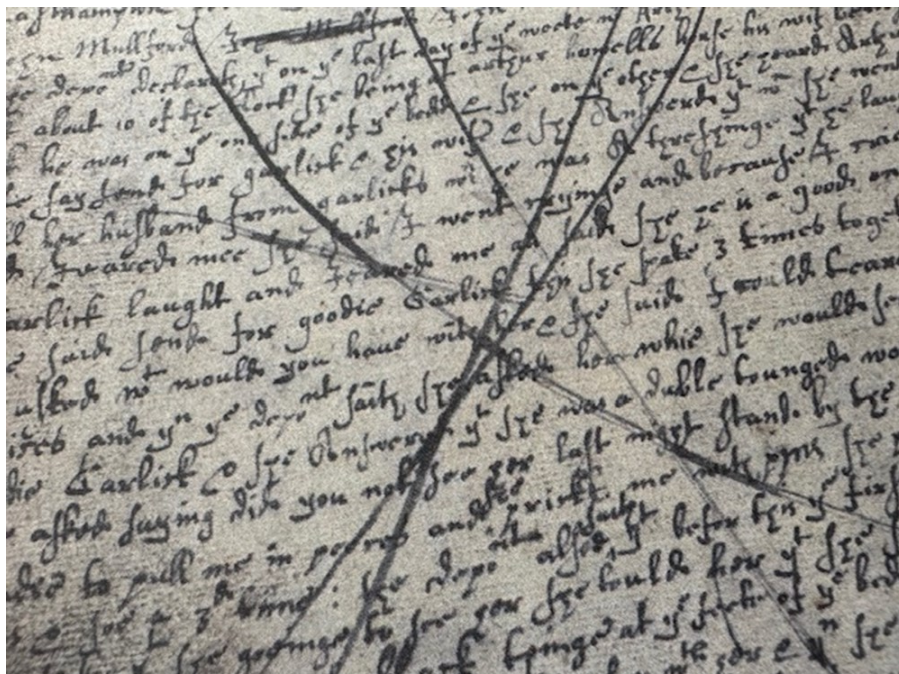
At age 16, Elizabeth had just given birth, and was on her deathbed. In her last throes, according to the accounts of several witnesses, she accused Goody Garlick of witchcraft. Goodwife Simons' account, given before Town Magistrates John Mulford/Mullford, John Hand, and Thomas Baker/Backer, appears in the records of the Town of East Hampton.

The records begin with an entry of February 24, 1657.

13. Town of East Hampton Records, Courtesy of the East Hampton Library, with thanks for their expertise and cooperation.

⁵⁹ See, online, <https://www.geni.com/people/Elizabeth-Garlick/6000000008328356511>; see also online <https://sites.rootsweb.com/~nwa/garlick.html>; <https://aaqeastend.com/contents/schs-photo-of-the-week-2016/>; See, also, <http://bklyn-genealogy-info.stevemorse.org/LI/WitchesofLongIsland.html>.

⁶⁰ <https://www.wikitree.com/wiki/Gardiner-161#:~:text=On%20her%20deathbed%2C%20Elizabeth%20accused,Goody%20Garlick%20was%20not%20convicted.>



14. Above, the original (1657) record of the accusation against Goody Garlick. Courtesy of the East Hampton Library, with thanks for their expertise and cooperation.

This account set off the witchcraft trial of Goody Garlick.⁶¹

Easthampton officials collected depositions from around nine accusers in all.⁶² They described Elizabeth Gardiner Howell's painful demise, in which Goodwife Simons, Goodwife Burdsill, and Elizabeth's mother, at Elizabeth's bedside, heard Elizabeth say that Goodwife Garlick was bewitching her, a "duble-toungued woman," pricking her with pins, and appearing

as "an ugly black thinge at ye feete of ye bed." Other allegations surfaced claiming that Goodwife Garlick, long ago, had made a woman's breast milk dry up, resulting in the death of a child, and that she caused harm to animals.⁶³

By a prior agreement, the Town was obliged to defer to the jurisdiction of the Connecticut Court in cases of capital crimes, and so the local officials sent the case to Hartford, given the momentousness of the charges.⁶⁴ On March 19, 1657, authorities ordered Thomas Baker and John Hand to go to Connecticut "for to bring us under their government, according unto the terms as Southampton is, and also to carry up Good wif Garlick, that she may be delivered up unto the authorities there, for her tryal of the cause of Witch- craft, which she is suspected for."

The case was heard in the Particular Court of Connecticut in Hartford, probably on May 5, 1658, by seven magistrates including the governor, John Winthrop Jr.—his first witchcraft trial—along with a jury of 12 men.

⁶¹ "The World of Goody Garlick: Diving Into East Hampton's Witchcraft History". Hamptons.com. 2015-09-17. Retrieved 2023-01-24; John Hanc (October 25, 2012). "Before Salem, There Was the Not-So-Wicked Witch of the Hamptons". *Smithsonian Magazine*. Retrieved August 15, 2015. Erin Hillis, *The Unique Concept of the Witch and the Witch Trials in Early Modern England* online at <https://www.luthercollege.edu/university/academics/impetus/spring-2011/the-unique-concept-of-the-witch-and-the-witch-trials-in-early-modern-england/>; Marie Williams, *Witchcraft Claims In East Hampton, Long Island* October 27, 2019 online at <https://www.newyorkalmanack.com/2019/10/witchcraft-claims-were-also-found-in-new-york>.

⁶² John P. Demos, *Entertaining Satan, Witchcraft and Culture in Early New England* (1982) at 236.

⁶³ Testimony of Goody Hand, February 27, 1657, testimony of Goody Edwards, March 11, 1657, that she saw a pin taken out of Elizabeth's mouth while on her deathbed.

⁶⁴ John Hanc (October 25, 2012). "Before Salem, There Was the Not-So-Wicked Witch of the Hamptons". *Smithsonian Magazine* quoting Eastchester historian Bob Hefner.

The officials read the indictment to her:

*Elizabeth Garlick, thou art indicted...that not having the fear of God before thine eyes thou hast entertained Satan, the Great enemy of God and mankind, and by his help since the year 1650 hath done works above the course of nature to the loss of lives of several persons (with several other sorceries), and in particular the wife of Arthur Howell...for which, according to the laws of God and the established law of this Commonwealth, thou deservest to die.*⁶⁵

Goody Garlick must have felt helpless and terrified. She was not entitled to legal counsel. The court had a track record, having already tried at least eight witchcraft cases in which six women were hanged.

Under existing rules, certain conditions indicated the presence of witchcraft.

1. When a healthful body shall be suddenly taken without apparent natural cause.
2. When two or more are similarly taken in strange fits.
3. When the afflicted party in his fits tells truly what the witch, or other absent parties are doing or saying or the like.
4. When the parties shall do or say strange things, and yet when out of their fits know nothing of what they did or said.
5. When there is a supernatural strength such that a strong man or two shall not be able to keep down a child, or weak person upon a bed. Arthur Howell apparently had this difficulty restraining Elizabeth.
6. When the party doeth vomit up crooked Pins, Needles, Nails, Coals, Lead, Straw, Hair, or the like.
7. When the party shall see visibly some Apparition, and shortly after some mischief shall befall him.⁶⁶

Under these tests, things could have not looked good for Goody Garlick. In witchcraft cases, a jury rendered the actual verdict, but the magistrates had persuasive influence, thanks to the power to gather evidence, conduct the prosecution, and overturn verdicts they disagreed with.

Fortunately, Governor John Winthrop Jr. (Winthrop the younger, 1606–1676) presided at her trial. The son of John Winthrop (1588–1649), co-founder of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, Winthrop, Jr. was a scholar, a philosopher, and a physician. “He spent his life seeking mastery over the hidden forces at work in the cosmos...He saw witchcraft cases as an incidence of community pathology,” said Connecticut state historian Walter Woodward.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ East Hampton’s Legendary Witch, presented by Loretta Orion, Ph.D. for the Lecture Series, “Life in Olde East Hampton,” October 25, 2002 Online at <https://easthamptonlibrary.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/20021025.pdf>.

⁶⁶ Michael Dalton, *A Guide to Justices of the Peace Regarding Witches from the Country Justice* (1618).

⁶⁷ John Hanc “Before Salem, There Was the Not-So-Wicked Witch of the Hamptons”. *Smithsonian Magazine* (October 25, 2012), online at <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/before-salem-there-was-the-not-so-wicked-witch-of-the-hamptons-95603019/>.

At the time, Connecticut had the harshest record regarding witchcraft of all New England colonies. Four of the seven magistrates who heard her case had each previously participated in convictions in which women were hanged.⁶⁸

In addition to Governor Winthrop, seven magistrates, along with a jury of 12 men, heard the case, circa May 5, 1658. On the bench sat Hartford Magistrates—Winthrop, along with Thomas Welles (1594–1660), former Governor of Connecticut (1655–1656); John Webster (1590–1661), former Governor of Connecticut (1656); Samuel Willys (1631–1679); and John Talcott (1630–1688).⁶⁹

The court rendered its verdict, finding the evidence insufficient to take Goody Garlick's life. Unlike today's verdicts, which simply declare guilty or not guilty, the panel did not wholly exonerate her or give her an entirely clean bill of health.

Governor Winthrop wrote to the people of East Hampton:

Gen & Loving Friends

We having received your letter & findinge And...did take yt case ...into serious consideration and ... though there did not appeare sufficient evidence to prove her guilty yet we cannot but well approve and commend the Christian care & prudence of those in authority with you in searching into ye case accordinge to such just suspicion as appeared

*Also ...it is desired & expected...by this Court...you should [be] neighbourly & peaceably without just offence to Jos. Garlick & his wife &... should doe ye like to you.*⁷⁰

The letter is brilliant, a stroke. Winthrop, as if on a tightrope, spared Goody Garlick while maintaining the sensibilities of the community. His views on witchcraft accusations did not match those of his fellow magistrates, but his knowledge of occult medical practices made him a respected voice in matters involving suspected magic and illness. Also, as governor, he was the leading judicial authority in the colony, who could use the courtroom as a theater of persuasion, combining expert knowledge with carefully chosen questions to mold the jury's opinion.

When it ended, a Connecticut jury decided, for the first time, not to convict a suspected witch. The decision both validated the accusers' suspicions while protecting the suspected witch. Elizabeth and Joseph Garlick went back to East Hampton, where Joseph was employed by Lion Gardner. At the age of 76, Goody Garlick died, ca 1696, in East Hampton, where she is buried.⁷¹

This was not the only case in which Winthrop saved a woman's life in a witchcraft accusation. In 1662, in Hartford, Ann Cole had "diabolical possession." Elizabeth Kelly, an eight-year-old girl, claimed she was bewitched, and Rebecca Greensmith confessed to having "familiarity with the

⁶⁸ Walter W. Woodward, *Prospero's America: John Winthrop, Jr., Alchemy and the Creation of New England Culture, 1606-1675* (2010), at 227.

⁶⁹ Robert C. Black III, *The Younger John Winthrop* (1968) at 181.

⁷⁰ See online at <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=njp.32101004385512&seq=600&q1=witchcraft&start=1>.

⁷¹ See online at <https://ancestors.familysearch.org/en/LYT2-BK7/elizabeth-goodie-blanchard-1620-1696>

devil,” attending meetings in the woods with Elizabeth Seager and others. Elizabeth Seager was tried (apparently twice) in 1663 and finally convicted of witchcraft in 1665, but Governor John Winthrop, Jr., refused to carry out the sentence.⁷²

Winthrop, Jr. was an extraordinary man. His thoughtfulness and decency saved lives, by using discretion, and his ability to win the trust of contemporaries who were ardent believers in witchcraft.

After Winthrop’s brief tenure on the bench, convictions for witchcraft resumed in the Connecticut court.⁷³

Mary Wright of Oyster Bay

A fascinating episode took place in 1660, involving Mary Wright (1642–1688) of Oyster Bay, Long Island.⁷⁴ Researchers may find her name as the victim of a witchcraft accusation, reason alone to include her in this article.⁷⁵ The actual episode, however, did not entail a witchcraft trial, but another form of persecution, in which Mary Wright emerges as a young woman one of uncommon courage and character.

She was agitated when Boston authorities executed Mary Dyer merely because she was a Quaker—a sect the Puritans found bothersome and heretic. Mary Dyer’s statue is in Boston, opposite the State House.

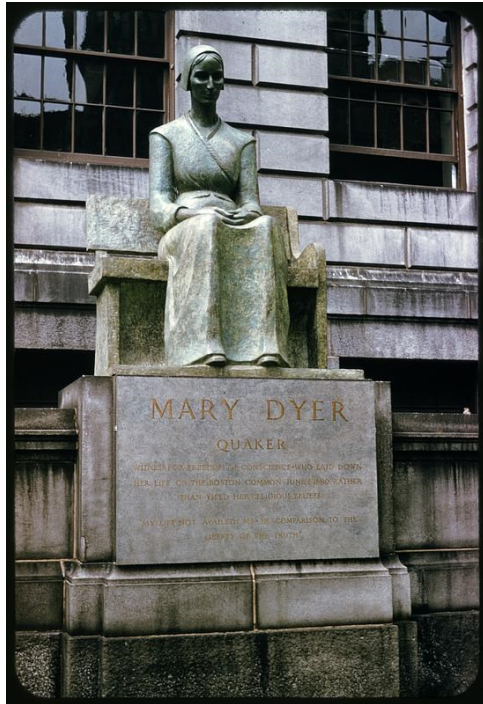
⁷² David D. Hall, *Witch-hunting in Seventeenth Century New England. A Documentary History, 1638- 1693* (1991) at 147

⁷³ <https://easthamptonlibrary.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/19980509-02.pdf>

⁷⁴ Daughter of Peter Wright and Alice Way;

Wife of Samuel Andrews, whom she married in 1663 1663 in Oyster Bay. https://ewing-online.com/family/family.php?database=humo1_&id=F962&main_person=I2980

⁷⁵ <https://www.seekingmyroots.com/members/files/G007529.pdf> ; HOWLAND DELANO PERRINE, THE WRIGHT FAMILY OF OYSTER BAY, L. I. WITH THE ANCESTRY OF AND DESCENT FROM PETER WRIGHT AND NICHOLAS WRIGHT 1423-1923 (1923) p. 48



15. Mary Dyer (1611- 1660), opposite the Massachusetts State House. The inscription reads Mary Dyer, Quaker, Witness for Religious Freedom, Hanged on Boston Common 1660 "My Life Not Availeth Me in Comparison to the Liberty of the Truth." Boston Public Library.

Fleeing religious persecution in England, Dyer became a devoted Quaker, committed to spreading her newfound spirituality, for which the authorities jailed and banished her. The Puritan authorities were displeased by the arrival of Quakers, whom they regarded as both a religious threat and a civic enemy of the existing order. In 1656, Court officials passed a law against a "cursed sect of hereticks" called Quakers, and ordering that a fine be imposed on any ship commander who brings Quakers ashore.

The order further provided that Quakers arriving are to be severely whipped, and none suffered to converse with them, and that the order be published in several places of Boston "by beate of drumme."⁷⁶

After authorities banished her, Mary Dyer defied the banishment order and was sentenced to death. Given a chance to recant her beliefs and escape execution, she refused: "Nay, I cannot; for in obedience to the will of the Lord God I came, and in his will I abide faithful to the death."⁷⁷

Mary Wright, a teenager, was so moved by the persecution of Quakers that she went to Boston, to testify in the courts of Puritan authority.

She was banished upon pain of death.⁷⁸ Even so, her sister Hanna, also a teenager, then travelled from Oyster Bay also to protest further the actions of the Boston Magistrates, warning them to

⁷⁶ Records of the governor and company of the Massachusetts bay in New England. Ed. by Nathaniel B. Shurtleff ..., v.4 pt.1. | Hathi Trust Digital Library online at <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/ssd?id=uma.ark:/13960/t40s0371p&seq=293>; Also online at

https://archive.org/stream/provincialpapers00boultrich/provincialpapers00boultrich_djvu.txt.

⁷⁷ From City of Boston, online at <https://content.boston.gov/news/notes-archives-mary-dyer-executed-onthisday-1660>; See, also, William Sewel, *THE HISTORY OF THE RISE, INCREASE, AND PROGRESS, OF THE CHRISTIAN PEOPLE CALLED QUAKERS* (1832) at 259 online at . <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/57241/57241-h/57241-h.htm#S-1660>.

⁷⁸ Heather E. Barry, "Naked Quakers Who Were Not So Naked" 43 *Historical Journal of Massachusetts* No. 2 (Summer 2015) at 127; online at <https://www.westfield.ma.edu/historical-journal/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Barry-combined.pdf>; See, also, <https://gloversmith.blogspot.com/2015/04/our-quaker-roots-4-lydia-wright-on-trial.html>; The matter is not entirely clear but by one account, Mary Wright was jailed and upon being released was whipped while being carted through the streets. See HOWLAND DELANO PERRINE, *THE WRIGHT FAMILY OF OYSTER BAY, L. I. WITH THE ANCESTRY OF AND DESCENT FROM PETER WRIGHT AND NICHOLAS WRIGHT 1423-1923* (1923) p. 48, Online at

<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt/search?id=wu.89062469929&q1=wenlock&sz=25&start=1&sort=seq&hl=true>; See, also, , S.R. Ferrara, *Accused of Witchcraft in New York* (2023) at 67-68.

“spill no more innocent blood.” They sat silently, until the secretary Edward Rawson (1615–1663) said, ‘What, shall we be baffled by such a one as this? come, let us drink a dram.’⁷⁹

Three years after her ordeal, Mary Wright married Samuel Andrews in 1663, and they had six children. She died in New Jersey in 1668 at about age 46.

Ralph and Mary Hall

The English took over New Netherland from the Dutch in 1664, and in the high court of the colony, called the Court of Assizes, soon sponsored a witchcraft trial in Seatalcott, or Setauket (later Brookhaven). The local settlers had had emigrated from the Boston region, and, unlike the settlers in the Dutch part of New York, brought their witchcraft notions with them.

New York’s Colonial Court of Assizes was composed of the Governor, the Council, and the magistrates of each town. It was empowered to hear capital cases, from which an appeal could be taken to the royal court in London. The first session of the Court of Assizes was held at the Fort in New York, on the last Thursday of September in 1665.⁸⁰

The records of the trial against Ralph Hall and Mary Hall reveal that at the Court of Assizes, held in New York October 2, 1665, the couple were charged “upon suspicion of witchcraft.” The jury consisted of Thomas Baker, Foreman of the Jury, of East Hampton; Capt. John Symonds of Hempstead; Mr. Hallet of Jamaica; Anthony Waters of Jamaica; Thomas Wandall of Marshpath Kills; Mr. Nicolls of Stamford; Balthazer de Haart of New Yorke; John Garland of New Yorke; Alexander Munro of New Yorke; Anthony de Mill of New Yorke; Thomas Searle of New Yorke; and Jacob Leisler of New Yorke.

Leisler (1640–1691) later gained fame and authority as leader of Leisler’s Rebellion, in which he seized control of the southern portion of the colony and ruled it from 1689 to 1691, before being executed by order of New York’s English Royal Governor Henry Sloughter (b. ? d. 1691).⁸¹ Leisler’s statue is in New Rochelle.

⁷⁹ William Sewel, THE HISTORY OF THE RISE, INCREASE, AND PROGRESS, OF THE CHRISTIAN PEOPLE CALLED QUAKERS (1832) at 370 online at https://www.gutenberg.org/files/57241/57241-h/57241-h.htm#Page_370.

⁸⁰ Historical Society of the New York Courts, online at https://history.nycourts.gov/about_period/hempstead-convention/.

⁸¹ Voorhees, David William. “The ‘Fervent Zeale’ of Jacob Leisler.” *The William and Mary Quarterly*, vol. 51, no. 3, 1994, pp. 447–72. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2947438>. Accessed 5 Mar. 2025.



Jacob Leisler (1640–1691)

Considering that the Court of Assizes began business in September 1665, the Hall case must have been one of the Court's first cases.

Allard Anthony (1620–1685), Sheriff of New York, brought the couple before the Court and read the indictment to them: Anthony was a prominent citizen of New Amsterdam, who, in 1653, had been appointed to the newly-established office of Schepen. That year, Anthony was sent to Holland to request aid to defend the colony against the English, then threatening to invade. The following year, he was appointed Burgomaster, until 1658 and was reappointed in 1661 and 1662.

Anthony took the oath of allegiance to the English Crown on January 16, 1665. On June 12, 1665, when the English form of municipal government was established in the City of New York, Governor Nicoll appointed Anthony the first Sheriff of New York City. He had a city residence on Whitehall Street that was considered one of the finest private buildings of its time, and he owned a farm on Manhattan near Wall Street.⁸²

He read the indictment (for full indictment see Appendix Two):

The ...Overseers of the Towne of Seatallcott Do Present for our Sovereigne Lord the King, That Ralph Hall..., upon the 25th day of December [1663 or 1664] ...by some detestable and wicked Arts, commonly called Witchcraft and Sorcery, did ... Exercise ... on the Person of George Wood...[who was] mortally sickned and languished and ...died.

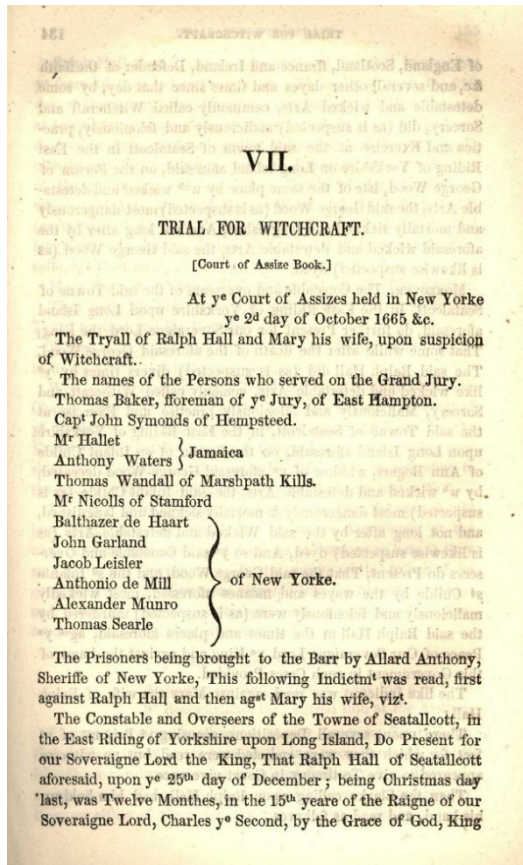
Moreover, ... Ralph Hall did ...Exercise ...on the Person of an Infant Childe of Ann Rogers, ..wicked and detestable Arts, the said Infant Chide ...sickned and ...died, And so [was] murdered by the said Ralph Hall.

There upon, severall Depositions, accusing the Prisonrs of the fact for which they were endicted were read, but no wnesse appeared to give Testimony in Court viva voce."

The court clerk then had Ralph Hall, hold up his hand, and asked: "Ralph Hall, what dost thou say... art thou guilty, or not guilty?" Mary Hall was called upon for the same.

Both pleaded not guilty "and threw themselves to bee Tryed by God and the Country." We do not have the trial evidence, but it appears that there were no live witnesses, the proof consisting of affidavits only. Interestingly, the pertinent laws at the time did not include witchcraft as a crime, and so the charge for causing death was murder.

⁸² See Historical Society of the New York Courts. Online at <https://history.nycourts.gov/figure/allard-anthony/#:~:text=On%20June%2012%2C%201665%2C%20when,%2C%20on%20October%2013%2C%201670.>



The case went to the jury. Once again, the jury did not simply say guilty or not guilty as to either Mary Hall or Ralph Hall, although their determination as to Ralph Hall was close to a verdict of not guilty. As for Mary Hall, they had their suspicions, but they appreciated that guilt requires more, and so they fashioned a sort of probation:

[W]ee finde that there are some suspitions by the Evidence, of what the woman is Charged with, but nothing considerable of value to take away her life. But in reference to the man wee finde nothing considerable to charge him with.

The Court gave this sentence,

That the man should bee bound Body and Goods for his wives Apperance, at the next Sessions, and so on from Sessions to Sessions as long as they stay within this Government, In the meane while, to bee of their good Behavior. So they were return'd into the Sheriffs Custody...

Three years passed without incident. Entering into a recognizance, according to the sentence of the Court,

they were released (Release in Appendix Three).⁸³

It appears that the Halls fled to the island owned by Pelham founder Thomas Pell now called City Island.⁸⁴

⁸³ See online at https://archive.org/stream/narrativesofwit00burr/narrativesofwit00burr_djvu.txt; See, also,

<https://homepages.rootsweb.com/~tmetrvlr/hd10.html>; See also, Edmund Bailey

O'Callaghan, *The Documentary History of the State of New-York*

Albany, 1850ETH-Bibliothek Zürich Persistent Link: <https://doi.org/10.3931/e-rara-84363>; As to the Halls, see, also, Paul M. Hamlin and Charles E. Baker, *Supreme Court of the Province of New York*, Vol. I at 143 n 5.

⁸⁴ See Blake Bell, *Historic Putnam*, online at <https://historicpelham.blogspot.com/2018/06/original-records-of-witchcraft-trial-of.html>; See also, Drake, Samuel G., *Annals of Witchcraft in New England and Elsewhere in the United States from their First Settlement Drawn Up from Unpublished and Other Well Authenticated Records of the Alleged Operations of Witches and Their Instigator, the Devil*, pp. 125-27 (NY, NY: Burt Franklin 1869) online at <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/moa/ACA6563.0001.001?rgn=main;view=fulltext>; See. also, Moyer, Paul B.

"Introduction: *The Devil in New England.*" *Detestable and Wicked Arts: New England and Witchcraft in the Early Modern Atlantic World*, Cornell University Press, 2020, at 2, JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7591/j.ctvrs9084.5>. Accessed 5 Mar. 2025.; see, also, online

<https://dn790006.ca.archive.org/0/items/narrativesofwitc00burriala/narrativesofwitc00burriala.pdf>; As to the Hall episode, see also,

<https://www.familysearch.org/library/books/viewer/552829/?offset=408281#page=287&viewer=picture&o=info&n=0&q=>.

Kathrine Harrison (sometimes Catherine/ Harryson)

There were two witchcraft proceedings against Katherine Harrison, one in Wethersfield, Connecticut, in 1668–1669, and the other in New York, in 1670, after she had left Connecticut.⁸⁵ She had come from England circa 1651 and for about two years in Hartford worked as a servant for Captain John Cullick.⁸⁶ In his household, she joined others who, years later at her witchcraft trial, brought up accounts of her actions at that earlier time, including fortune telling, sabbath-breaking, and, against the apparent odds, predicting that a couple would marry. To her misfortune, she was so adept at spinning linen that her accusers thought the amounts too large to be accomplished “without some form of inhuman power.”⁸⁷

She arrived in Wethersfield in 1653, and married a farmer, John Harrison, with whom she had three daughters. They also became prosperous landowners, which also worked against her. Her troubles also stemmed from her abilities as a “cunning woman” who could help or cure people with ailments. When her husband died in 1668, she was left with an estate of nearly a thousand pounds. She was also outspoken and sassy, which, combined with her rise from servant to wealthy landowner, made her an object of jealousy and resentment, a vulnerable target for accusation. Her powers to help and to cure were now seen as evil.⁸⁸

After an examination by the court on a charge of suspicion of witchcraft, Katherine Harrison was jailed by the Court of Assistants held at Hartford May 11, 1669, presided over by Maj. Deputy Governor John Mason.⁸⁹

The court met again at Hartford, May 25, 1669, presided over by John Winthrop, Governor, with William Leete, Deputy Governor, Major Mason and others as assistants. The indictment against her read:

⁸⁵ See George Lincoln Burr, ed., *Narratives of the Witchcraft Cases 1648-1706*, *Witchcraft in New York The Cases of Hall and Harrison*, Hanover Historical Texts Project Scanned and proofread by Kirstie Kleopfer, September 1999. Proofread and pages added by Jonathan Perry, March 2001. (1914) 41-52 online at <https://history.hanover.edu/texts/nyhah.html> See, also, <https://dn790006.ca.archive.org/0/items/narrativesofwitc00burriala/narrativesofwitc00burriala.pdf> According to Burr there had been records of the Connecticut Court of Assistants, in its session of May 20, 1670 of her trial, still extant at Hartford in the records of the county court and in those of the Court of Assistants (I. 1-7), and in part printed in the *Connecticut Colonial Records* (II. 118, 132), in Adams and Stiles, *Ancient Wethersfield* (I. 682-684), and in Taylor, *The Witchcraft Delusion in Colonial Connecticut* (New York, 1908), pp. 47-61. He adds that in the New York case the evidence against her may be found in the *Records of the Town of East-Hampton* (Sag Harbor, 1887 ff.), I. 128-140, 152-155, the record of the Connecticut court (she was acquitted) in the *Historical Magazine*, VI. 53, and a letter of Governor Winthrop to the Easthamptonians in the *Public Records of Connecticut*, I. 572-573.

⁸⁶ A founder of Hartford, Cullick was Deputy from Hartford to the Connecticut General Court in 1644, 1646 and 1647, and was the Magistrate and Secretary of the Colony from 1648 until 1658. He was Commissioner to the United Colonies from 1652 to 1655. In 1654 he and Major John Mason were sent to Boston as agents of Connecticut, to discuss Cromwell's plans for fighting the Dutch at New Amsterdam. He moved to Boston and died there ca 1662/3.

⁸⁷ John P. Demos, *Entertaining Satan*, (1983) at 355-365.

⁸⁸ R.G. Tomlinson, *Witchcraft Trials in Connecticut*, (1978) at 44; Chris Pagliuco, *Connecticut Witch Trials*, online at <https://www.wethersfieldhistory.org/articles/connecticuts-witch-trials>

⁸⁹ JOHN M. TAYLOR, *THE WITCHCRAFT DELUSION IN COLONIAL CONNECTICUT*, 1647-1697 (1908) online at <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/12288/12288-h/12288-h.htm>.

Kateran Harrison thou standest here indicted by ye name of Kateran Harrison (of Wethersfield) as being guilty of witchcraft for that thou not haveing the fear of God before thine eyes hast had familiaritie with Sathan the grand enemy of god and mankind and by his help hast acted things beyond and beside the ordinary course of nature and hast thereby hurt the bodyes of divers of the subjects of or souraigne Lord the King of which by the law of god and of this corporation thou oughtest to dye.

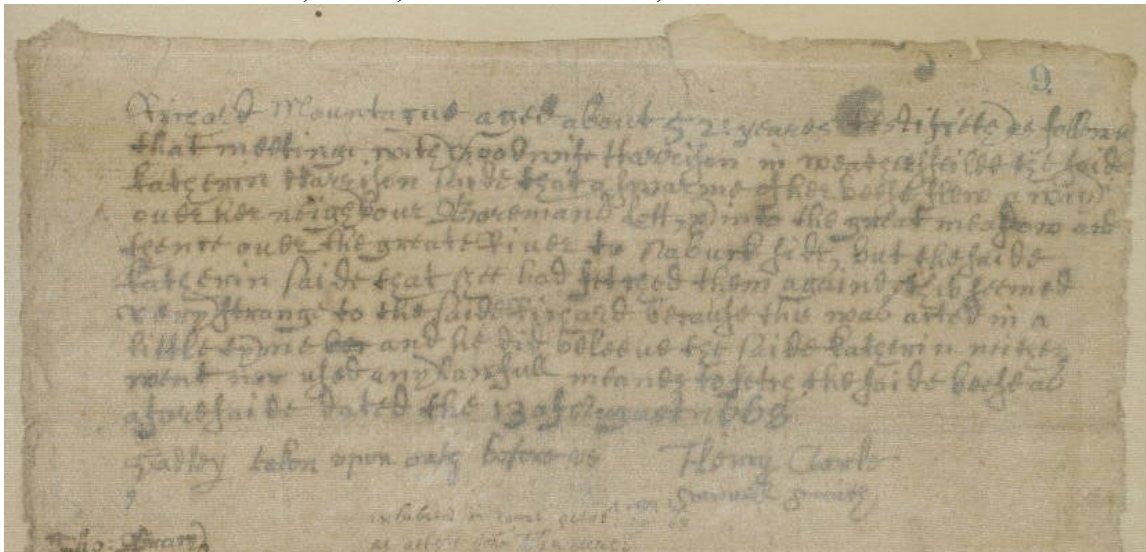
Katherine plead not guilty and “referred herself to a tryall by the jury present.”

She was sworn in:

You doe sware by the great and dreadful name of the everliving god that you will well and truly try just verdict give and true deliverance make between or Sovraigne Lord the King and such prisoner or prisoners at the barr as shall be given you in charge according to the Evidence given in Court and the lawes so help you god in or lord Jesus.

The evidence against her came principally from her former co-workers at the Cullick household.⁹⁰ It was a mixture of spectral evidence (testimony of the afflicted who claimed to see the apparition or the shape of the person who was allegedly afflicting them), hearsay (e.g. my wife told me that she saw a, b, and c) and imputations, all of which would be inadmissible in today’s courts. The objection to hearsay evidence was only just developing,⁹¹ spectral evidence was beginning to be questionable, and imputations were for the judges and jurors to resolve.

Rebeckka Smith testified that Goodwife Gilbert loaned a cap to Katherin Harrison, who then desired to have it, but Goody Gilbert refused to sell it, and when she wore it again, her shoulders and head became afflicted, which, to Rebeckka Smith, meant witchcraft. Smith also averred that



16. Samuel Wyllys Papers, Testimony of Richard Montague. Courtesy Connecticut State Library, State Archives.

⁹⁰ Content from the Connecticut State Library online at

<https://cslib.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15019coll10/id/152/rec/6> And

https://archive.org/stream/historyofancient12adam/historyofancient12adam_djvu.txt and <https://buff.ly/3PyCYgI>.

⁹¹ See Edmund M. Morgan. *Hearsay Dangers and the Application of the Hearsay Concept*, 62 *Harvard Law Review*, No. 2 (Dec., 1948), pp. 177-219

she “had bene afflicted in the past year being suddenly taken her thigh and leg being stiff like a stick, and dreadfully sick, having strange Fitts” that she said in the hearing of her worried daughter and others, she thought that “some evle person had bewitched her.”

For a fuller account of original testimony against Katherine Harrison, see Appendix Four.

Thomas Waples testified on August 7, 1668 that Katherine was “a noted liar,” and further that Gooddy Greenesmith had accused Katherin Harrison of being a witch.⁹² John Welles stated on June 29, 1668 that seven or eight years ago he saw Harrison rise up from a cow with a pail in her hand. Mary Olcot testified on August 8, 1668 that when Elizabeth, Simon Smith’s wife was a servant she “thought she should have married William Chapman, but [Katherine] affirmed that she should not be married to William, and predicted that Elizabeth should be married to one named Simon.”

Richard Mountague testified that Katherine Harrison said that a swarm of her bees flew over her neighbor’s lot but she had fetched them home again⁹³

William Warren testified in open court on October 27, 1668 that Katherine Harrison “was a roman and professed fortune teller, and some other matters concerning Katherine Harrison needful to be considered of.”⁹⁴ On May 25, 1669 Samuel Martin testified that Harris predicted someone’s imminent death.⁹⁵ Samuel Hurlbut said that Harrison had been an army camp follower.⁹⁶

Eliazer Kimmerly said that her heard Katherine speak of someone’s death.⁹⁷

Another person, Boynton, wrote the court saying that seven or eight years earlier, Katherine had stolen milk from his cows, but when he attempted to stop her, an invisible force held him stiff until Katherine was gone. Katherine explained to the court that many of her neighbors were torturing her animals and property; one of her cows was beaten until two ribs were broken, her crops were destroyed, and two of her oxen were assaulted. At the same time, her neighbors were “working behind her back to collect written depositions that would accuse her of witchcraft.”⁹⁸

A partial trial was had at the May session of the court, but the jury could not agree upon a verdict, and the court adjourned the case until the October session, when a verdict was to be given, and Harrison was remanded to jail in the meantime.⁹⁹

⁹² R. G. Tomlinson, *Witchcraft Trials of Connecticut* (1978) at 43; See. also, John P. Demos, *Entertaining Satan, Witchcraft and Culture in Early New England* (1982) at 364.

⁹³ Above from https://archive.org/stream/historyofancient12adam/historyofancient12adam_djvu.txt and <https://buff.ly/3PyCYgI>

⁹⁴ Connecticut State Library, State Archives, RG 000, Classified Archives, Samuel Wyllys papers, call no. 974.6 fW97. <https://wams.nyhistory.org/early-encounters/english-colonies/connecticut-witch-trials> and <https://cslib.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15019coll10/id/158/rec/5>.

⁹⁵ <https://cslib.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15019coll10/id/158/rec/5>.

⁹⁶ From <https://cslib.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15019coll10/id/158/rec/5>.

⁹⁷ Testimonial accounts from Samuel Wyllys Papers at Connecticut state library online at <https://cslib.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15019coll10/id/152/rec/6>.

⁹⁸ Sophia Mego, online at <https://scholarscollaborative.org/Hartford/social-issues/the-hartfords-witch-panic/>;

⁹⁹ JOHN M. TAYLOR, *THE WITCHCRAFT DELUSION IN COLONIAL CONNECTICUT, 1647-1697* (1908, 1974) 45-61; see, also, Walter W. Woodward, *New England’s Other Witch-Hunt: The Hartford Witch-Hunt of the*

Agitated, her opponents began a campaign collecting new depositions for use against her in the next trial. In the interim, the magistrates released Harrison from prison and allowed her to return to Wethersfield. The local opposition flared up, producing a petition protesting Harrison's release, claiming that after Harrison had been let out of jail "harmful and dangerous effects" took place. They urged that she be re-jailed.¹⁰⁰

In October 1669 a jury found Katherine Harrison guilty of witchcraft.¹⁰¹

An extraordinary event then took place, which would affect not only Harrison's fate, but would have a lasting effect on witchcraft trials and investigations. The Magistrates of the Court of Assistants looked to the Hartford ministry for guidance, posing four questions.¹⁰²

The first was whether a *plurality* of witnesses was necessary to convict someone of witchcraft. This was a subtle and complicated query. Is it enough to have two or more people testify as to a single fact or event? Or can a conviction be based on two or more people each testifying alone to different facts or events?

The second was "whether the preternatural apparition of a person, legally proved, be a demonstration of familiarity with the devil." The third was "whether a vicious person's foretelling some future event, or revealing of a secret, be a demonstration of familiarity with the Devil," and will be considered separately, below. The fourth question was "whether harm inflicted by a person's spectre or apparition, if legally proven, was proof of diabolism."

The ministers cited John 8:17-8 in response to the first question. "It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true, and that for evidence in witch trials to have legal standing, a 'plurality of witnesses' was required to testify to the *same individual event*, and that 'without such a plurality, there can be no legal evidence of it.'"¹⁰³

In response to the second question, they wrote that spectral evidence could demonstrate 'familiarity with the Devil', but only as long as it was 'legally proved'—again, a 'plurality of witnesses' was required.

As for the third question, the ministers answered that a person's fortune-telling abilities 'seem to us, to argue familiarity with the Devil'. However, this knowledge had to be beyond 'human skill

1660s and Changing Patterns in Witchcraft Prosecution, OAH Magazine of History, July, 2003, Vol. 17, No. 4, pp. 16-20. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25163616>.

¹⁰⁰ WOODWARD, WALTER W. "The Magus as Mediator: Witchcraft, Alchemy, and Authority in the Connecticut Witch-Hunt of the 1660s." *Prospero's America: John Winthrop, Jr., Alchemy, and the Creation of New England Culture, 1606-1676*, 2010, at 210–52. JSTOR, https://doi.org/10.5149/9780807895931_woodward.12. Accessed 6 Mar. 2025.

¹⁰¹ George Lincoln Burr, ed., *Narratives of the Witchcraft Cases 1648-1706, Witchcraft in New York The Cases of Hall and Harrison* online at <https://history.hanover.edu/texts/nyhah.html>

¹⁰² With hearty thanks to Liam Connell, for his excellent article, *A Great or Notorious Liar': Katherine Harrison and her Neighbours, Wethersfield, Connecticut, 1668 – 1670* (University of Melbourne), in which he presented the questions and answers. Online at online at

https://www.monash.edu/_data/assets/pdf_file/0011/1668440/lconnell1.pdf

¹⁰³ See, also, Georgescu, Sedona. *Fear Thy Neighbor: Spatial Relations in 17th Century New England Witch-Hunt Trials*. 2017, at 8, Trinity Student Scholarship. Trinity College Digital Repository, JSTOR, <https://jstor.org/stable/community.34031178>. Accessed 16 Feb. 2025.

in arts' and could not be gained from 'strength of reason arguing from the course of nature', or from 'information from man'. Once again, thy said, a plurality of witnesses was necessary.

After reading the Hartford ministers' response, the magistrates quashed the guilty verdict and moved to reconvene the following May. The General Assembly (over which the Governor presided) referred the case to a special session of the Court of Assistants (without a jury), and the court (John Winthrop, Jr. (1606–1676) presiding) declared that it did not agree with the jury's verdict "so as to sentence her to death or to a longer continuance in restraint" and ordered Harrison released on condition that she pay her "just fees" and seriously consider leaving Wethersfield—for her own safety and the "contentment of the people who are her neighbors." Such was the humanity of John Winthrop, Jr.¹⁰⁴

John Winthrop, Jr. (1606–1676)

The son of John Winthrop (1588–1649), a founder of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, Winthrop Jr. played a key role, perhaps the most important of all, in reforming witchcraft investigations. His biographer, Walter W. Woodward, wrote a cogent segment of the book, describing that accomplishment:¹⁰⁵

Harrison's claims to mastery of occult arts, made her case especially sensitive for Winthrop and the magistrates, who had to adjudicate the boundaries between good healing and bad magic. They knew that the local inhabitants felt aggrieved by what they saw as the magistrates putting a thumb on the scales of the first trial, to help Harris. They generated a petition:

"Theire are diverse witnesses more to be considered," they noted, *"whose witnessing was not given in to the consideration of the Juerie."* These witnesses' testimony had since been taken in writing, the petitioners reported, and some of them would be present at the next trial "to declare themselves more at large." The petitioners further requested that the prosecution be directed, not by the magistrates, but by a local merchant whose name headed the list of signers, and who would *"be the better fitted to answeare diverse questions, and cleare up some matters nessessary."* Furthermore, to make sure that obscure legal matters should not prove impediments to conviction, they wanted a renowned lawyer to assist in the prosecution.

Winthrop's biographer asks: Was Winthrop the particular target of criticism in the Wethersfield petition? Had he pressed the authority of his occult knowledge and political leadership further than his fellow Puritans would allow? As chief magistrate, Winthrop bore most of the official responsibility for Harrison's trial and her subsequent release. Circumstantial evidence suggests also that he might individually have been instrumental in setting Harrison free.

The trial had centered on the fine points of law, witchcraft, and magic. Fundamental questions had been raised regarding the evidentiary standards necessary for conviction in witchcraft cases,

¹⁰⁴ Robert C. Black, III, *The Younger John Winthrop* (1988) at 306; see also, Chris Pagliuco, *Connecticut's Witch Trials*, online at <https://www.wethersfieldhistory.org/articles/connecticuts-witch-trials/>.

¹⁰⁵ Walter W. Woodward, *Prospero's America: John Winthrop, Jr., Alchemy, and the Creation of New England Culture, 1606-1676*, 2010, pp. 160–209.

the acceptability of spectral evidence, and the distinction between acceptable and diabolical practice of magic. It was then that the magistrates turned to the ministers for clarification. Fortunately, the ministry included Gershom Bulkeley.

Bulkeley was also a physician, an alchemist, and a friend of Winthrop. Bulkeley, Woodward notes, shared Winthrop's interest in occult sciences, and he fully embraced the governor's lifelong opposition to witchcraft convictions. In addition to his role in the Harrison trial, Bulkeley would write: "*I wish N.E. have not a great deale of innocent blood to answer for, both of former and later times. The good Lord pardon his people, and give them to see their error.*"

Bulkeley's answers to the questions called for a strict interpretation of the two-witness rule, holding that a witchcraft conviction was valid only if there were two witnesses to the exact same act at the exact same time. As a result, much of the evidence against Harrison or any suspected witch was automatically negated, for the spectral apparitions almost always happened when the witnesses were alone.

As for spectral evidence, the ministers confirmed the validity of spectral evidence, but only provided that there were at least two witnesses to the spectral apparition in question, thus undercutting it, since apparitions almost universally appeared to only one person at a time,

Bulkeley and the ministers walked a thin line, supporting the suspicions of Katherine Harrison's accusers while saving Harrison.

On May 12, 1670, Winthrop presided over a meeting of the General Assembly in which Harrison's case was referred into the Court of Assistants. Eight days later, a special court freed Harrison.¹⁰⁶

They also ordered her to leave town. That she did, going to Westchester, where her daughter and her son-in-law Josiah Hunt were living.¹⁰⁷

Her troubles did not end. The local community, though not sharing witchcraft beliefs with the same passion as their Connecticut neighbors, was not thrilled about having an expelled witch in their midst. A complaint followed with two months, asserting that she had been in prison for 12 months for witchcraft.¹⁰⁸

Governor Francis Lovelace (1621–1675) issued an order directing that Harrison leave Westchester. Harrison declined to leave, and Lovelace issued another order on August 26, 1670, directing that she leave. (For Orders, see Appendix Five.)

¹⁰⁶ Riddell, William Renwick. "Witchcraft in Old New York." *Journal of the American Institute of Criminal Law and Criminology*, vol. 19, no. 2, 1928, pp. 252–58. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1134645>. Accessed 6 Mar. 2025; Court of Assistant Records, Connecticut State Archives, LIII, 7; Hall, ed., *Witch-Hunting*, 184.

¹⁰⁷ Marie Williams, online at <https://www.newyorkalmanack.com/2019/10/westchester-countys-katharine-harrison-accused-witch/>.

¹⁰⁸ Burr adds that there then follows a transcript, from the records of the Connecticut Court of Assistants, of this action in her case in its session of May 20, 1670. The documents of her trial, still extant at Hartford in the records of the county court and in those of the Court of Assistants (I. 1-7), and in part printed in the *Connecticut Colonial Records* (II. 118, 132), in Adams and Stiles, *Ancient Wethersfield* (I. 682-684),

Things moved swiftly, and four days later the Governor entertained the matter:

The Town was represented by Constable Edward Waters and John Quinby. Captain Richard Ponton, Thomas Hunt Sr. and Jr, Roger Townsend appeared on Katherine Harrison's behalf.

In support of her innocence, Capt. Ponton produced a letter from Capt. John Talcott.¹⁰⁹ Lovelace then referred the matter to the Court of Assizes, stating that "*In the meane time that shee give Security for her good Behaviour, during the time of her Abode amongst them at West-Chester. Cautiously, on August 25, 1670 he ordered an inventory of her goods.*"

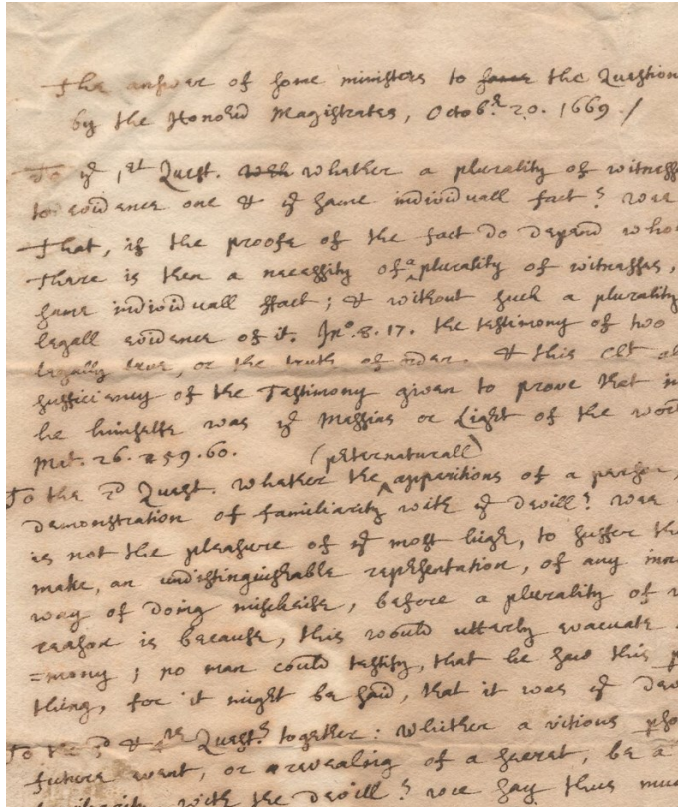
The Governor made his ruling in October, 1670. He found no evidence against her and ordered her release (See Appendix Five).¹¹⁰

In the end, she had been able to convince her neighbors of her upright character.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ Talcott, then treasurer of the Connecticut colony, was one of its foremost men. He was a member of the Court of Assistants, and was doubtless largely responsible for its action. He was well known at West Chester, for in 1663 at the head of a troop from Connecticut he had taken the place from the Dutch. Burr, ed., *Narratives of the Witchcraft Cases 1648-1706*, (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1914) 41-52 Online at <https://history.hanover.edu/texts/nyhah.html#22>.

¹¹⁰ ORIGINAL NARRATIVES OF EARLY AMERICAN HISTORY REPRODUCED UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE AMERICAN HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION GENERAL EDITOR, J. FRANKLIN JAMESON, DIRECTOR OF THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORICAL RESEARCH CARNEGIE INSTITUTION OF WASHINGTON IN THE NARRATIVES OF THE WITCHCRAFT CASES 1648 – 1706 at 52 , online at <https://dn790006.ca.archive.org/0/items/narrativesofwite00buriala/narrativesofwite00buriala.pdf>; Riddell, William Renwick. "Witchcraft in Old New York." *Journal of the American Institute of Criminal Law and Criminology*, vol. 19, no. 2, 1928, pp. 252–58. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1134645>. Accessed 6 Mar. 2025.

¹¹¹ James Sullivan, I *History of New York State 1523- 1927*, at 209- 210; This was not the end of Katharine Harrison's hardships however. It appears in the records that Harrison's friends and family began to take control of her property. She had given some of her possessions to Robert Yates for safekeeping, and now he refused to give them back. Then, her daughter and son-in-law (along with the father-in-law Josiah Hunt) brought an action for property they argued Katherine Harrison was obliged to give over upon the marriage of her daughter. Katherine returned to the Governor with her complaint against Robert Yates, and filed a counteraction stating she never promised her daughter money or possessions upon her marriage. Governor Lovelace issued an order in July 1671 stating that Harrison's possessions were her own and that she should be assisted in locating any possessions of hers she had put into the care of others during her stay in prison. Marie Williams online at <https://www.newyorkalmanack.com/2019/10/westchester-countys-katharine-harrison-accused-witch/>



17. The Questions from John Winthrop, Jr. answered by the ministers, October 20, 1669, courtesy Brown University Library.

Petrus/Peter Stuyvesant, Goodwife Ayres, and Judith Varlet

The interaction of these three makes an interesting chapter in New York's witchcraft history.

Petrus/Peter Stuyvesant (ca 1612–1672)

Best known and remembered is Stuyvesant, Director-General of New Netherland from 1647 to 1664.

Born in Friesland in the Netherlands around 1612, Stuyvesant studied languages and philosophy at the University of Franeker. Joining the Dutch West India Company around 1635, he was Director of the Dutch colony of Curaçao from 1642 to 1644. In April 1644 he led an attack on the Spanish island of Saint Martin and was hit by a cannonball, requiring amputation of his right leg. He

wore a prosthetic limb, a wooden pegleg ornamented with silver bands.

In 1646, he replaced Director Willem Kieft and arrived in New Netherland in 1647. In September of that year, he appointed an advisory council to represent the citizenry, the *Nine Men*. The first assembly was appointed in 1648 but, dissatisfied, Stuyvesant appointed a second Council in 1649, of which Adriaen van der Donck became its president. The Nine drafted the Great Remonstrance of New Netherland and sent three delegates to Holland to present the remonstrance to the Dutch West India Company and the Dutch parliament.

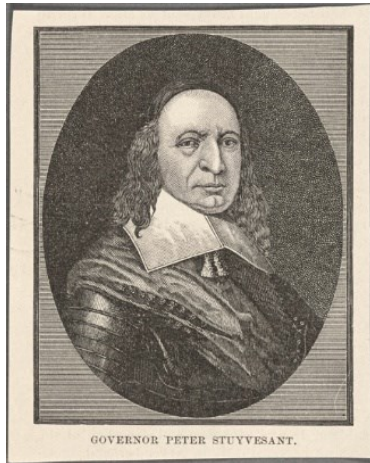
The Remonstrance resulted in the establishment of a municipal form of government in New Amsterdam, to consist of a Schout, two Burgomasters and five Schepens.

Stuyvesant was strongly committed to the supremacy of the Dutch Reformed Church in New Netherland and issued an ordinance forbidding Lutheran services, until the Directors of the Dutch West India Company intervened.

In 1654, the Dutch surrendered their colony in Brazil to the Portuguese, and many Jews were among those who fled. Stuyvesant refused to allow them to settle in New Amsterdam and wrote to the Dutch West India Company urging that “the deceitful race—such hateful enemies and blasphemers of the name of Christ—be not allowed to further infect and trouble this new colony.” Stuyvesant expressed a wider concern—that “Jewish settlers should not be granted the same liberties enjoyed by Jews in Holland, lest members of other persecuted minority groups, such as Roman Catholics, be attracted to the colony.” The board of the Dutch West India

Company, many of whom were Jews, forced Stuyvesant to allow the Jewish immigrants to stay, although he mandated that the Jewish community be self-supporting and forbade the construction of a synagogue.

The Quakers arrived in New Netherland in 1657. Stuyvesant issued an ordinance that made harboring a Quaker a crime. The people of Vlissingen (none of whom were Quakers) lodged a protest now known as the Flushing Remonstrance, advocating lasting religious freedom. In 1663, the Dutch West India Company, fearing that too rigorous a policy of religious repression might reduce immigration, instructed Stuyvesant to end religious persecution in the colony.



After the Dutch ceded the colony to the English crown in 1664, Stuyvesant returned to Holland to report to the Dutch authorities, then returned to New York and lived out his life on his Manhattan farm, the Great Bouwerie.¹¹²

Washington Irving described Stuyvesant as a “tough, sturdy, valiant, weather-beaten, mettlesome, obstinate, leathern-sided, lion-hearted, generous-spirited old governor.”¹¹³

His remains lie in the Stuyvesant family burial vault under St. Mark’s Church in the Bowery, at the intersection of Stuyvesant Street and Second Avenue in Manhattan.¹¹⁴

Goodwife Ayres

Little is known of Goodwife Ayres, beyond that she was an accused, married to William Ayres.¹¹⁵

¹¹² Historical Society of the New York Courts, online at <https://history.nycourts.gov/figure/pieter-stuyvesant/>.

¹¹³ WASHINGTON IRVING, *KNICKERBOCKER'S HISTORY OF NEW YORK*, online at <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/13042/13042-h/13042-h.htm>; For more on Stuyvesant, see Jaap Jacobs, *The Colony of New Netherland, A Dutch Settlement in Seventeenth-Century America* (2009).

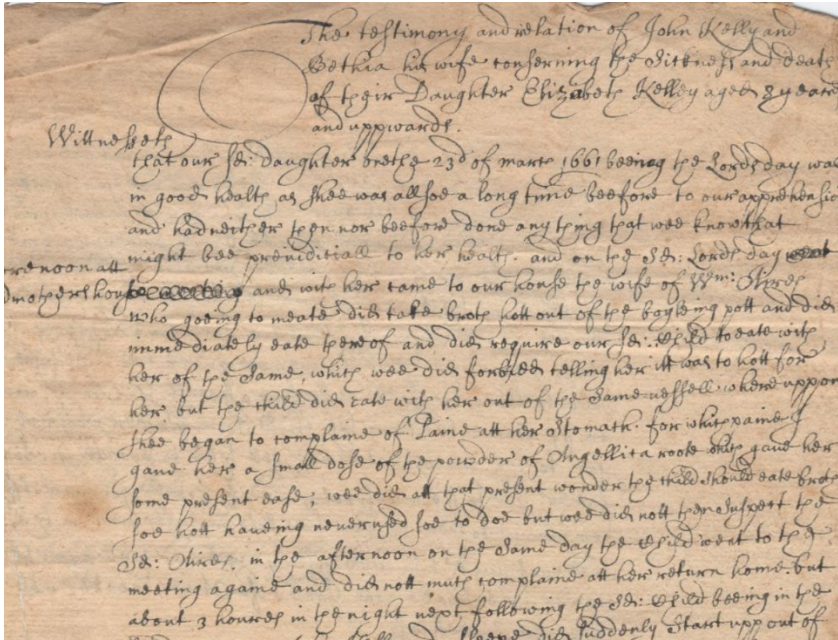
¹¹⁴ Historical Society of the New York Courts, online at <https://history.nycourts.gov/figure/pieter-stuyvesant/>.

¹¹⁵ See, generally, Christopher Klein, *Before Salem, the First American Witch Hunt*, (2012, 2023) online at <https://www.history.com/news/before-salem-the-first-american-witch-hunt>; see also, Sophia Mego, online at <https://scholarscollaborative.org/Hartford/social-issues/the-hartfords-witch-panic/>; See, also, <https://www.legendsofamerica.com/elizabeth-kelly-goody-ayres/>; see also, <https://www.wikitree.com/wiki/Varleth->; See, also, CHARLES J. HOADLY, *A Case of witchcraft*, Hartford Connecticut Magazine, November, 1899; See, also, *Hartford's Witches*, from the Colonial History of Hartford online at <https://freepages.rootsweb.com/~nyterry/genealogy/towns/hartford/hartwitches.html>.

Judith Varlet (1629–1711)

Judith Varlet (Verleth/Verlet) was born in Utrecht, Nederland, the daughter of Gaspar and Judith (Tentenier) Varlet. In 1666 she married Nicholas Bayard, Peter Stuyvesant's brother-in-law.¹¹⁶

The Hartford Witch-hunt, one of largest in mid-seventeenth-century New England, resulted in accusations against at least eight persons, three of whom were executed. As part of it, eight-year-old Elizabeth Kelly accused Goodwife Ayres of causing her sickness, and also implicated Judith Varlet. The Kellys describe their daughter's fatal illness:



18. Original testimony of John Kelly. Courtesy Brown University.

Witnesseth[.] That our said daughter on the 25d of March 1661 ...And on the said Lord's day was in the forenoon at her grandmother's house and with her came to our house the wife of William Ayres who going to eat did take broth hot out of the boiling pot and did immediately eat thereof ...out of the same vessel whereupon she began to complain of pain at her stomachbut we did not then suspect the said Ayres. ...but about 3 hours in the night next following the said child being in the bed with me John Kelly and asleep did suddenly start up out of her sleep and holding up her hands cried Father Father help

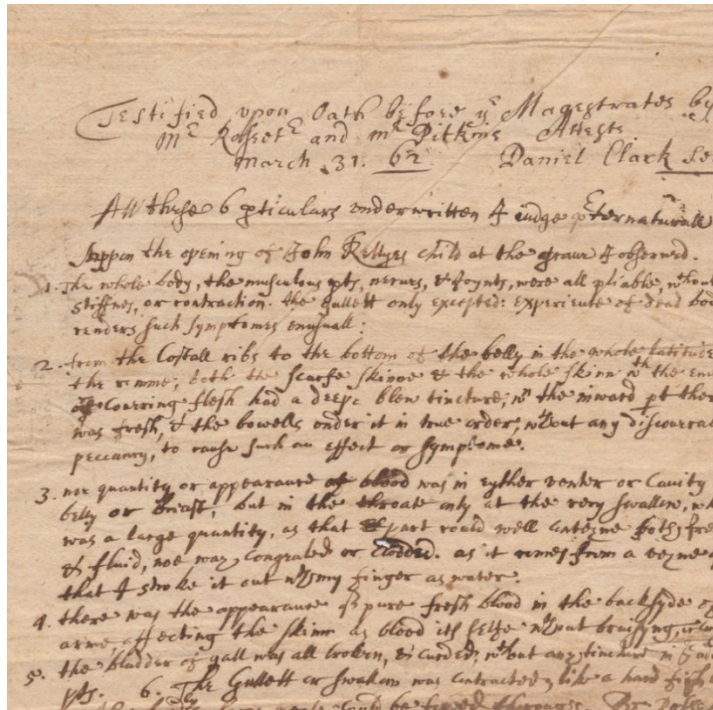
*me help me Goodwife Ayres is upon me she chokes me, she kneels on my belly, she will break my bowels, she pinches me, she will make me black and blue, oh! (For full account see Appendix Six).*¹¹⁷

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<http://varletfamily.pbworks.com/w/page/8500460/Chapter%2020%3A%20The%20Caspar%20Varlet%20Family%20;> See, also, James Kences, Some Unexplored Relationships of Essex County Witchcraft to the Indian Wars of 1675 and 1689, Essex Institute Historical Collections, at 185 online at <http://yorkmainehistory.org/yorkhistorygroup/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/James-Kences-Some-Unexplored-Relationships-1.pdf>; See, also, CHARLES J. HOADLY, *A Case of witchcraft*, Hartford Connecticut Magazine, November, 1899; For unrelated litigation involving the Verleth family, see Gherke, Michael Eugene, "Dutch women in New Netherland and New York in the seventeenth century" (2001). Graduate Theses, Dissertations, and Problem Reports. 1430. <https://researchrepository.wvu.edu/etd/1430>.

¹¹⁷ Taken upon oath by John Kelly and his wife May 13, 1662 in open court. D[aniel?] Clark Secretary. [inscribed on first page]: The evidences of sundry persons respecting Goody Ayres killing Kelly's daughter. Source: Wyllys Papers, AMBL. See, also, G. Lincoln Burr, *Narratives of New England Cases*, (2002) at 21n; John P. Demos, *Entertaining Satan*, (1982) at 90; Aaron James Whiting, *To Hang a Witch, Religion and Paranoia in Seventeenth Century Hartford*. online at <https://twu.edu/media/documents/history-government/To-Hang-a-Witch--Religion-and-Paranoia-in-Seventeenth-Century-Hartford-.pdf> (no publication or date given)

Joseph Marsh testified that he “came to John Kelly's house on the Tuesday morning after [Kelly's] child was taken sick I heard her say father bring hither the broad axe or else the narrow axe and her mother being by her asked her what to do and she answered to cut off Goody Ayres's head then her mother asked her why whe[re] is she and she said there she comes over ...”



19. Bary Rossiter's Autopsy report on John Kelly's child, 1662. Courtesy Brown University.

Moreover, “there sat Goody Ayres upon the bed where Betty Kelly lay and I heard her speak to her saying if she would be quiet and hold her tongue and lie still and go to sleep and say no more to her father about her she would come tomorrow morning and bring her a...lace to set upon her dress upon which she replied saying will you and she said yes indeed I will

Robert Stern added that he saw Goodwife Seager and Greensmith in the woods dancing around those black creatures

Witnesses added that Goodwife Ayres wiped the corner of the child's mouth with a cloth, and wanted to turn up the sleeve of the arm; but could not. John Kelly did, and saw black and blue marks on the child's arms as if they had

been bruised, or beaten. The child died and a strong scent arose from the corpse. Later, when the child was laid into the coffin, there appeared, a reddish spot, which covered a great part of the cheek, on the side next to Goodwife Ayres where she stood.

On January 8, 1662 Rebecca Greensmith testified that in the woods, along with Goodwife Ayres, she had danced, & had a bottle of sack, also that Judeth Varlett told her she “was much troubled wth Marshall Jonath Gilbert & cried, & she sayd if it lay in her power she would doe him a mischief, or what hurt shee could.”¹¹⁸

Rebecca Greensmith confessed to having “familiarity with the devil” and described attending meetings in the woods with Goodwife Ayres and others, including Judith Varlet.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ Taylor, John M. *The Witchcraft Delusion in Colonial Connecticut, 1647-1697* (1908) at 10Online at <https://archive.org/details/witchcraftdelusi00tayluoft/page/100/mode/2up>; See, also, John P. Demos, *Entertaining Satan, Witchcraft and Culture in Early New England* (1982)at 428

¹¹⁹ *Witch-Hunting in Seventeenth-Century New England, A Documentary History 1638-1693*, Edited by: David D. Hall p. 147 online at <https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.1515/9780822382201-012/html?lang=en&srsId=AfmBOoqa1KniDIHgEv9CieZNTKTvjKowqhnVW7ZN5y1UwMRV0fx3elrf>

The Greensmiths were executed in early 1663. Connecticut authorities arrested Goodwife Ayres and Judith Varlet. Ayres escaped to New York.¹²⁰

Enter Stuyvesant

Based on Rebecca's confession, Judith Varlett was jailed, awaiting trial under suspicion of witchcraft. Her brother, Captain Nicholas Varlett, came from New York to the rescue, with a letter from his brother-in-law Governor Peter Stuyvesant, no less. In his letter, Stuyvesant spoke of Judith's well-known education, good character, and religious faith. She could not be guilty, he wrote, of "the pretend accusation of witchery." It succeeded; authorities released her, and she then traveled to New York. She later married Governor Stuyvesant's nephew, Nicholas Bayard.¹²¹

Stuyvesant's letter of October 13, 1662 reads, in pertinent part, as follows:

By this Occasion off me Brother in Lawe beinge Necessitated to make a Second Voyage for aide his distressed Sister Judith Varleth Imprisoned as we are Informed uppon pretend accusation off Wicherye, wee realy beleeve & out her knowne education, Lyfe Conversation & profession off faith we deare assure, that Shee is innocent of such a horrible Crimen & therefore I doubt not he will now as formerly fynde your honn" favour & ayde for the Innocent. Your lovinge friend & Neighbour

*13th of Oct. 1662. P. Stuyvesant.*¹²²

Stuyvesant's stance is revealing. He not only went to bat for her, but in other writings displayed his skepticism about witchcraft. In 1661, New Haven Puritans were exploring the possibility of migrating into Dutch territory. Stuyvesant was receptive to the idea, stating that he was willing to incorporate English Protestants into New Netherland's religious environment, as compatible with

¹²⁰ David D. Hall, *Witch-hunting in Seventeenth Century New England. A Documentary History, 1638- 1693* (1991) at 14; Aaron James Whiting, *To Hang a Witch, Religion and Paranoia in Seventeenth Century Hartford*. online at <https://twu.edu/media/documents/history-government/To-Hang-a-Witch--Religion-and-Paranoia-in-Seventeenth-Century-Hartford-.pdf> (no publication or date given)

¹²¹ <https://www.facebook.com/ctwitchmemorial/posts/judith-varlett-varlet-varleth-up-until-this-point-most-of-my-writings-have-been-/2043173289303561/ny>

¹²² Stuyvesant's letter of October 13, 1662 to the people of Hartford, in Documents Relative to the History of New York, vol. 14, p. 518 Online at <https://archive.org/details/documentsrelativ14brod/page/518/mode/2up>; see, also, online: <https://www.facebook.com/ctwitchmemorial/posts/judith-varlett-varlet-varleth-up-until-this-point-most-of-my-writings-have-been-/2043173289303561/>; and <https://lutebramblett.blogspot.com/2013/01/judith-varleth-1629-1711.html>; See, also, <https://www.genealogy.com/ftm/b/a/k/Tracy-Baker-az/WEBSITE-0001/UHP-1085.html> ; see also <https://www.wikitree.com/wiki/Varleth-7> ; See, also, online at <https://www.newyorkfamilyhistory.org/online-records/nygb-record/566-355/19> ; see also, <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=1796847197060031&id=1163535060391251&set=a.1200582833353140> in which Stuyvesant described her as "a woman of fascination." See, also, John P. Demos, *Entertaining Satan, Witchcraft and Culture in Early New England* (1982) at 71

the public church, as in Holland. Nevertheless, he insisted on maintaining Dutch authority in “dark & dubious matters, especially in Witch craft”.¹²³

Stuyvesant wrote to Robert Treat on October 13, 1662 (For full letter see Appendix Seven). He assured Treat that the potential settlers could have their own magistrates, and that sentences for capitol crimes in which the parties are convicted by their own confession may be put into execution without appeal, *but in dark & dubious matters, especially in Wich craft such Sentences off Death shal not be put in Execution...* (Emphasis added)¹²⁴

Elizabeth Walker Cary

Captain Nathaniel Cary (1645–1730) and Elizabeth Walker Cary (1650–1722) were married on July 9, 1674, in Lancashire, Massachusetts. Nathaniel was the son of James Cary and Eleanor Hawkins; Elizabeth was the daughter of Captain Augustine and Hannah Walker. The couple settled in Charlestown, Massachusetts, and eventually had at least five children.

In a sworn complaint, Thomas Putnam and Benjamin Hutchinson of Salem Village accused Elizabeth of witchcraft, for having afflicted Mary Walcott, Abigail Williams, and Mercy Lewis. “John Indian,” a Native American, was also a witness against her. She was examined the next day.

The authorities used the “touch test” with several of the “afflicted girls” who were falling into fits during the proceedings. Her husband Nathaniel Cary described what took place: “She was forced to stand with her arms stretched out. I requested that I might hold one of her hands, but it was denied me; then she desired me to wipe the tears from her eyes, and the sweat from her face, which I did; then she desired she might lean herself on me, saying she should faint. Justice Hathorne replied she had strength enough to torment these persons, and she should have strength enough to stand. I, speaking something against their cruel proceedings, they commanded me to be silent, or else I should be turned out of the room. The Indian before mentioned was also brought in, to be one of her accusers; being come in, he now fell down and tumbled about like a hog but said nothing. The justices asked the girls who afflicted the Indian, they answered she (meaning my wife).”

Elizabeth Cary was held for trial and remained imprisoned for two months in Boston. Nathaniel later obtained a writ to have Elizabeth moved to the Cambridge prison, which was closer to their home. Knowing that she would never get a fair trial in Salem, he also tried, unsuccessfully, to have the proceedings moved to his district.

¹²³Evan Haefeli, *Dutch New York and the Salem Witch Trials: Some New Evidence*, ” Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society volume 110 Part 2 (2003): 277-308; Timothy J. Crist, Godly Government, Puritans and the Founding of Newark, November 2009, online at <https://www.newarkhistorysociety.org/images/articles/resources/PDF/NHS-GodlyGovernment-061913.pdf>; Miller, Perry. *The New England Quarterly*, vol. 8, no. 4, 1935, pp. 582–84. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/360367>. Accessed 9 Mar. 2025.

¹²⁴ *Documents relative to the colonial history of the State of New York* online at https://archive.org/stream/documentsrelativ13newyuoft/documentsrelativ13newyuoft_djvu.txt

With no more legal options, Nathaniel, with the help of Boston Reverend Samuel Willard's son John, helped his wife escape from Cambridge jail in July and flee to New York.¹²⁵ Some of Nathaniel's goods were seized by the sheriff and he was caught and arrested, but after just a half a day, he was dismissed. Nathaniel and Elizabeth returned to Charlestown after the witch frenzy had come to an end.

He had given a harrowing account of the accusation against his wife.¹²⁶ (See, appendix Eight)

20. Testimony of Sarah Churchill v. Ann Pudeator, and testimony of Mary Warren v. Bridget Bishop, Elizabeth Cary, George Jacobs, Sr., and Ann Pudeator, June 1, 1692. Massachusetts Court of Oyer and Terminer (Essex County).

The Deposition of Ann Putnam the wife of Thomas Putnam who testifieth and saith that on the first day of June 1692. the Apperishtion of Rebekah Nurs did again fall upon me and almost choak me and she toald me that now she was come out of prision she had power to afflet me and that now she

could for she tould me she had kiled benjamin Holton and John fuller and Rebekah Shepard: and she also toald me that she and her sister Cloyes and Ed Bhishop wife of of Salem village had kiled young Jno putnams Child because yong Jno putnam had said that it was no wonder they were witches for their mother was so before them and because they could not aveng themselves on him they did kill his child: and immediatly they did appere to me: six children in winding sheets which caled me aunt: which did most grievously affright me: and they tould me that they ware my sisters Bakers children of Boston and

¹²⁵ Salem Witch Museum, online at <https://salemwitchmuseum.com/locations/site-of-salem-village-parsonage/>

¹²⁶ <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A32160.0001.001?rgn=main;view=fulltext> ;

<https://salem.lib.virginia.edu/n29.html>; <https://salem.lib.virginia.edu/n29.html>;

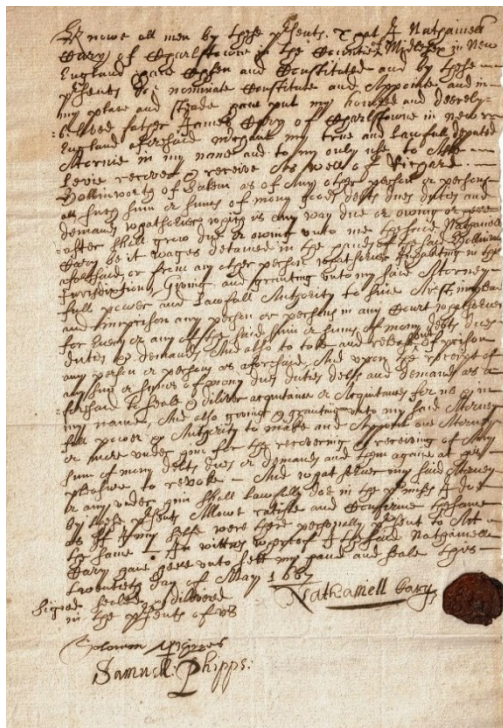
<https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/53412/pg53412-images.html>; see, also, Salem Witch Museum's Post online at <https://www.facebook.com/salemwitchmuseum/posts/on-this-day-in-the-year-1692-nathaniel-cary-successfully-arranged-the-escape-of-907822348053893/>; <https://www.facebook.com/salemwitchmuseum/posts/on-this-day-captain-nathaniel-carys-wife-was-transferred-to-jail-in-cambridge-wh/4328003497211388/>;

<https://salemwitchmuseum.com/locations/ingersolls-ordinary/>; See. Also, (Robert Calef, *More Wonders of the Invisible World* [London, 1700] pp. 95-98, online at

<https://salem.lib.virginia.edu/n29.html#n29.2>; See, also, <https://historyofmassachusetts.org/salem-witch-trials-accusers/>; Testimony of Sarah Churchill v. Ann Pudeator and testimony of Mary Warren v. Bridget Bishop, Elizabeth Cary, George Jacobs Sr., and Ann Pudeator, June 1, 1692, Massachusetts Court of Oyer and Terminer records, DEP 01, Box 6, Folder 39. Property of the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court, Division of Archives and Records Preservation. Digital image courtesy of Phillips Library, Peabody Essex Museum, Rowley, MA. From online at <https://pem.quartextcollections.com/Documents/Detail/5113>.

*that gooddy Nurs and Mistris Cary of Charletown and an old deaft woman att Boston had murthered them: and charged me to go and tell these things to the magestrats or elce they would tare me to peaces for their own blood did crie for vengance also their Appeared to me my own sister Bayley and three of hir children in winding sheets and tould me that gooddy Nurs had murthered them.*¹²⁷

After fleeing to New York, the Carys found Governor Fletcher hospitable (above). Some of Cary's goods were seized by the Massachusetts sheriff and he was caught and arrested, but after just a half a day, he was dismissed. Elizabeth returned to Charlestown after the witch frenzy had come to an end. She died at the age of 72 on August 30, 1722. Her husband outlived her by eight years, dying in Charlestown on July 18, 1730.¹²⁸



21. Nathaniel Cary. Manuscript Document Signed, "Nathaniell Cary," beside a red wax seal. Charlestown, May 20, 1667. Additionally signed by witnesses Solomon Higgins and Samuel Phipps, Town Clerk. Courtesy University Archives.

The document, written in a hybrid of Elizabethan English and Modern English, appears to be a power of attorney. As Cary was often at sea, he would appoint someone to handle his estate while he was away.¹²⁹

Winifred (King) Benham

Winifred (King) Benham (sometimes Benom) (ca 1639–aft. 1697) was the daughter of Mary Williams King Hale (b. ca 1616), and the wife of Joseph Benham. Mary Hale supported herself by running a boarding house in Boston, as well as an early version of an infirmary from her home, taking in ailing individuals and attempting to cure them. For their care, she charged 20 shillings per week for three weeks, and 10 shillings per week after that.

In 1681, a young boarder named Michael Smith accused Mary Hale, by way of witchcraft, of poisoning him after his romance with her granddaughter Johanna Benham, a daughter of Winifred, ended.¹³⁰ Mary Hale was arrested and tried, but acquitted.¹³¹ Smith had claimed that Mary Hale had bewitched him while he

¹²⁷ THE TRIAL OF REBECCA NURSE online at http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/salem/ASA_NUR.HTM; See, also, <http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/salem/salem.htm>

¹²⁸ <https://www.geni.com/people/Elizabeth-Cary/6000000025333383542>

¹²⁹ See, https://www.universityarchives.com/auction-lot/salem-witch-husband-helped-her-escape-1667-rare-ds_E884A549D3

¹³⁰ Michael Leclerc and D. Brenton Simons, *Origin of Accused Witch Mary (Williams) (King?) Hale of Boston and her Brothers, Hugh, John, and, possibly, Nathaniel Williams*, 82 *American Genealogist*, No. 3, (July 2007) 161

¹³¹ From online at <https://elliesancestors.blogspot.com/2017/09/a-witch-in-family.html>; See, also, <https://www.wikitree.com/wiki/Williams-45182>

was at the Isles of Shoals and at Bilboa and, further, that in a separate incident, she transported him to Dorchester, where he encountered a coven of witches.

Among the witchcraft evidence used against Mary Hale was a test using a bottle containing Smith's urine. When the bottle was stopped, Mary Hale moved to and fro in an agitated manner throughout the house. When it was unstopped, her movement ceased. Massachusetts Governor Simon Bradstreet (1603–1697) endorsed a deposition in the witchcraft accusation against Mary Hale. The deposition was made by her granddaughter, Joanna Benham, in support of a complaint by Mary Hale against Roger and Jane Browne, who had publicly denounced Hale as a witch. In her deposition, Joanna relates that when she confronted Jane Browne, she responded that she “widdow Hale came to her and tould her that she was bewitched (meaning Jane Browne is bewitched) and that if ever shee suckled the child againe it would dye.”

On the verso, Governor Bradstreet wrote out a bond for five pounds as surety “that the sd Roger Browne and Jane his wife shall psonally appear att the next County Court to be holden att Boston to answer the complnt of the widdw Hale for his wife calling of her witch and for scratching of her face, ec. and for himselfe affirming her to be a witch.”¹³² We have no record of her life after this. We do not know when or where she died.¹³³

Mary Hale's daughter, Winifred Benham, Sr., and her own daughter, Winifred Benham, Jr., was tried three times for witchcraft in Connecticut, first in 1692 and twice in 1697, before finding refuge in Staten Island.¹³⁴

Trouble began for Winifred Benham, Sr. in 1684 when her husband, Joseph, was called to court in Hartford on the charges of riotous seizing and restraining. He managed to defend himself against those charges. Several years later, he said of the Wallingford selectmen that “they were noe more fit for townsmen than Doggs,” for which he was fined.¹³⁵

The very next year in 1692, Winifred came under suspicion of witchcraft based on accusations from Hannah Parker. Joseph went to Hannah and threatened to shoot her. Later, in the New Haven Court, Joseph admitted to threatening to shoot Hannah. The court warned the Benhams that if there were any further problems they would be called again into court.

It was not long before Winifred Benham and her daughter were charged with witchcraft. The accusation pertained to the death of a young child, with what appeared to be spots on the child, and like spots on Winifred Benham, quickly vanishing.

¹³² <https://veryimportantlot.com/de/lot/view/a-deposition-in-a-case-of-witchcraft-concerning-ma-1119142>

¹³³ <https://witchhuntshow.com/2023/06/15/connecticut-witch-trials-101-part-6-1692-and-beyond/>

¹³⁴ *New Haven, CT: Families of Ancient New Haven.* (Online database. *AmericanAncestors.org*. New England Historic Genealogical Society, 2008.) Originally published as *New Haven genealogical magazine*. vols. I-VIII. Compiled by Donald Lines Jacobus. 8 vols. Rome, New York: Clarence D. Smith, 1923-1932.; <https://connecticutwitchtrials.org/victims/#winifred-benhamsr>; See, also, <https://www.americanancestors.org/DB98/i/7494/958/234948686>

¹³⁵ Michael Leclerc and D. Brenton Simons, *Origin of Accused Witch Mary (Williams) (King?) Hale of Boston and her Brothers, Hugh, John, and, possibly, Nathaniel Williams*, 82 *American Genealogist*, No. 3, (July 2007) 163; Also online at https://archive.org/stream/bub_gb_-zQWAAAAYAAJ/bub_gb_-zQWAAAAYAAJ_djvu.txt; see, also, <https://www.wikitree.com/wiki/Benham-23>

Records reveal that in 1692

*Winfred Benham of Wallingford, being summoned to appear at this Court for Examination upon suspicion of witchcraft, was now present, and the witnesses were called to testify what they had to say in the case and accordingly gave in their testimonies in writing, which were read in the hearing of the said Winfred. And she being called to say what she had to say for herself, her general answer was that she knew nothing of the matters testified and was not concerned therein. She also gave some testimonies for herself, which were read.*¹³⁶

In June 1693, the court found enough to go forward, adjourning the matter and requiring the Benhams to put up a bond in the interim.¹³⁷

After considering the charges, the court dismissed the case:

*The Court, having heard and considered all the evidence against the said Winfred Benham and not finding sufficient grounds of conviction for further prosecution (at present) of the said Winfred, do therefore at this time dismiss the business, yet advising the said Winfred Benham solemnly to reflect upon the case, and grounds of suspicion given in and alleged against her, and told her if further grounds of suspicion of witchcraft, or fuller evidences should appear against her by reason of mischief done to the bodies or estate of any by any preternatural acts proved against her, she might justly fear and expect to be brought to her trial for it.*¹³⁸

She was again charged in 1697, based on accusations of several youths that their bodies were “sorely afflicted” by mother and daughter, Winifred Benham.

The record reveals (for the full account see Appendix Eight) that by order of the Governor a special County Court was held at New Haven on August 31, 1697. Officiating were Robert Treat, Esq., Governor; William Jones, Esq., Deputy Governor; and Major Moses Mansfield,

¹³⁶ From: Jacobus, Donald Lines (compiler). *Families of Ancient New Haven, Vol I-VIII. and Index Vol IX* New Haven: 1931. Reprint, Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., Inc., 1974, 1981, 1997. Originally published as New Haven Genealogical Magazine, Volumes I-VIII. Rome, NY and New Haven, CT 1922-1932. *Connecticut Witches - Winifred Benham, Mother and Daughter* New Haven County Court Records, volume I, page 202; Court held in Nov. 1692:

¹³⁷ See <https://www.facebook.com/ctwitchmemorial/posts/wallingford-connecticut-1670-most-of-what-we-post-on-this-facebook-page-is-devot/1918975128390045/>; See, also, Demos, John Putnam (1983). *Entertaining Satan: Witchcraft and the Culture of Early New England*. (1982) 70, 402-9.; See also, Calef, Robert. *More wonders of the invisible world, or The wonders of the invisible world displayed. In five parts*. Salem, Reprinted by John D. and T. C. Cushing, Jr. for Cushing and Appleton, 1823. p. 385 .”; See, also, online at <https://www.wikitree.com/wiki/King-405#:~:text=The%20Superior%20Court%20at%20Hartford,and%20after%20this%2C%20she%20was>; See, also, Carol F. Karlsen, *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman* at 44 ; See, also, <https://www.wikitree.com/wiki/King-405>

¹³⁸ See, online at https://archive.org/details/twigsfromfamilyt00hoag_0/page/44/mode/2up; see also, <https://www.wikitree.com/wiki/King-405> See, also, "Twigs from family trees; or, 162 early American and foreign lineages of first settlers in this country and their descendants who were pioneers in northern Pennsylvania and central New York; together with royal lineages, revolutionary journals, incidents and anecdotes of the old timers, and a register of the marriages and deaths of the pioneers. Carefully compiled from authentic sources, by Edward Coolbaugh Hoagland ... at 45, online at " https://archive.org/details/twigsfromfamilyt00hoag_0/page/44/mode/2up; See, also, <https://connecticutwitchtrials.org/victims/#winifred-benham-sr-of-wallingford-accused-of-witchcraft-1692-and-1693-acquitted-of-witchcraft-1697>.

Assistant. Complaint being made to the Authority by Ebenezer Clark, Joseph Royce, and John Moss, Jr., all of Wallingford, that mother and daughter Benham had afflicted them.

From Joseph Benham the authorities took 40 pounds recognizance for his wife's appearance, accordingly in a Memorandum. "The death of said (blank) young child to be inquired into, with what appeared of spots on said child and the like spots on said Benham quickly vanishing."¹³⁹

In Robert Calef's "More Wonders," published in 1700, appears:

In August 1697. The Superior Court at Hartford, in the Colony of Connecticut, where one Mistress Benom was tried for Witchcraft, she had been accused by some children that pretended to the spectral sight; they watched her several times for Test: they tried the experiment of casting her into the Water, and after this she was Excommunicated by the minister of Wallingford. Upon her Tryal nothing material appearing against her, save Spectre Evidence, she was acquitted, as also her daughter, a girl of Twelve or thirteen years old, who had been likewise accused; but upon renewed complaints against them, they both fled into New York Government.

The following comments were written by Donald Lines Jacobus concerning this incident:

The youthful accusers belonged to respectable families of Wallingford. John Moss (in his 15th year) was the son of John and Martha (Lathrop) Moss, grandson of John Moss. Calef's account of the case seems to be trustworthy so far as it can be verified, and we need not hesitate to accept his statement that Mrs. Benham was searched for witch marks, probably at the New Haven trial. His assertion that the water test was applied is perhaps questionable. Mr. Jones one of the examining Magistrates, is known to have held the water test in slight esteem. However, it may have been applied at Mrs. Benham's own request. Accused witches were no less superstitious than their accusers, and feeling confident of their own innocence, sometimes volunteered to undergo the water test, in the belief that it would prove them innocent. Nothing is known against the character of Mrs. Benham, and the family was of good repute, save for the suspicions of witchcraft. Two at least of her daughters named a child for their mother, which tends to show that they were fond of her. It is pleasing to learn that the young daughter, Winifred Junior, after passing through such terrifying experiences, was married to Evert Van Namen and reared a family in Richmond, N.Y.¹⁴⁰

In August 1697 mother and daughter were acquitted, although excommunicated by the Wallingford Minister.¹⁴¹

In October, yet another set of charges were brought, the jury returning with a verdict "Ignoramus," meaning "we do not know."¹⁴² This spelled freedom.

¹³⁹ NEW HAVEN COUNTY RECORDS, Volume 1, page 252 Dated August 1697.

¹⁴⁰ <https://www.americanancestors.org/databases/new-haven-ct-families-of-ancient-new-haven/image?volumeId=7494&pageName=958&rId=234948686>

¹⁴¹ <https://www.genealogy.com/forum/surnames/topics/benham/213/>;

¹⁴² See,

https://xtf.lib.virginia.edu/xtf/view?docId=modern_english/uvaGenText/tei/Bur5Nar.xml;chunk.id=d3;toc.depth=1;toc.id=d3;brand=default;query=acquitted#1 citing "Records Court of Assistants (1: 74, 77) See , also, Online at

Considering that witchcraft never took much of a hold in New York, there are those to thank for it, among them, Joseph Dudley, the Dutch ministry, Peter Stuyvesant, and the Dutch New York population itself.

<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/12288/12288-h/12288-h.htm>; As to her burial, see <https://nellielevine.com/tag/winifred-king-benham/>, and <https://ancestors.familysearch.org/en/LHKG-QTJ/winifred-king-1637-1697>, the former stating she is buried in Wallingford, the latter in Richmond County, New York.

Appendix One

Questions from Governor Dudley to the Ministers, 1692

The answers are laid out here in question-and-answer form, as translated.

1. Whether it is indisputable that in all ages, since the first fall of man, some women, commonly called witches, have been so abandoned by God, that they have given themselves wholly to the service of the Devil, in order the more easily to exercise their malice against their fellow-men?

Answer:

It is replied to the first question, that there have been many who have maintained the negative, among whom Pliny, the famous investigator of the mysteries of nature (although an extremely mendacious one), stands first. This is not to be wondered at, since there have been, and still are, impious men who even deny the existence of a God, although nature, the consent of all nations, the very consciences of the wicked, and various divine revelations, militate most triumphantly against this impious dogma. But the majority of the learned, possessing sounder minds, have adopted the contrary opinion. And, indeed, how can it be doubted that there are persons who have immediate commerce with the Devil, unless the divine law and gospel be considered as mere fables, the concurrent opinion of all nations be rejected as pure stupidity, and human reason totally exploded? For, if you suppose the existence of a Devil (which must be supposed unless you intend to become impious), and that he is a most miserable, envious, cunning and powerful creature, he is one who will leave no stone unturned to gratify his envy, and alleviate his own misery in some manner, by consorting with other wretches ; he will tempt men, and try to drag them into his camp, in order that thereafter he may thrust them into his own abyss. To this end, he makes use of lies, miracles, promises, fictitious or real sensual indulgences, honors, riches, and other innumerable allurements. Can it be supposed that so many and great temptations will be ineffectual, especially with carnal men, given to sensual pleasures? and, above all, with those who care for nothing but the present? This is not probable; therefore, in view of the common conduct of mankind, and the cunning and power of the Devil, we may conclude that there are people who have immediate commerce with the Devil.

To this reasonable conclusion all nations consent; and can it be supposed that that is not true, to the truth of which all nations testify? We have the best right to believe that there is a God, because, I affirm, there never was a nation which has not acknowledged his existence. What is affirmed by two or three is presumed to be true; how much more certain is that which is unanimously asserted by all nations! But even if it had not been the judgment of all nations that there are those among men who associate immediately with the Devil, why has every nation had certain peculiar and fitting names to denote such people? as, for instance [Hebrew word] with the Hebrews, [Greek word] with the Greeks, *saga* and *venesica* with the Romans, etc. Are these mere names, made up without any real foundation? But it must be added that laws have been made against such people; as Pliny himself reports of a certain Cresinus, who was to appear before the judges, in

order to clear himself from the charge of witchcraft: Plin. 18. 6. It would be easy to relate many instances of persons who have acquired a reputation for devilish arts, as the woman mentioned by Acron, who was said to inflict upon people, or expel from them, evils by means of incantations and herbs ; and, again, of her, in Apulia, who could call down the sky, suspend the earth, render the springs solid, and the rocks liquid, raise the spirits of the dead, and deprive the gods of their power: but where shall this narrative end?

After the consensus of all nations, come the law and the gospel. That witches existed in the time of Moses, no one has denied. Moses himself declares that witches, and those that had the spirit of a python, were, by commandment of God, to be punished with death: Exod. 22; Deut. 20 [18]. Moreover, there were such in the time of Saul, since he himself consulted a pythoness. And is it not plain from the writings of the prophets, that the Egyptians, Canaanites, Philistines, Sidonians, Tyrians, Moabites, Ammonites, Idumeans, and the Israelites themselves, were given to miracles and miracle-working? Assuredly, those wizards, and persons having the spirit of a python, were either nothing but fictitious names, or they had immediate intercourse with the Devil.

The Gospel narratives also prove the same thing. In the days of Christ and the Apostles there were miracle-workers, and women who were soothsayers. This is so clearly evident to every reader of the Acts, and the writings of the Evangelists and Apostles that I do not think it worthwhile to quote the passages.

We might also, if we chose, recount the history of witches and wizards in our own age; but there would be no end of narrating. Let those who desire this information, read Hemming, " De Magia," and Daneau, " De Sortiariis"

2. Where[in] does the exact and formal nature of Witchcraft (that which, whether given or tendered, is called witchcraft) truly consist?

Answer:

To the second question it is replied, that the formal essence of witch craft consists in an alliance with the Devil ; that is to say, in that men [desert] the realm of God our Creator and Supreme King—whom all are bound to obey in everything by reason of our dependence upon him, and whose glory every one, to the extent of his ability, is bound to maintain against his enemies—and go over to the camp of the Devil, in order to fight against God, so as to increase and strengthen, as much as they can, the kingdom of the Devil. In return for this defection, the Devil, on his part, promises them his aid to gratify their lusts. Thus man, on the one part, throws off the yoke of God, bidding farewell to His precepts and promises, in order to belong wholly to the Devil, whom he holds in the place of God; and, on the other part, the Devil engages to satisfy one or all or most of the lusts of the man.

3. Whether in order to convict of Witchcraft by Diabolical and preternatural acts towards the tormented, it is necessary to prove previous malice...or whether these are to be reasonably presumed, [as] in most cases?

Answer:

To the third question it is replied, that —since previous enmity or malice by no means offers certain evidence for conviction of witchcraft (it being possible for even a good man to conceive enmity against his neighbor, and to foster a desire to injure him ; and for a bad and devilish man to be able to conceal the very worst practices under the appearance of friendship and benevolence)— no inquiry concerning previous malice is necessary, in the case of one whom it is possible lawfully to convict of having afflicted others with evils by devilish arts, and super natural actions ; for the desire to do harm must be presumed in such a man, (as being a slave of the Devil) though he may attempt to cover his wickedness by what means soever. For such is the cunning of the Devil, and his servants, that they deceive, as much as possible, the eyes and minds of the discerning, and remove all suspicion.

4. Whether the spectre or apparition of one who has previously neither shown malice nor made threats, put before the eye or imagination of the afflicted, as immediately exercising force and injury upon them, is sufficient for a just conviction of a witch?

Answer:

To the fourth question it is replied, that the spectre or apparition of one who immediately works violence and injury upon the afflicted, is by no means sufficient to convict a wizard or a witch, although preceded by enmity and threats. The reason is, because the Devil can assume the shape of a good man, and present this shape before the eyes of the afflicted, as the source of the afflictions which they suffer. For, if he was able to place the shape of the dead man of God, Samuel, before the eyes of Saul, why can he not be able to exhibit the shape of a living man of God to the eyes of those whom he presently afflicts, in order that he may bring hatred, afflictions, fetters, and even death upon them? Nor is any attention to be paid to previous enmity or threats; because such may befall a just man equally with a wicked man.

5. Whether giving the Devil permission to place before the eyes or the imagination of the afflicted the forms and figures of innocent persons...consistent with the holy government of...God?

Answer:

To the fifth question it is replied, that it is by no means repugnant to God's most holy government, that he permits the Devil in the shape of a good man, to annoy any one. As God is the supreme monarch of the world, and has a sovereign right over his creatures he

is at liberty equally to afflict his creatures and to make use of any instrument he may choose for this end, —especially as he is most skilful in turning evil into good. Whatever he does he may do for a good purpose. He permitted the Devil to marvellously vex the holy man, Job, and by the event of the temptation, illustrated his own glory, manifested the patience and virtue of his servant, and confounded Satan. When the Devil tempted our Lord Jesus Christ in the wilderness, he spread before his eyes the idea and image of the empires of the whole world. It did not affix a stain on the government of God, to suffer his most malignant enemy to abuse the image of the world against his Beloved One; why, therefore, should it be deemed repugnant to his most sacred authority, for him to allow the Devil to abuse the spectre of a good man?

But you will say, If God thus permits, a good man will incur undeserved hatred, and stand trial for life or death. What then? Shall not God be allowed to thrust a sinful, though faithful and pious man into such calamitous experience in order to try his piety and virtue? Was not the most holy man, Job, despised as well as reviled by his friends because of his miserable condition?

That pious and holy man had certainly in no way merited his calamities. If, therefore, you once concede that God can afflict an innocent creature, you must further admit that he is at liberty to make use of whatever instruments he pleases. By "an innocent creature" however, I mean here, not one who is entirely spotless (for such an one does not exist among men), but one who suffers by reason of an unjust and false accusation. But God, in accordance with his supreme right, can suffer such a creature to be afflicted although, from a human standpoint, it has not deserved such a kind of affliction.

6. Further, whether or not such an apparition is of itself sufficient for a just conviction of witchcraft?

Answer:

To the sixth question it is replied: although nothing hinders the Devil, as an impostor and juggler, from exercising the power to be witch the eyes and fancy of men, and to present the spectre of a good man to those whom he himself is vexing, as is above observed, still to condemn such a man as a wizard, for the reason that his spectre is presented to the afflicted while they are suffering, would be the greatest imprudence. In such case, the judges must be astute and cautious lest they rashly favor the purpose and cunning of the Devil ; for he may intend two things at once ; namely, to vex the one, while he exhibits the spectre of the other, and so to bring the latter, whose image he is simulating, into bad repute and danger of his life ? for he is a liar as well as a tormentor and murderer.

7. Whether a serious accusation by the afflicted is sufficient to prove witchcraft, against a long continued consistent, just, Christian life...where no previous malice is made known?

Answer:

To the seventh question it is replied, that an honest and charitable life and conduct, of long continuance, such as meets with universal approbation, probably removes 'the suspicion of criminal intent from those who are accused of witchcraft by the testimony of the afflicted ; for it can hardly be that he who fights in the camp of the Devil should have the power, for a great while, to put on the appearance of a soldier of Christ. Nevertheless, I should not believe this to be sure and indubitable evidence of false accusation, because I do not see why a cunning man may not conceal his devilish practices under the semblance of a good life, in order to escape suspicion and righteous condemnation. The Devil himself sometimes tells the truth, and proclaims good morals, in order the more easily and insidiously to deceive.

8. Whether or not those who are...tortured by continual pains...and threatened with many miseries, through several months, are worn out...or suffer even a great loss of their natural spirits...?

Answer:

To the eighth question it is replied, that it is possible for those who are really tortured, convulsed and afflicted by the Devil with many miseries, during several months, to suffer no wasting of the body, and no weakening of their spirits. The reason is, that nutrition is perfect—the stomach suffering no injury. On the contrary, if the Devil so procure it, the stomach of the tortured, having become stronger, will crave and swallow greater quantities of nourishment than before, and will easily repair all the injury caused by the tortures, by perfectly digesting and assimilating its supply of food. Hence it is not to be doubted that the Devil (God permitting it), has power to prevent the impairment of the natural spirits. I testify that I have seen elsewhere, a man affected with mania who every month about the time of the full moon wandered in the mountains and through the fields, for eight days, taking no nourishment but water during that time, who, nevertheless, suffered no diminution or change either of body, vigor, or color. His natural spirits were not only not broken by his fasting, but were preserved in their normal state and condition by the power of his malady. That the Devil can produce that which is produced by a kind of natural cause I do not doubt, since he well knows how to balance liabilities with assets and assets with liabilities

We the undersigned affirm the above-written solutions of the questions propounded, to be true. In our church congress, 11 October, 1692

Henry Selijns, Peter Petrius, Ministers of New York

Godfrey Dellius, Minister of the Dutch Church at New Albany.

Rudolph Varich, Minister at Flatbush.

The New York Historical Society has a similar account, from the papers of “Witchcraft in New York” (1869):

Some interesting particulars respecting their intervention were found among the papers of the Rev. John Miller who was Chaplain to the King’s forces at New York in 1692-95. Sir William Phips having become very uneasy upon the convictions and executions which had taken place within his jurisdiction, applied to the New York Ministers through Chief Justice Dudley, for their opinions and advice. Seven questions were presented for consideration, and either directly or through the other ministers, Mr. Miller’s opinions also were desired.

Question 1. Is it a fact that there have been witches from the beginning of the world to the present time?

2. What is the true definition of a witch, and in what does his power (formalis ratio) consist?

3. Does God justly permit the Devil to show and represent to those who are bewitched the images of innocent persons as if they were the authors of the witchcraft?

4. Is previous malice and cursing to be necessarily proved in order to convict a witch?

5. Is anyone whose figure appears to the person bewitched, and is by him accused as the author of the witchcraft, to be adjudged guilty, and convicted of the witchcraft?

6. Is the accusation alone of the party supposed to be bewitched, sufficient to prove a man who lives piously, justly, and soberly, guilty?

7. If the person bewitched, after suffering various and heavy torments, after the paroxysm is over, appears of a strong and firm habit of body, without receiving any other damage, is it not a cause for suspicion of delusion or diabolical possession?

In answer to the First Question, Mr. Miller asserted his belief in the actual existence of Witchcraft from the beginning of the world, taking his authority from Scripture and a variety of heathen authors.

2. Witchcraft is the art of torturing and destroying men, and it is an art, because it practises certain forms of incantation, uses composition from herbs, &c. : it is performed by the assistance of the Devil, otherwise it is not Witchcraft: the cooperation of the Devil is the ratio formalis.

3. The hearts of men are unknown to us; we cannot say whether those whom we suppose to be innocent are really so; and perhaps God permits their representation (in vision to the enchanted) that he may punish their sins, by the subsequent disgrace and punishment which they endure.

4. If previous malice, &c., can be proved, it will confirm the Witchcraft proved otherwise by all or the principal circumstances mentioned in the English statute; but they are not necessarily to be proved, because legal proof of the circumstances expressed in the statute will suffice for the condemnation of the Witch.

5,6. Men, whether they live soberly or impiously, are scarce on that account to be publickly accused, much less found guilty, because the minds of men, especially of the ignorant or depraved, can easily be and frequently are deceived by the Devil.

7 Since whatever the Devil himself does, or men do by his cooperation, tends to the ruin of those who are tortured, and since I understand some to be in this manner tortured, who, after the paroxysm, are cheerful, healthful and merry, I suppose them not to be maliciously enchanted by any sorcerer, but deluded by the Devil to promote the misery of mankind."

The only account we have of the opinions of the Dutch and French Ministers is that of Mather, who states that " they gave it in under their hands that if we believe no venefick witchcraft, we must renounce the Scripture of God, and the consent of almost all the world ; but that yet the apparition of a person afflicting another, is a very insufficient proof of a witch ; nor is it inconsistent with the holy and righteous government of God over men, to permit the affliction of the neighbours, by devils in the shape of good men; and that a good name, obtained by a good life, shall not be lost by meer spectral accusations."

To the record of this beneficent intervention it may not be improper to add a reference to the fact that several of these victims of persecution in Massachusetts sought and found refuge and protection in New York, until the danger was past. The historian of the Witchcraft Delusion, the Rev. Charleses W. Upham, D.D., says: " The fact that when Massachusetts was suffering from a fierce and bloody, but brief, persecution by its own Government, New York opened so kind and secure a shelter for those fortunate enough to escape to it, ought to be forever held in grateful remembrance by the people of the old Bay State, and constitutes a part of the history of the Empire State of which she may well be proud." Historical Magazine, 2d Series, vi. 215."

In this version, the critical response is to questions 5 and 6: Is anyone whose figure appears to the person bewitched, and is by him accused as the author of the witchcraft, to be adjudged guilty, and convicted of the witchcraft?

6. Is the accusation alone of the party supposed to be bewitched, sufficient to prove a man who lives piously, justly, and soberly, guilty?

5,6. Men, whether they live soberly or impiously, are scarce on that account to be publickly accused, much less found guilty, because the minds of men, especially of the ignorant or depraved, can easily be and frequently are deceived by the Devil.¹⁴³

¹⁴³ <https://archive.org/details/newyorkhistorical1869unse/page/276/mode/2up>.

Appendix Two

Indictment against Ralph and Mary Hall 1665

The Constable and Overseers of the Towne of Seataillcott, in the East Riding of Yorkshire upon Long Island, Do Present for our Sovereigne Lord the King, That Ralph Hall of Seataillcott aforesaid, upon the 25th day of December [1663 or 1664] ... in the 15th yeare of the Raigne of our Sovereigne Lord, Charles the Second, ...by some detestable and wicked Arts, commonly called Witchcraft and Sorcery, did (as is suspected) maliciously and feloniously, practice and Exercise ...on the Person of George Wood...by wch wicked and detestable Arts, the said George Wood (as is suspected) most dangerously and mortally sickned and languished and ...dyed.

Moreover, ...That some while after the death of the aforesaid George Wood, The said Ralph Hall did ...Exercise ...on the Person of an Infant Childe of Ann Rogers, widdow of the aforesaid George Wood deceased, by wh wicked and detestable Arts, the said Infant Chide ...sickned and ...dyed, And so the said Constable and Overseers do Present, That the said George Wood, and the sd Infante sd Chide were (as is suspected) murdered by the said Ralph Hall.

The record reveals that There upon, severall Depositions, accusing the Prisonrs of the fact for which they were endicted were read, but no witnesse appeared to give Testimony in Court viva voce.

Appendix Three

Release of Ralph and Mary Hall

A Release to Ralph Hall and Mary his wife from the Recognizance they entred into at the Assizes.

These Are to Certify all whom it may Concerne That Ralph Hall and Mary his wife (at present living upon Great Minifords Island) are hereby released and acquitted from any and all Recognizances, bonds of appearance or othr obligations-entred into by them or either of them for the peace or good behavior upon account of any accusation or Indictmemt upon suspition of Witch Craft brought into the Cort of Assizes against them in the year 1665. There haveving beene no direct proofes nor furthr prosecucion of them or eithr of them since. Given undr my hand at Fort James in New Yorke this 2lth day of August 1668.

R. Nicolls

Appendix Four

Testimony against Katherine Harrison

Thomas Waples testified on August 7, 1668 that Katherine was *“a noted liar” and did report she had read Mr Lillies book in England, and one that did spin more [linen] then he doth judge could be spunn without some unlawfull help and that Katherin could “fortune/ matters that were in future tymes to be accomplished”... and further saith that Captain Cullek did turn Katherin out of his service for her evill conversation, And further that Gooddy Greenesmith did before her condemnation accuse Katherin Harrison to be a witch*

John Welles stated on June 29, 1668 that seven or eight years ago when [his] father lived in the house where Joseph/ Wright lived some evenings *“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 half/ way crosse the street and could go no further/ my legs were bound to my thinking with a napkin but could see nothing I looked for the cattle that were in the street by goodman nots shop and I saw good wife Harrison rise/ up from a cow that was non of her own with a pail in her hand and made haste home and/ when she was over her own stile I was loosed.”*

Mary Olcot the wife of Thomas Olcot testified on August 8, 1668 *“when Elizabeth the now wife of Simon Smith was a servant to Catharine Collet, the said Elizabeth “thought shee should have bene Married to William Chapman, allthough the saide Elizabeth affirmed that [Katherine] affirmed “that shee should not be married to William, for Catherin saide that Elizabeth should be married to one named Simon.”*

Richard Mountague *“aged about 52yeares testifieth as follows: that meeting with goodwife Harrison in weathersfeilde the saide Katherin Harrison saide that a swarme of her bees flew a way over her neighbour Boremans lott, & into the great meadow and/ thence over the greate River to Nabuck side, but the saide/ Katherine saide that shee had fetched them againe, this seemed very strange to the saide Richard because this was acted in a little tyme... and he did beleeeve the saide Katherin neither/ went nor used any lawfull means to fetch the saide beese as/ aforesaide Dated the 13 of August 1668/*

On May25, 1669/ Samuel Martin Sr *“aged aboute Fifty years/ Testefyeth yt beinge at Catherin Harrison hir hous in march/ Last: we (spoke?) in dy course (discourse?) aboute mr Josiah wilard and/ Samll Hale Sre then & ther she sayed I shalt shortlye See them gone Bothe them & thers: I asked hir whye/ And she Sayed doe you not know ther was one almost/ gon the other Daye /I askt who was allmost gonn she sayd mr willard For he had been sick\ and/ furthern Sayeth nott:/ sworne*

Samuel Hurlbut/Holebut *...say that thay hard Josiah/ Gilbard say that Goodwife Harrison Caled him Cousin/ but he know no such matter but \she/ was/ one that folowed the Army in England*

Eliazer Kimmerly *“aged about 28 yeares affirmed “that he heard his late wife in her lifetime oft say that she suspected or thought that her mother was bewitched, and soe it was reported to and suspect [illegible] many others, and allsoe m[aste]r kimmerly saith that he heard his/ late wife affirme that upon some discourse about master Robins/ his death Katherin Harrison let fall*

theise words (in the presence/ of sondry persons) when yur father m[aste]r Robins was killed...this seased on and tooke deepe impression in the heart/ of the saide Mary that her Father was killed and further saith/ that Goodman Cole of Hartford hearinge the words aforesaide/ it tooke deepe impression upon his spirit as suspitious of murther”

Appendix Five

Complaint against Harrison in Westchester

At the Fort July 7th 1670.

Before the Governor.

Upon the Complaint of Thomas Hunt Sen'r and Edward Waters on behalfe of the Towne of West Chester against a Woman suspected for a Witch who they desire may not live in their Towne; The Woman appeares with Capt. Captain Richard Panton, of West Chester, in whose home she had found shelter. [to justify her selfe; her Name is Katharine Harryson.Shee saith shee hath lived at Wethersfield 19 yeares, and came from England thither; Shee was in Prison 12 Months. Shee was tryed for Witchcraft at Hartford in May last, found guilty by the Jury, but acquitted by the Bench, and released out of Prison, putting her in minde of her Promise to remove.

Orders directing Harrison to leave Westchester

An Ordr for Katherine Harrison to Remove from Westchestr.

Whereas Complaint hath beene made unto me by the Inhabitants of Westchestr agt Katherine Harrison late of Wethersfeild in his Ma' ties Colony of Conecticott widdow. That contrary to the consent and good liking of the Towne she would settle amongst them and she being reputed to be a person lyeing undr the Supposicion of Witchcraft hath given some cause of apprehension to the Inhabitants there, To the end their Jealousyes and feares as to this perticuler may be removed, I have thought fitt to ordr and appoint that the Constable and Overseers of the Towne of Westchestr do give warning to the said Katherine Harrison to remove out of their precincts in some short tyme after notice given, and they are likewise to admonish her to retorne to the place of her former abode, that they nor their neighbours may receive no furthr disturbance by her. Given undr my hand at Fort James in New Yorke this 7th day of July 1670. [FRANCIS LOVELACE].

Second Order

An Ordr for Katherine Harrison and Captn Richard Panton to appeare at the Fort before the Governor.

Whereas Complaint hath beene made unto me by the Inhabitants of Westchestr agt Katherine Harrison widdow that she doth neglect or refuse to obey my late Ordr concerning her removall out of the said Towne, These are to require you that you give notice unto the said Katherine Harrison as also unto Captn Richard Panton at whose house she resydeth, That they make their personall appearance before me in this place on Wednesday next being the 24th of this Instant month, when those of the Towne that have ought to object agt them doe likewise attend, where I [

will]endeavor a Composure of this difference betweene them. Giveu undr my hand at Fort James in New Yorke this 20th day of August 1670.

[FRANCIS LOVELACE.]

Additional Order

To the present Constable of Westchester.

An Ordr concerning Katherine Harrison.

Whereas severall Adresses have beene made unto me by some of the Inhabitants of Westchestr on behalfe of the rest desiring that Katherine Harrison late of Wethersfeild in his Ma'ties Colony of Connecticott widdow at present residing in their Towne may be ordered to remove from thence and not permitted to stay wthi their Jurisdiction upon an apprehension they have of her grounded upon some troubles she hath layne undr at Wethersfeild upon suspicion of Witchcraft, the reasons whereof do not so clearly appeare unto me, Yett notwithstanding to give as much satisfaction as may be to the Compainants who pretend their feares to be of a publique Concerne, I have not thought fitt absolutely to determyne the mattr at present, but do suspend it untill the next Genril Cort of Assizes, when there will be a full meeting of the Councell and Justices of the peace to debate and conclude the same. In the meane tyme the said Katherine Harrison wth her Children may remaine in the Towne of Westchestr where she now is without disturbance or molestation, she having given sufficient security for her Civill carriage and good behaviour. Given undr my hand at Fort James in New York this 25th day of August in the 22th yeare of his Ma'ties Raigne Annoq. Domini 1670.

[FRANCIS LOVELACE.]

Anno 1670.

Appeals, Actions, Presentmts etc. Entred for Hearing and Tryall at the Gen[er]all Cort of Assizes to bee helit in New Yorke beginning on the first Wednesday of Octobr 1670.

Lovelace Order releasing Harrison

Appeals, Actions, Presentmts Entred for Hearing and Tryall at the Gen[er]all Cort of Assizes to bee held in NewYorke beginning on the first Wednesday of Octobr 1670:

It is Ordered, that in regard there is nothing appears against her deserving the continuance of that obligacion shee is to bee releast from it, and hath Liberty to remaine in the Towne of Westchester where shee now resides, or anywhere else in the Governmt during her pleasure.
[FRANCIS LOVELACE.]

Appendix Six

Account of Kelly as to his daughter's ailment, and accusing Goody Ayres of Witchcraft

Father will you not help me, with some other expression of like nature to my great grief and astonishment[.] My reply was lie you down and be quiet do not disturb your mother, whereupon she was a little quiet but presently she starts up again and cried out with greater violence than before against Goodwife Ayres using much the expressions aforesaid. Then rising I lighted a candle and took her up and put her into the bed with her mother from which time she was in great extremity of misery crying still out against the said Ayres and that we would give her drink and on the Monday crying out against the said Ayres saying Goody Ayres torments me she pricks me with pins she will kill me, Oh! Father set on the great furnace and scald her, get the broad axe and cut off[i] her head; if you cannot get a broad axe get the narrow axe and chop off her head, with many the like expressions continually proceeding from her, we used what physical helps we could obtain and that without delay, but could neither conceive nor others for us that her malady was natural in which sad condition she continued till Tuesday on which day

I Bethia Kelly being in the house and with me the wife of Thomas Whaples and the wife of Nathaniel Greensmith, the child being in great misery the aforesaid Ayres came in whereupon the child asked her Goodwife Ayres why do you torment me and prick me, to which Goodwife Whaples said to the child you must not speak against Goody Ayres she comes in love to see you, while the said Ayres was there the child seemed indifferent well and fell asleep, the said Ayres said she will be well again I hope[.]

The same Tuesday at night the child told us both that when Goody Ayres was with her alone she asked me Betty why do you speak so much against me I will be even with you for it before you die, but if you will say no more of me I will give you a fine lace for your dressing.

I Bethia Kelly perceiving her while being with the child and thinking she promised her something I asked her what it was[.] The said Ayres answered a lace for a dressing, the said Ayres departing the child was more quiet till midnight and then she broke out afresh as before against Goody Ayres, moreover on the same Tuesday the child said Father why do you not go to the magistrates and get them to punish Goody Ayres pray father go to the magistrates and if I could go myself I would complain to them of her how she misuses me: in this plight she continued till Wednesday night and then died[.] The last words she spake was Goodwife Ayres chokes me and then she was speechless.

Goody Burr and her son Samuel testified "being both together in my house that Goody Ayres said when she lived at London in England that there came a fine young gentleman a suiting to her and when they were discoursing together the young gentleman made her promise him to meet him at that place another time: the which she engaged to do so: but looking down upon his foot she perceived it was the devil: then she would not meet him as she promised him but he coming there and found her not: she said that he carried away the iron bars. The mark of Goody Burr[;] Samuel Burr.

Robert Stern added: "I saw this morning Goodwife Seager in the woods with three more women and with them I saw two black creatures like two Indians but taller[.] I saw likewise a kettle

there over a fire[.] I saw the women dance round those black creatures and whiles I looked upon them one of the women Goodwife Greensmith said look who is ayonder and then they ran away up the hill. I stood still and the black things came towards me and then I turned to come away: He further saith I knew the persons by their habit or clothes having observed such clothes on them not long before. Source: Samuel Wyllys Papers, CSL.

Witnesses added: "[T]he child was brought forth, and laid upon a form, by the Goodwife Ayres, and Goodwife Whaples, and the face of it being uncovered, Goodwife Ayres was desired by John Kelly to come up to it and to handle it; the child having purged a little at the mouth. The[n] Goodwife Ayres wiped the corner of the child's mouth with a cloth, and then she was desired, to turn up the sleeve of the arm and she did endeavor to do it; but the sleeve being somewhat straight she could not well do it. Then John Kelly himself ripped up both sleeves of the arms, and upon the backside of both the arms from the elbow to the top of the shoulders were black and blue, as if they had been bruised, or beaten; after this the child was turned over, upon the right side, and so upon the belly, and then there came such a scent from the corpse, as that it caused some to depart the room, as Gregory Molterton, and George Grant, then the child being turned again, and laid into the coffin, John Kelly desired them to come into the room again, to see the child's face, and then we saw upon the right cheek of the child's face, a reddish tawny great spot, which covered a great part of the cheek, it being on the side next to Goodwife Ayres where she stood, this spot or blotch was not seen before the child was turned: and the arms of the child did appear to be very limber, in the handling of them." Thomas Catting, Thomas Butt, Joseph Water, Gregory Molterton, Nathaniel Willett, George Graves Thomas Source: Samuel Wyllys Papers, CSL.

On January 8, 1662 Rebecca Greensmith testified: " that I being in ye wood at a meeting there was wth me Goody Seager Goodwife Sanford & Goodwife Ayres; and at another time there was a meeting under a tree in ye green by or house & there was there James Walkely, Peter Grants wife Goodwife Aires & Henry Palmers wife of Wethersfield, & Goody Seager, & there we danced, & had a bottle of sack : it was in ye night & something like a catt cald me out to ye meeting & I was in Mr. Varlets orchard wth Mrs. Judeth Varlett & shee tould me that shee was much troubled wth ye Marshall Jonath : Gilbert & cried, & she sayd if it lay in her power she would doe him a mischief, or what hurt shee could."

Appendix Seven

Stuyvesant letter of October 13, 1662 to Robert Treat

*“We doe graunt by these presents the English Townes shall have the Choyce off their owne Magistrates in quality and number as they See most expedient for the Towne or Townes benefit They Shall have Consent & power to keepe Court or Courts and to make such Orders and Laws as they shal fynde most sutable to the Condition & Welfare off that place, only that the Lawes and orders, made for the better administration of justice shal be presented unto the Governour and Councell and beinge found to Concure with the holy Schriptide shall be Confirmed Concerninge the appeels it is hereby graunted and Confirmed, that all Capitall sentences wherein the partys are Convinced by owne Confession, Shal be put in Execution by the Court or Courts without appeel, **but in dark & dubious matters, especially in Wich craft such Sentences off Death shal not be put in Execution...** (Emphasis added)*

Appendix Eight

Joseph Benham's account of the witchcraft charges against his wife

"I having heard some days, that my Wife was accused of Witchcraft, being much disturbed at it, by advice, we went to Salem-Village, to see if the afflicted did know her; we arrived there, 24. May, it happened to be a day appointed for Examination; accordingly soon after our arrival, Mr. Hathorn and Mr. Curwin, &c. went to the Meeting-house, which was the place appointed for that Work, the Minister began with Prayer, and having taken care to get a convenient place, I observed, that the afflicted were two Girls of about Ten Years old, and about two or three other, of about eighteen, one of the Girls talked most, and could discern more than the rest. The Prisoners were called in one by one, and as they came in were cried out of, &c. The Prisoner was placed about 7 or 8 foot from the justices and the Accusers between the justices and them; the Prisoner was ordered to stand right before the Justices, with an Officer appointed to hold each hand, lest they should therewith afflict them, and the Prisoners Eyes must be constantly on the Justices, for if they loook'd on the afflicted, they would either fall into their Fits, or cry out of being hurt by them; after Examination of the Prisoners, who it was afflicted these Girls, &c. they were put upon saying the Lords Prayer, as a trial of their guilt after the afflicted seem'd to be out of their Fits, they would look steadfastly on some one person, and frequently not speak; and then the Justices said they were struck dumb, and after a little time would speak again; then the Justices said to the Accusers, which of you will go and touch the Prisoner at the Bar? then the most courageous would adventure, but before they ad made three steps would ordinarily fall down as in a Fit; the Justices ordered that they should be taken up and carried to the Prisoner, that she might touch them; and as soon as they were touched by the accused, the Justices I would say, they are well, before I could discern any alteration; by which I observed that the Justices understood the manner of it. Thus far I was only as a Spectator my Wife also was there part of the time, but no notice taken of her by the afflicted, except once or twice they came to her and asked her name.

But I having an opportunity to Discourse Mr. Hale (with whom I had formerly acquaintance) I took his advice, what I had best to do, and desired of him that I might have an opportunity to speak with her that accused my Wife; which... promised should be, I acquainting him that I reposed my trust in him.

Accordingly he came to me after the Examination was over, and told me I had now an opportunity to speak with the said Accuser, viz. Abigail Williams, a Girl of 11, or 12 Years old; but that we could not be in private at Mr. Parris's House, as he had promised me; we went therefore into the Alehouse, where an Indian Man attended us, who it seems was one of the afflicted: to him we gave some Cyder, he shewed several Scars, that seemed as if they had been long there, and shewed them as done by Witchcraft, and acquainted us with t his Wife, who also was a Slave, was imprison'd for Witchcraft. And now instead of one Accuser, they all came in, who began to tumble down like Swine, and then three Women were called in to attend them. We in the Room wereto see who they would cry out of; but in a short time they cried out, Cary; and immediately after a Warrant was sent from the Justices to bring my Wife before them, who were sitting in a Chamber nearby, waiting for this.

Being brought before the Justices, her chief accusers were two Girls; my Wife declared to the Justices, that she never had any knowledge of them before that day; she was forced to stand with her Arms stretched out. I did request that I might hold one of her hands, but it was denied me; then she desired me to wipe the Tears from her Eyes, and the Sweat from her Face, which I did; then she desired she might lean herself on me, saying, she should faint.

Justice Hathorn replied, she had strength enough to torment those persons, and she should have strength enough to stand. I speaking something against their cruel proceedings, they commanded me to be silent, or else I should be turned out of the Room. The Indian before mentioned, was also brought in, to be one of her Accusers: being come in, he now (when before the Justices) fell down and tumbled about like a Hog, but said nothing. The Justices asked the Girls, who afflicted the Indian? They answered she (meaning my Wife) and now lay upon him; the Justices ordered her to touch him, in order to his cure, but her head must be turned another way, least instead of curing, she should make him worse, by her looking on him, her hand being guided to take hold of his; but the Indian took hold on her hand, and pulled her down on the Floor, in a barbarous manner; then his hand was taken off, and her hand put on his, and the cure was quickly wrought.

I being extremely troubled at their Inhumane dealings, uttered a hasty Speech [That God would take vengeance on them, and desired that God would deliver us out of the hands of unmerciful men.] Then her Mittimus was writ. I did with difficulty and charge obtain the liberty of a Room, but no Beds in it; if there had, could have taken but little rest that' Night, she was committed to Boston Prison; but I obtained a Habeas Corpus to remove her to Cambridge Prison, which is in our County of Midldesex.

Having been there one Night, next Morning the jaylor put Irons on her legs (having received such a command) the weight of them was about eight pounds; these Irons and her other Afflictions, soon brought her into Convulsion Fits, so that I thought she would have died that Night, I sent to intreat that the Irons might be taken off, but all entreaties were in vain, if it would have saved her Life, so that in this condition she must continue. The Tryals at Salem coming on, I went thither, to see how things were there managed; and finding that the Spectre-Evidence was there received, together with Idle, if not malicious Stories, against Peoples Lives, I did easily perceive which way the rest would go; for the same Evidence that served for one, would serve for all the rest, I acquainted her with her danger; and that if she were carried to Salem to be tried, I feared she would never return.

I did my utmost that she might have her Tryal in our own County, I with several others Petitioning the Iudge for it, and were put in hopes of it; but I soon saw so much, that I understood thereby it was not intended, which put me upon consulting the means of her escape; which through the goodness of God was effected, and she got to Road-Island, but soon found herself not safe when there, by reason of the pursuit after her; from thence she went to New-York, along with some others that had escaped their cruel hands; where we found his Excellency Benjamin Fletcher Esq Governour, who was very courteous to us. After this some of my Goods were seized in a Friends hands, with whom I had left them, and my self-imprisoned by the Sheriff, and kept in Custody half a day, and then dismissed ; but to speak of their usage of the Prisoners, and their Inhumanity shewn to them, at the time of their Execution, no sober Christian could bear; they had also tryals of cruel mockings; which is the more, considering what a People for Religion, I mean the profession of it, we have been; those that suffered being many of them

Church-Members, and most of them unspotted in their Conversation, till their Adversary the Devil took up this Method for accusing them. ”

Court inquiry into the charges against Winifred Benham:

“A special County Court by order of the Governor held at New Haven the 31st of August 1697. Present” Robert Treat, Esq., Governor: William Jones, Esq., Deputy Governor; Major Moses Mansfield, Assistant. Complaint being made to the Authority by Ebenezer Clark, Joseph Royce, and John Moss, Jr., all of Wallingford, against Winifred Benham, Jr. her daughter, that Sarah Clark daughter of said Ebenezer Clark, Elizabeth Lathrop, and John Moss, son of the said John Moss, Jr., were frequently and sorely afflicted in their bodies by the said Benham, mother and daughter, or their apparitions, and as they strongly suspect by their means or procurement by the Devil in their shapes, and therefor desire the Authority as God’s Ordinance for their relief strictly to examine the said suspected persons in order to a due trial of them, that a stop may be put to their suffering and prevention of such mischiefs among them for the future. The court having seriously considered the accusations and information on good testimony given in against Winifred Benham, Sr., and Winifred Benham, Jr., upon suspicion of them for witchcraft, they, or the devil in their shapes, afflicting sundry young persons above named, as formerly accused and suspected in the year 1692; and in order to their further examination and trial personally and the husband of said Winifred Senior gave 40 pounds recognizance for their appearance accordingly, or that they be secured in prison for their said trial, and said Benham to pay the charge of this Court. Court Charges, 21 shillings. Execution granted for said 21 shillings. Memorandum. The death of said (blank) young child to be inquired into, with what appeared of spots on said child and the like spots on said Benham quickly vanishing.”

Benham Bond

The Court, having seriously considered the accusations and informations on good testimony given in Winifred Benham, Sr., and Winifred Benham, Jr., upon suspicion of them for witchcraft, they, or the devil in their shapes, afflicting sundry young persons above named, as formerly accused and suspected in the year 1692; and finding clear and sufficient grounds of suspicion against them after strict examination of the said persons apart and severally, see just cause to bind over the said Benhams mother and daughter to appear at the next Court of Assistants in October next at Hartford in order to their further examination and trial personally. And the husband of said Winifred Senior gave 40 pounds recognizance for their appearance accordingly, or that they be secured in prison for their said trial. And said Benham to pay the charge of this Court.

Court charges, 21 shillings. Execution was granted for said 21 shillings Memorandum. The death of said [blank] young child to be inquired into, with what appeared of spots on said child and the like spots on said Benham quickly vanishing

Winifred Benham of Wallingford, being summoned to appear at this Court for Examination upon suspicion of witchcraft, was now present, and the witnesses were called to testify what they had to say in the case and accordingly gave in their testimonies in writing, which were read in the

hearing of the said Winfred. And she being called to say what she had to say for herself, her general answer was that she knew nothing of the matters testified and was not concerned therein. She also gave some testimonies for herself, which were read.