

# Some Unexplored Relationships of Essex County Witchcraft to the Indian Wars of 1675 and 1689

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NEW ENGLAND “was miserably briar’d in the perplexities of an Indian war,” a conflict with the Indians and French that is now known as King William’s War and that was but six months away from its fourth year when the first accusations of witchcraft were made during the spring and summer of 1692. Public morale was poor in Massachusetts Colony at the time, in the wake of periodic massacres in isolated communities and as a result of the rampant inflation which had followed an expensive expedition to Quebec in the autumn of 1690.<sup>1</sup>

Further, the proximity of the towns of Essex County, situated in the northeastern section of Massachusetts to the “eastward”—the regions of New Hampshire and Maine where the heaviest fighting occurred—meant not only that they were expected to support the struggle by providing militia men as well as tax monies, but that they were highly vulnerable to the dreadful massacres. Andover and Billerica, for example, two of the towns directly involved in the witch hunts, became targets. The attack upon Billerica on 1 August 1692, in which six members of the Shed and Dutton families were killed, occurred within two weeks of the executions of six witches on Gallows Hill.<sup>2</sup>

The contiguousness of the two events is further underscored by the

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1. Douglas Edward Leach, *Arms for Empire: A Military History of the British Colonies in North America, 1607–1763*, The Macmillan Wars of the United States (New York: Macmillan, 1973), p. 112fn.

2. Samuel Adams Drake, *The Border Wars of New England* (1897; reprint ed., Williamstown, Massachusetts: Corner House, 1973), p. 86.

confession of Billerica's Martha Toothaker, who stated that she had made a pact with the devil while "under great discontentedness & troubled w<sup>h</sup> feare about the Indians," because he promised her "if she would serve him she would be safe from the Indians." On 5 August 1695 the Indians actually attacked the farms of the Toothaker, Rogers, and Leviston families, indicating that she had reason for being phobic about the heathen.<sup>3</sup>

How many other people in Essex County feared the Indians? How did casualties, the burden of taxes, and wartime tensions affect the towns that were close to the fighting? How did the attitudes of Puritanism influence the way in which Essex County perceived the Indian wars of 1675 and 1689? These are questions that merit thoughtful consideration.

## I

In the final decade of the seventeenth century it was still very much apparent that Essex County, like much of New England, was originally Indian land that the English had acquired through both legitimate and illegitimate means. The three rivers that flowed to the east of Salem Village possessed the Indian names; Pouomeneuhcant, Conamabsque-nooncant, and Soewamapenessett.<sup>4</sup>

Less than a decade before the witchcraft outbreak, the political leaders of the towns of Salem, Beverly, and Marblehead felt that it was necessary to demonstrate their formal right to the lands they occupied with a legal document signed by the Indian representatives. On 11 October 1686 six men of Salem, including Israel Porter of Salem Village, became the trustees of the land for a payment of £20 presented to David Non-nuphanohow, Sam Wuttaanoh, Jno. Tontohquenne, Cicely Peta-ghuncksq, Sarah Wuttaquatinnusk, Thomas Usqueakufsennum (alias Captain Tom), James Quonophkownatt (alias James Rumney Marsh), Israell Quonophkownatt, Joane Quonophkownatt, Yawataw Wattaw-tinnusk.<sup>5</sup>

3. Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, eds., *The Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 3 vols. (New York: Da Capo Press, 1977), 3:767; Drake, *Border Wars*, p. 107.

4. See "Map of Indian Lands and Localities in Essex County Massachusetts," in Sidney Perley, *The Indian Land Titles of Essex County Massachusetts*, Publications of the Essex Book and Print Club, no. 3 (Salem: Essex Book and Print Club, 1912), p. 13.

5. Sidney Perley, *Indian Land Titles*, pp. 78-84.

The conspicuous mixture of Christian and Indian names, as well as the language that was used in the transfer, indicate that these Indians were quite civilized and that the ceremony was a symbolic act intended to reinforce the colonists' claims to the land during a period of challenge by royal authority. The episode reflected a continuing awareness of the local Indian influence by the inhabitants of Essex County some ten years after the close of King Philip's War.

In every community of the county, veterans of that destructive conflict and survivors of the massacres still carried memories of their experiences; in Salem Village, Thomas Putnam, Jr. and Nathaniel Ingersoll had formerly been members of Capt. Thomas Prentice's and Capt. Nicholas Page's troops of horse during Philip's War and had participated in the Mount Hope and Narragansett campaigns of 1675. Thomas Flint, another village veteran, was wounded during the second of these campaigns. The village and all adjacent towns had also contributed soldiers to Capt. Thomas Lathrop's company and thus had suffered in the aftermath of the battle of 18 September 1675, which the Reverend William Hubbard described as "the Saddest day that ever befell New England." Seventy soldiers, including Lathrop, died that day at Bloody Brook outside Deerfield. The "ruine of a choice Company of young Men," lamented Hubbard, "the very Flower of the County of Essex all called out of the towns belonging to that county."<sup>6</sup>

In the late winter and early spring of 1676, the towns of western Essex and northern Middlesex Counties were repeatedly attacked by Nipmuck Indian war parties. Andover and Billerica were attacked in April and May; on 2 May Indians led by Simon burned the house of Thomas Kimball at Rowley. The head of the family was killed, and Kimball's wife and five children were taken captive.<sup>7</sup>

Indians destroyed the towns of Lancaster and Groton on the Merrimack River, just forty miles to the west of Salem Village (fig. 1). On 10 February 1676 fifty persons were killed at Lancaster, in a display which Mrs. Mary Rowlandson characterized as wild and violent:

6. George M. Bodge, *Soldiers in King Philip's War* (Leominster, Massachusetts: Rockwell and Churchill Press, 1896), pp. 167, 83, 291; Douglas Edward Leach, *Flint-Lock and Tomahawk: New England in King Philip's War* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1958), p. 88.

7. George W. Ellis and John E. Morris, *King Philip's War*, The Grafton Historical Series (New York: The Grafton Press, 1906), p. 221.

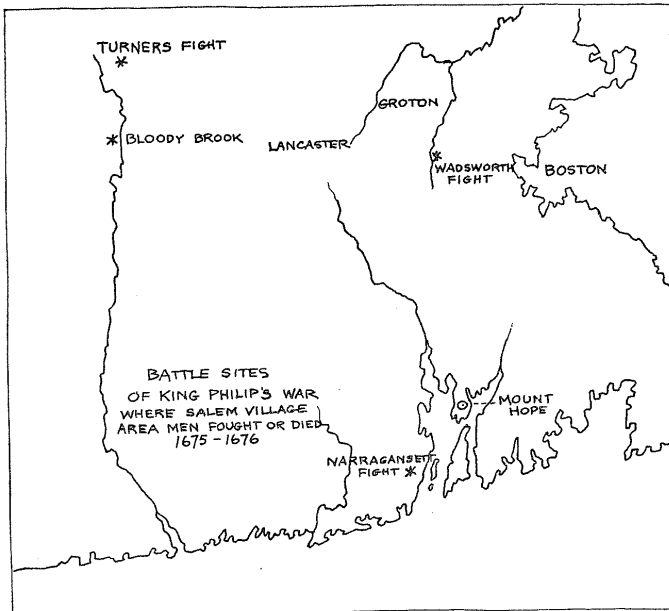


FIGURE 1

It is a solemn sight to see so many Christians lying in their blood, some here and some there, like a company of sheep torn by wolves, all of them stripped naked by a company of hell-hounds, roaring, singing, ranting and insulting as if they would have tore our very hearts out.<sup>8</sup>

A bizarre incident at Marblehead in 1677 expressed the effect of the pressures of Indian war upon colonial women of the same generation as Mrs. Rowlandson:

A group of women emerging from church set upon two Indian prisoners from Maine and with their bare hands literally

8. Mary Rowlandson, "The Sovereignty and Goodness of God," in *Puritans Among the Indians; Accounts of Captivity and Redemption, 1676-1724*, ed. Alden T. Vaughan and Edward W. Clark (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1981), p. 35.

tore them apart. An eyewitness reported that "we found the Indians with their heads off and gone, and their flesh in a manner pulled from their bones."<sup>9</sup>

The violent actions of another woman, Hannah Dustin of Haverhill, occurred only five years after the 1692 witchcraft outbreak. On 30 April 1697 Mrs. Dustin, her nurse, and a small boy murdered nine Indians in their sleep because she "thought she was not forbidden by any law to take away the life of the murderers by whom her child had been butchered." Mrs. Dustin very quickly attained celebrity status and was applauded by her contemporaries for this brutal act of vengeance.<sup>10</sup>

By the late 1690s, the enthusiasm for experiments in assimilation which had been exemplified by the missionary John Eliot had been replaced by "an emerging racism based on fear of the Indian and suspicion that he would never accept Christianity or English ways." The New England Indian population of the 1690s was represented by the once-bellicose southern tribes shorn of military power and forced into the periphery of society and by the alienated northern tribes who had turned to the French.<sup>11</sup>

The military alliance of the Indians and the French in the 1690s added a terrifying dimension to Indian war, because the Puritans were taught from childhood of the evils of Catholicism. The captive John Gyles showed how the papists preyed on Puritan superstitions:

My Indian master made a visit to the Jesuit and carried me with him. I saw the Jesuit show him pieces of gold and understood afterward he tendered them for me. The Jesuit gave me a biscuit which I put into my pocket and dare not eat but buried it under a log fearing that he had put something into it to make me love him, for I was very young and heard much of the Papists torturing the Protestants etc. so that I hated the sight of the Jesuit. When my mother heard the talk of my being sold to the Jesuit she said to me "Oh my dear child, if it were God's will I had rather fol-

9. James Axtell, "The Indian Impact on English Colonial Culture," in Axtell, *The European and the Indian; Essays in the Ethnohistory of Colonial North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 312.

10. Cotton Mather, "A Narrative of Hannah Dustin's Notable Deliverance from Captivity," in *Puritans Among the Indians*, ed. Vaughan and Clark, p. 164.

11. Francis J. Bremer, *The Puritan Experiment: New England Society from Bradford to Edwards* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1976), p. 204.

low you to your grave, or never see you more in this world then you should be sold to a Jesuit, for a Jesuit will ruin you body and soul."<sup>12</sup>

Antipapist prejudices of a different kind were heard from the pulpit of the Reverend Samuel Parris in the Salem Village meeting house. Parris's primary concern was the Catholic communion ritual and the belief that the communion bread "must be put into the mouths of the common people by the priest," because the people were unworthy to touch the bread with their hands. Parris also declared that "the Papists are arraigned of Sacrilege in their robbing the common People of the Cup. They will allow them the Bread . . . but they deny them the cup."<sup>13</sup>

The false sense of self-importance and love for gold, jewels, and finery that comprised much of Catholic stereotype in the Puritan mind was evidently an important element of the stereotypical devil which the Puritan both feared and envied. Capitulation to the devil often occurred due to his "wheedling through glittering promises of material gain and economic betterment." In 1692 the devil promised "new clothes," "a piece of money," and "a pair of French fall shoes," and the "afflicted" girl Mercy Lewis was offered "gold and many fine things" if she would write in his book.<sup>14</sup>

And, as John Gyles revealed in his memoirs, Jesuits and papists were most feared because of their capacity for deceit. It will be shown later that the Puritans were predisposed to regard the Indians as natural worshippers of the devil; an organized plot or conspiracy formed by the Indians and a major European power hostile to the English—French or even the Dutch—was a psychologically decisive event for the Puritans of New England and one that inevitably encouraged comparison with the supernatural alliance of the devil and the witch. This factor was not only the basis for the 1692 outbreak, but can be recognized in witchcraft episodes which occurred earlier during the seventeenth century.

12. John Gyles, "Memoirs of Odd Adventures, Strange Deliverances etc.," in *Puritans Among the Indians*, ed. Vaughan and Clark, p. 99.

13. Larry D. Gragg, "Samuel Parris: Portrait of a Puritan Clergyman," *Essex Institute Historical Collections* 119(1983):214 (hereafter referred to as *EIHC*).

14. Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed: The Social Origins of Witchcraft* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), p. 210; see also John Putnam Demos, *Entertaining Satan: Witchcraft and the Culture of Early New England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 178.

The quarter century that preceded King Philip's War was characterized by occasional war scares involving the Indians of southern New England. The scares of 1667, 1669, and 1671-72 were especially grave because they had developed in an atmosphere of Anglo-Dutch tension and threatened armed conflict. The anxiety that was experienced by the inhabitants of coastal settlements was conveyed by the energy which they exerted to install fortifications designed to repulse seaborne invasion.<sup>15</sup>

A pattern, albeit a tenuous one, might be suggested by the occurrence of witchcraft accusations in the coastal towns of both Massachusetts and Connecticut during the same years that an invasion or raid was thought imminent. In Essex County the 1653 Gloucester witchcraft outbreak that implicated Agnes Evans, Grace Dutch, Elizabeth Perkins, and Sarah Vinson, as well as the 1667 Marblehead and Salem episodes which involved Jane James and Edith Crawford, took place during Anglo-Dutch war scares.<sup>16</sup>

The only Dutch woman who was ever actually accused of witchcraft in New England was Judith Varlet, who was among the first individuals to be charged in the Hartford, Connecticut, outbreak of 1662-63. Varlet, the daughter of a merchant and related through marriage to Governor Peter Stuyvesant, was accused of witchcraft by Ann Cole, who was "given to Dutch-toned discourse when overtaken by 'fits'." The coastal towns of Connecticut like those in Massachusetts appeared to experience visitations of witchcraft during times of major war scares—Saybrook and New Haven in 1654-55, Stamford and Saybrook in 1667.<sup>17</sup>

The scares imposed a significant strain upon society; daily the inhabitants scanned the horizon for signs of enemy ships and were alert to detect any suspicious activity among the local Indian tribes, such as unexplained movement or very large gatherings. The crisis diminished the colonists' tolerance for antisocial behavior, and they interpreted verbal attacks against life and property as being extremely dangerous and symbolically in conformity with the actions of an enemy that had yet failed to appear.

15. Douglas Edward Leach, *Flintlock and Tomahawk*, pp. 24-25.

16. Based on data from "List of Known Witchcraft Cases in Seventeenth Century New England," in John P. Demos, *Entertaining Satan*, pp. 402-409.

17. John P. Demos, *Entertaining Satan*, pp. 71, 403, 406.

The persons accused of witchcraft functioned as ideal surrogates for that "enemy;" the discovery of a covenant with the devil helped the populace to rationalize the alliance between the Indians and the Europeans. Thus the witch was basically both a microcosm and a test created by a community that was reacting to war. The elimination of a supposed witch within a community eased the fear that the community would become a magnet for agents of destruction.

John Demos has argued recently that the witch recognized by the Puritans was not simple or monolithic, but displayed "at least four leading forms or guises—those of attacker, envier, intruder, and nurse."<sup>18</sup> The same set of contradictory traits were observable in the Indians who were encountered by the captives Mary Rowlandson and John Gyles; side by side with stories of torture and cruelty occurred stories of kindness and self-sacrifice often performed by the same individual. Much of the confusion and ambivalence that was generated by witches and Indians in the seventeenth century could be attributed to this nonstereotypical dimension of their personalities.

One reliable measure of Puritan ambivalence toward the Indian was the large number of persons taken into captivity who could not be induced to return. Anywhere "from 25 to 71 percent of the English captives" taken between 1689 and 1713 made that decision largely because "they found Indian life morally superior to English civilization and Catholicism more satisfying than Puritanism." The rejection of Puritan religion by a major portion of approximately 600 individuals was evidence of the many problems that were plaguing the churches of New England in the 1690s, a generation after Puritan leadership submitted to the Half-Way Covenant.<sup>19</sup>

The Half-Way Covenant was something of a contrivance that had been formulated to preserve church membership regardless of its diluted quality. The reform helped to:

further weaken the homogeneity of the New England Way by opening the floodgates to all forms of membership extension and by setting the clergy in fierce debate among themselves with a resulting loss of prestige for the ministerial class.<sup>20</sup>

18. John P. Demos, *Entertaining Satan*, p. 174.

19. James Axtell, "The Scholastic Philosophy of the Wilderness," in Axtell, *The European and the Indian*, pp. 162-66.

20. Francis J. Bremer, *The Puritan Experiment*, p. 149.

The church at Salem Village rejected this reform in favor of a more traditional baptism policy that was promoted by the Reverend Samuel Parris. Membership in the village church could be earned only through a confession from applicants of a work of faith and repentance wrought in their souls. Samuel Parris was also committed to probing into the affairs of village families. On 20 October 1690 while Massachusetts awaited the outcome of the Phips expedition to Quebec, Parris attended a meeting of the Cambridge Association of ministers which had been convened to discuss the reasons for the current "heavy judgement of God." Samuel Parris was apparently responsible for both the framing of the question on what steps should be taken for social and moral reform, and the answer, which was:

that the ministers of the several congregations do endeavor with utmost industry and faithfulness personally to visit the several families in their places, and inquire, instruct, and warn and charge, according to the circumstances of the families.<sup>21</sup>

This neurotic clerical response to defeat in an Indian war supplied neither comfort nor security and was in itself an indication of why it was within Parris's own household that the witchcraft outbreak first erupted in 1692.

## II

On 23 May 1690, three days after the surrender of the garrison at Falmouth, Maine, to the French and Indian attackers, Bartholomew Gedney, a successful Salem merchant and military officer, visited Salem Village on a recruiting mission only to find that field work made the farmers reluctant to depart "on such a sodaine [*sic*]." Gedney did persuade, however, the son of Jonathan Walcott, the local militia captain, to go in his father's place, accompanied by the "stout young men."<sup>22</sup>

Two months earlier, in March, Gedney had probably been in attendance at the Salem Town meeting which had rejected the request by many of these same farmers for independent status as a separate township. Having been one of three men selected in February 1687 to arbitrate over Rev. Deodat Lawson's contested ordination, he understood the nature of the local conflicts. The May encounter of the merchant

21. Larry D. Gragg, "Samuel Parris," *EIHC* 119(1983):228-29.

22. Massachusetts Archives 36:89.

and farmers would have made clear many of the contrasts that helped to promote those conflicts.<sup>23</sup>

Salem Village did not possess a large defense apparatus, and what little it did have had been obtained with difficulty because the town frequently interfered. In the autumn of 1677, a year following the conclusion of King Philip's War, the villagers were given permission by the colonial government to establish a militia company so that they would no longer be required to participate in training sessions held several miles from their homes.<sup>24</sup>

Early in King William's War, a new element was added to the village defenses with the construction of a watch house, but as the village artisans labored building this structure, their time and skill was required to repair the Salem fort on Winter Island. Because these fortifications had been constructed during the Anglo-Dutch war in 1666, they demanded perpetual maintenance and large outlays of tax money for their upkeep. Throughout the 1680s the Massachusetts government remonstrated with Salem to undertake the restoration of these works; and in 1681 immediate attention was prescribed just to keep the fort functional as it had become "altogether unserviceable & defective." At the opening of William's War, the fort was in such bad condition that residents warned the legislature of the danger of its easy capture by the French, who might then make use of its cannon to destroy Salem Town.<sup>25</sup>

The fort was especially important in the history of the village's grievances against the town, because only a year after it had been constructed, it produced an anxious admission of vulnerability as well as a plea for some independence. In a petition to the legislature, the farmers explained that while the fort would deter an attack directly upon the town, it would not prevent a seaborne attack upon them, because at the sparsely settled village, the enemy would "meet neither with fforce, nor 400 men under warning of an Alarm to oppose them."<sup>26</sup>

The fort may also have been partly responsible for Salem Town's reluctance to permit the village to become a legally distinct entity, ow-

23. Massachusetts Archives 11:57-60; Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, p. 58.

24. Nathaniel B. Shurtleff ed., *Records of the Governor and Company of Massachusetts Bay in New England*, vol. 5 (Boston: William B. White, 1854), p. 172.

25. On Salem Village watch house see *Town Records of Salem, Massachusetts*, vol. 3, 1680-1691 (Salem: Essex Institute, 1934), p. 221; fort repairs, *Salem Town Records*, vol. 3, p. 240; Massachusetts Archives 52:42, 48; 36:231, 58.

26. Massachusetts Archives 112:175-177.

ing to the fact that it was reluctant to forfeit tax monies that it could levy from the farmers. Even when the town did make concessions they proved to be slight or symbolic; however, one major concession made in March of 1672 relieved the villagers of their obligation to pay a church tax. Instead, a five-member village committee would determine how much money would be allocated to support the minister and the meetinghouse, which came into existence that same year.<sup>27</sup>

From 1672 until 1689, the year that the Reverend Samuel Parris was ordained, Salem Village had hired and fired three ministers due to the influence of inhabitants who opposed the choice of a minister and customarily withheld payment of the tax used for his salary. The Reverends James Bayley, George Burroughs, and Deodat Lawson had all been forced to resign in the years 1679, 1683, and 1688 because of these pressures.<sup>28</sup>

On 10 October 1689, four months after Parris was hired, Nathaniel Ingersoll, Nathaniel Putnam, John Putnam, Jonathan Walcott, and Thomas Flint were appointed to supervise the transfer of the village parsonage, barn, and two acres of land to Parris as a gift after a 1681 rule preventing such an outright donation had been rescinded. It is interesting to note at this point that the appointments of these five men demonstrated how closely the ecclesiastical and military histories of Salem Village had been intertwined prior to the witch hunts; Walcott, Ingersoll, and Flint were officers in the militia company and war veterans, and the Putnams had supplied the land on which a blockhouse had been built in 1676.<sup>29</sup>

Further, during the same year that Lt. Thomas Putnam, Sr., had helped to improve the village's security, Joseph Hutchinson, an avowed enemy of the church, was accused of limiting egress to the meeting house by building stone walls so that the villagers "were all forced to go [out] at one gate." The obstruction, which would hinder any attempt at escape during an Indian attack, was representative of the tactics that were employed by the opponents of the church. Later, in October of 1691, while in the midst of a second Indian war, the church was abruptly crippled by the elections of Joseph Porter, Hutchinson, Joseph Putnam,

27. Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, pp. 41-42.

28. Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, pp. 46-47.

29. Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, pp. 61-62.

Daniel Andrew, and Francis Nurse to the village committee. The enemies of the church had effectively taken control.<sup>30</sup>

### III

On 25 January 1692 a messenger conveying news of a catastrophe galloped south toward Boston on the Ipswich Road, which passed Salem Village; earlier that day, and only forty miles distant, a war party comprised of 150 Abanaki Indians had attacked "wretchedly secure" York, Maine, on the Agamenticus River. The homes of 300 or 400 persons had been burned, and the community's minister, Shubael Dummer, had perished with about 50 other persons. The Reverend George Burroughs, minister at neighboring Wells, Maine, supplied authorities at Boston with a graphic report of the "pillours of smoke, ye raging of ye merciless flames, ye insultations of ye heathen enemy, shouting, shooting, hacking . . . & dragging away [80] others [to Canada]."<sup>31</sup>

Contemporary observers felt that York had not been sufficiently vigilant, "dwelling in unguarded houses." Actually, one of the reasons York fell was that as a typical agricultural village of late seventeenth-century New England, its homes and farms were too widely scattered to be adequately protected if attacked. Salem Village was clearly aware of the dangers of this type of scattering, having addressed this problem in its previously mentioned 1667 petition to the Massachusetts legislature. That document portrayed a community whose inhabitants were so widely separated "one from another, some a mile, some further" that even "six or eight watches will not serve."<sup>32</sup>

One of the villagers opposed to Parris, Peter Cloyce, was a former inhabitant of York whose wife, Sarah, would eventually be hanged as a witch in August of 1692. Every Indian war had brought refugees to Essex County towns from the "eastward." These persons generally returned to their homes when hostilities ceased, but some stayed. Two victims of the 1692 witch hunt, Abigail Hobbs of Topsfield and Anne Pudeator of Salem Town, had originally lived in Casco or Falmouth,

30. Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, pp. 55-57, 65-66.

31. Thomas Hutchinson, *The History of the Colony and Province of Massachusetts Bay*, ed. Lawrence Shaw Mayo, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1936), p. 343; Petition from Wells, 27 January 1692, Massachusetts Archives 37:259.

32. Massachusetts Archives 112:175-77.

Maine, until the Indians forced their migration south. In her confession Hobbs said that she had first seen the devil in the Maine woods. Goody Pudeator, who was hanged, still had children living at Casco at the time of her death.<sup>33</sup>

Among the small group of the accusing "afflicted girls" who lived in Salem Village was Susanah Sheldon, the daughter of yet another refugee family from Black Point, Maine. Not only had the family of this seventeen-year-old been driven from Maine in 1675 during King Philip's War and again in William's War, but her twenty-four-year-old brother, Godfrey, had been killed at the "eastward" in early July of 1691.<sup>34</sup>

Though Susanah Sheldon may have justly harbored a deep hatred or fear of the Indians as a result of her experiences, almost every one of the girls at one time or another during the witch hunt also revealed a dread of the heathen. Mary Walcott, the "afflicted" stepdaughter of the village's militia captain, accused Capt. John Alden of witchcraft because he "[sold] powder and shot to the Indians and French, and [lay] with Indian squaws and had Indian papooses." This abuse of Alden might well have been engendered by his having negotiated a truce with the Indians that led indirectly to the attack upon York when the French sought to revive their alliance with the northern tribes. Alden's association with the York massacre took another form as well, for he had been responsible for securing the redemption of the captives.<sup>35</sup>

Eleven-year-old Ann Putnam, another of the "afflicted" children, accused George Burroughs, the village's former minister and the survivor of two Indian massacres in Maine, of having murdered the son of Deodat Lawson while young Lawson was a chaplain in the service of Sir Edmund Andros, saying that the chaplain had "preached soe to the

33. Examination of Abigail Hobbs, 19 April 1692, "Salem Witchcraft, 1692. In three volumes. Verbatim Transcripts of Salem Witchcraft Papers, Compiled Under the Supervision of Archie N. Frost, Clerk of Courts" (Salem: 1938), vol. 2, unpaginated.

34. See entry on the family of William Sheldon in James Savage, *A Genealogical Dictionary of the First Settlers of New England, showing three generations of those who came before May, 1692 on the basis of Farmer's Register*, vol. 4 (Boston: Little, Brown, 1862), pp. 70-71; "Reverend Samuel Parris's Record of Deaths at Salem Village During his Ministry," *New England Historical and Genealogical Register*, 36 (1882), p. 188 (hereafter referred to as NEHGR).

35. Robert Calef, *More Wonders of the Invisible World: Or, The Wonders of the Invisible World Display'd in Five Parts*, in *Narratives of the Witchcraft Cases, 1648-1706*, ed. George Lincoln Burr, (1914; reprint ed., New York: Barnes and Noble, 1972), pp. 353-55.

souldiers." She also claimed that Burroughs had "bewitched [*sic*] a grate many souldiers to death at the eastword."<sup>36</sup>

It was, though, Mercy Lewis, the Putnam family's seventeen-year-old servant, who uttered the most direct denunciation of the Indians or heathen, and she did so in a manner characteristic of the New England Puritans when she derived her language directly from the Bible. The Reverend Lawson witnessed the unusual display, as Mercy "sang the song in the fifth of Revelation, and the 110 Psalm, and the 149 Psalm." In both of these Psalms, the word *heathen* occurs:

He shall judge among the heathen, he shall fill the places with the dead bodies: he shall wound the heads over many countries.  
Psalm 110:6

Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a twoedged sword in their hand;

To execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people.<sup>37</sup>

Psalm 149: 6-7

Mercy Lewis's confusion over the identities of Indians and witches was as much a product of Puritan influences upon her as these Biblical quotations. During the most discouraging moments of her captivity, Mrs. Rowlandson similarly found security in the Psalms. On one occasion it was to alleviate her anxiety over the welfare of her ill son and missing daughter:

I repaired under these thoughts to my Bible (my great comfort in that time) and that scripture came to my hand, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee," Psalm 55:22.<sup>38</sup>

According to Samuel Parris, the New England Puritans belonged to the family of man, but were distinct from all other peoples because God had created them for a special mission. This was as much a convention

36. Testimony of the younger Ann Putnam against the Reverend George Burroughs, in *The Salem Witchcraft Papers*, ed. Boyer and Nissenbaum vol. 1, p. 164.

37. Deodat Lawson, *A Brief and True Narrative of Some Remarkable Passages Relating to Sundry Persons Afflicted by Witchcraft, at Salem Village Which Happened from the Nineteenth of March, to the Fifth of April 1692*, in *Narratives of the Witchcraft*, ed. Burr, p. 161.

38. Mary Rowlandson, "The Sovereignty and Goodness of God," in *Puritans Among the Indians*, ed. Vaughan and Clark, p. 49.

of Puritan thought as was the reliance upon the Bible. But Parris had an unusual way of introducing the idea which stressed kinship of Puritan and pagans; "we are all one by nature," he once informed the Salem Village congregation, "with Egyptians, Turks, Pagans, Indians and Ethiopians."<sup>39</sup>

#### IV

During the first year of King William's War, Cotton Mather exhorted readers to:

tell mankind that there are Devils and Witches: and that those night-birds least appear where the Day-light of the Gospel comes, yet New England has had examples of their existence and operation: and that not only the wigwams of Indians, where the pagan powaws often raise their masters, in the shapes of bears and snakes and fires but also in the homes of white English men and women.<sup>40</sup>

That same year, 1699, the captive John Gyles was warned by "an old squaw" to whom he had confided his desire to observe an Indian powow in progress, "that if they knew of my being there, they would kill me. . . . When she was a girl she had known young persons to be taken away by a hairy man." Gyles was in danger of being carried off by the "hairy man" also if the wizards had discovered him.<sup>41</sup>

The near encounter with the "hairy man" reflected a consensus opinion of seventeenth-century New England; the Elect perceived themselves as having been encroached upon by unregenerates who acted as the instruments of Satan to obstruct or destroy their labors for God in the wilderness of the New World, and they believed as well that the devil had inspired the Indians to go to war, and to perpetrate massacres. Each story of atrocity or torture served to reinforce these simple ideas and helped to make the affinities all the more apparent. Increase Mather observed that the "barbarous Indians (like their Father the Devil. . .delighted in cruelties)."<sup>42</sup>

39. Larry D. Gragg, "Samuel Parris," *EIHC* 119(1983):225.

40. Cotton Mather, *Memorable Providences Relating to Witchcraft and Possessions*, in *Narratives of the Witchcraft*, ed. Burr, p. 99.

41. John Gyles, "Memoirs of Odd Adventures," in *Puritans Among the Indians*, ed. Vaughan and Clark, pp. 114-15.

42. Peter N. Carroll, *Puritanism and the Wilderness: The Intellectual Significance of the New England Frontier, 1629-1700* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), p. 78.



For the inhabitants of Essex County in 1692 this belief had important consequences. Witchcraft appears to have been generally regarded as a preliminary weakening of a community's moral strength or resistance, so that the inhabitants might eventually fall victim to the Indians and French. This can be inferred from Cotton Mather's revelation learned from:

one who was executed at Salem for witchcraft who confessed that at their chief witch-meetings, there had been present some French Canadiens, and some Indian sagamores to concert the methods of ruining New England.<sup>43</sup>

Essex County had already displayed signs of what social psychologists refer to as "invasion neurosis," the extreme tension of anticipating an attack which does not materialize. The tendency of the county's population to react to rumour and to sense imminent danger was exemplified by two incidents which occurred during King William's War. In the first case, there was just cause for fear; an escaped slave revealed details of a conspiracy which a fanatic French sympathizer named Isaac Morrill had organized in the autumn of 1690. Morrill not only planned to overwhelm northern Essex County with 500 Indians and 300 French soldiers, he also hoped to incite servants to murder their masters and to fight beside him as allies (fig. 2). Morrill's preparations had included an alarmingly thorough reconnaissance of the region's garrisons, which, according to witnesses Robert and Elizabeth Long, he had inspected while carrying a concealed weapon on his person.<sup>44</sup>

A much stranger example of war hysteria occurred at the town of Gloucester in the summer of 1692, but this episode seems largely to have been the fault of that town's excitable minister, the Reverend John Emerson. A potential source of trouble for the town had surfaced two years earlier, when in July of 1690, Emerson had implored Maj. Wait Winthrop to release forty-seven members of the village's militia company who had been impressed into the army which was then being as-

43. Cotton Mather, *A Brand Pluck'd out of the Burning*, in *Narratives of the Witchcraft*, ed. Burr, pp. 281-82.

44. David T. Konig, "A New Look at the Essex 'French': Ethnic Frictions and Community Tensions in Seventeenth Century Essex County Massachusetts", *EIHC* 110 (1974): pp. 178-79.

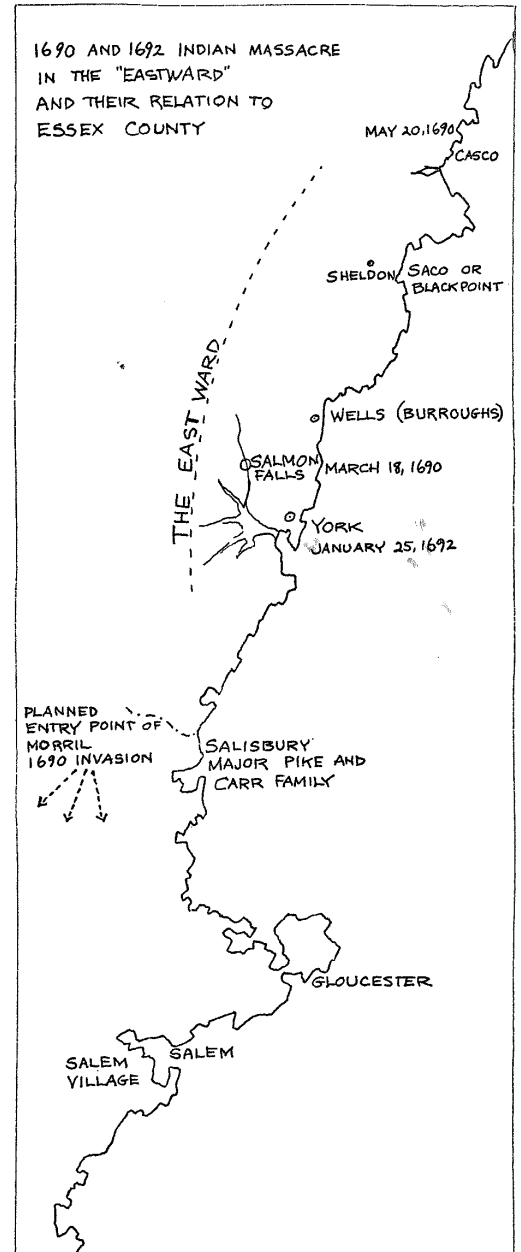


FIGURE 2

sembled for the attack upon Quebec. Otherwise, Emerson complained, "wee must all be forced to leave the towne for we are not able to stay any longer after they are gone." The extraordinary levy, if enacted, would have divested the town of two-thirds of its men, and the group of fifteen soldiers that would be retained to defend Gloucester would have been easily overwhelmed by a French raiding party which tried "to breake in upon" the town.<sup>45</sup>

Emerson's anxiety over possible attack appears to have been contagious, for in late June of 1692 Ebenezer Babson reported to him of the occurrence of furtive activity in the vicinity of his house. Babson had seen, or so he told the minister, "men which looked like Frenchmen" moving stealthily through the swamps. Upon hearing this rumour, several persons abandoned their farms and fled to the garrisons to evade what by that time Emerson thought to be the "Devil and his agents." In a letter written to Cotton Mather after the panic had subsided, Emerson described some of the strange happenings witnessed by the town that summer which included an account of Babson's encounter with the nebulous enemy:

Bapson . . . saw three men walk softly out of the swamp . . . being within two or three rod[s] of them he shot, and as soon as his gun went off they all fell down. Bapson then running to his supposed prey, cried out unto his companion. . . "he had killed three!" "he had killed three!" But coming about unto them they all rose up.<sup>46</sup>

At Gloucester, the rapid shift in interpretation of the menace as first an actual enemy, and then to one of supernatural origin, was due in part to the memory of the 1653 and 1657 witchcraft outbreaks in the town, and also to the mind-set of Essex County in 1692. The critics of the witchcraft trials who have condemned the Puritans for callousness and lack of sophistication have largely ignored the evidence in the confessions, of "witch militias" and nests of witches at garrisons, such as Chandler's garrison in Andover—the kind of information which only helped to further aggravate "invasion neurosis." The Reverend Deodat Lawson recorded many examples of these admissions in his *Brief and True*

45. Rev. John Emerson to Maj. Wait Winthrop, 26 July 1690, The Winthrop Papers, *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, fifth series, 1:438.

46. Cotton Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana or the Ecclesiastical History of New England, 1629-1698*, vol. 2 (1702; reprint ed., Hartford: Silas Andrus and Sons, 1853), p. 621.

*Narrative*, and he shows—through an aggressive confrontation between the "afflicted" girls and Martha Cory—that the witch militia appeared as real as that which Jonathan Walcott captained in Salem Village; "the afflicted persons asked Cory why she did not go to the Company of Witches which were before the Meeting house mustering? Did she not hear the drum beat?" The "company," as Lawson later explained, was composed of "about 23 or 24" individuals.<sup>47</sup>

Boyer and Nissenbaum argue that the witchcraft accusations were influenced by the conscious and even subconscious resentments among the faction that supported the church in response to gestures of disloyalty by its enemies. Such a gesture seems implicit in a June 1690 notice from the colonial government to the officers of the Beverly troop. Those officers were assured that if they could "make up a number of forty able Troopers. . . with the addition of those of Salem Village now listed with them they may continue" as a troop.<sup>48</sup>

Eligibility for the troop of horse—one of the most prestigious branches of the colonial service—was determined by wealth, as the trooper was expected to purchase his own costly accoutrements: a horse, saddle and equipment, carbine, pistols, and a sword or cutlass. These acquisitions were beyond the means of the majority of Parris's supporters, who lived too far west of Beverly to have frequented the town. The men, whoever they might have been, probably lived on the Ipswich Road, close to the taverns and shops alien to the less wordly farmers.<sup>49</sup>

It is possible that wartime disloyalty was the nucleus of discontent that resulted in the spread of accusations of witchcraft to the town of Andover, which soon rivaled Salem Village in the number of arrests. The source of trouble in Andover was exposed when the government attempted to reorganize the Upper Regiment, the regiment of militia in northwestern Essex County, by transferring the Boxford militia from that unit to another regiment in the county. A group of men from

47. Deodat Lawson, *A Brief and True Narrative*, in *Narratives of the Witchcraft*, ed. Burr, pp. 156, 163.

48. Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, pp. 186-88; Massachusetts Archives 36:112a.

49. Requirements for the troop of horse, "An Act for Regulating of the Militia," 1693, Chap. 7, section 6, *The Charter Granted by their Majesties King William and Queen Mary, to the Inhabitants of Massachusetts Bay in New England* (Boston: S. Kneeland, 1761), pp. 38-39; Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, pp. 96-97.

Andover promptly sent a petition to Boston to protest the action because the two towns:

[lay] soe neare to each other & ready upon all occasions of ye enemy's approach to releive each other, which if disjoyned wee cannot doe, & for many other reasons we humbly pray . . . that Boxford might still continue as part of ye upper Regiment.<sup>50</sup>

The "many other reasons" alluded to in this petition signed by Capt. John Osgood, John Barker, and Stephen Johnson, who were to be in 1692 the husbands and fathers of ten Andover witches, suggest that these families may have begun to gravitate toward Boxford. There is no direct evidence of any ambitions to secede from Andover, as it was never formally asserted; there are, however, occasional expressions of close association, such as the extensive land holdings of the Barker family in Boxford.<sup>51</sup>

After having witnessed Rowley's experience with secession, the Andover selectmen would have been especially alert to prevent any attempted move, and this inchoate faction, if any factionalism actually existed, may have been on their minds during the summer of 1692, when Joseph Ballard "sent horse and man" to Salem Village to fetch little Ann Putnam so that she might discover the cause of his wife's illness—an action that resulted in an epidemic of witchcraft accusations in Andover. Ballard's ailing wife, Elizabeth (Phelps) Ballard was related to Thomas Chandler, the keeper of the infested garrison house, through the marriage of two of his children, daughter Sarah and son William, to members of the Phelps family in 1682 and 1687.<sup>52</sup>

Two possible exhibitions of disloyalty at Salem Village and an adjacent town symbolized the disintegration of the communal covenant that was so important to the Puritans. As Boyer and Nissenbaum have shown, Samuel Parris espoused this particular theme obsessively from 1689 until 1692. In January of 1690, Parris informed his congregation, "there is no trust to a rotten hearted person, whatever friendship may

50. Petition from Andover, 11 March 1690, Massachusetts Archives 35:296.

51. On Andover witchcraft accusations see, Marion L. Starkey, *The Devil in Massachusetts: A Modern Inquiry into the Salem Witch Trials* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1949), chap. 15.

52. "Andover Marriages," *Vital Records of the Town of Andover, Massachusetts to the end of the year 1849*, vol. 2 (Topsfield: Topsfield Historical Society, 1912), p. 81.

be pretended." Parris also tended to portray the church as a fortress—and in a real sense a garrison house—and its communicants as soldiers obligated to defend it:

Christ furnisheth the believer with skill, strength, courage, weapons and all military accomplishments for victory . . . the Lord Jesus sets them forth, furnisheth them with all necessaries for battle. The Lord Jesus is the true believer's magazine. [19 July 1691]<sup>53</sup>

Cotton Mather reported after his detailed discussions with the "afflicted" Mercy Short about her spectral visions:

that at such times the spectres went away to ther witch-meetings: but that when they returned the whole crew, besides her daily troublers look'd in upon her, to see how the work was carried on: that there were French Canadiens and Indian sagamores among them, diverse of whom shee knew.

Her familiarity with the enemy resulted from Mercy's experiences as a survivor of an Indian massacre and as a redeemed captive. She was the daughter of Clement Short, a farmer from the small southern New Hampshire coastal community of Salmon Falls.<sup>54</sup>

Mercy's ordeal had begun on 18 March 1690 when a war party led by the French-Canadian, Hertel, simultaneously assaulted the settlement's three garrison houses. Surprised and defenseless, Salmon Falls was destroyed; thirty-four people were killed and another fifty-four were captured. On that day the Indians and French "horribly butchered Mercy's father, her mother, her brother, her sister and others of her kindred." Three other brothers and two sisters were carried off to Canada. Mercy Short had in common with the "afflicted" of Salem Village her age and lack of family, as well as the severe form of dislocation that she had suffered as a result of the Indian attack.<sup>55</sup>

Six of the eight "afflicted" girls in Salem Village were not living in their parent's households in 1692. Some of them worked as servants,

53. Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, pp. 168–71.

54. Cotton Mather, *A Brand Pluck'd out of the Burning*, in *Narratives of the Witchcraft*, ed. Burr, p. 282.

55. Douglas Leach, *Arms for Empire*, p. 88; Mather, *A Brand Pluck'd out of the Burning*, p. 259.

and others lived in the homes of relatives. The deliberate separation of teen-aged children from their parents was a fundamental idea of the social or family ethic of New England Puritanism. Edmund S. Morgan maintains that this practice of "putting children out" as apprentices or to live with other families was often done for the purpose of establishing a "necessary distance between parent and child." A recent contrasting view accounts for the behavior as an intuitive response by parents concerned with "insulating themselves to some extent against the shock that the death of a child might bring."<sup>56</sup>

Separation from parents was also a frequent theme of Puritan ministers in their dialogues with children. Cotton Mather explained gravely to youthful listeners, "That which will exceedingly Aggravate [the] *Torments of your Damnation*, will be the Encounter which you shall have with your Godly Parents," for on that Day of Judgement such children will see their parents concur in their condemnation and will hear them say, "We now know them no more, Let them depart among the Workers of Iniquitie."<sup>57</sup>

The Reverend Michael Wigglesworth employed the imagery of separation in his poem "The Day of Doom," composed in the 1660s:

The tender Mother will own no other  
of all her num'rous brood,  
But such as stand at Christ's right hand,  
acquitted through his Blood.<sup>58</sup>

A grim specter seen by the "afflicted" girls Mary Walcott and Susanah Sheldon during the witchcraft episode seems the embodiment of the Puritan Father. This specter, which the girls called the "shining man," had once interceded to rescue Susanah Sheldon from the witchspectre of John Willard. The shining man then commanded her to tell what:

I had heard and seen to Mr. Hathorn this Willard being there  
present tould mee if I did hee would cutt my throate. At this

56. Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, p. 35fn.; David E. Stannard, *The Puritan Way of Death: A Study in Religion, Culture, and Social Change* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 58.

57. Cotton Mather as quoted in Stannard, *The Puritan Way of Death*, p. 64.

58. Michael Wigglesworth, *The Day of Doom; or a Poetical Description of the Great and Last Judgement* (1715; reprint ed., New York: American News Company, 1867), verse 199, p. 78.

same time and place this Shining Man told mee that if I did goe to tell this to Mr. Hathorn that I should be well goeing and coming but I should be afflicted there, then said I to the Shining Man hunt Willa[r]d away and I would beleeve what he said that he might not chock mee with that the Shining Man held up his hand and Willard vanished away.<sup>59</sup>

Children who were denied genuine closeness to their parents through emotional or physical distance were sometimes brought closer together as an artificial family; but such an intimate unit can work only as long as conditions are not too demanding. False families of "disaster" children tended only to cultivate their fears.

Regarding the above, it was not the January 1692 York massacre alone which forced the children to behave this way, but rather the earlier massacres at Salmon Falls and Falmouth, Maine, in March and May of 1690 respectively, which the girls still remembered two years later when York fell.

The critical factor in the children's response to the 1690s massacres could have been Mrs. Ann Putnam, whose eleven-year-old daughter and namesake had accused the Reverend Burroughs of murder. Prior to her 1678 marriage to Lt. Thomas Putnam, Jr., immediately after King Philip's War, Ann Carr had lived in Salisbury, in the extreme northern part of Essex County. Her father (George Carr) had owned, in addition to a large estate, a shipworks and ferry, and upon his death in 1682, his widow and one of his sons took control of the entire enterprise, not only causing enmity between them and Ann, but even producing litigation.<sup>60</sup>

In August of 1672, through the marriage of her brother William Carr to Elizabeth Pike, Ann (Carr) Putnam became a relation of Maj. Robert Pike, the individual who in May of 1690 was appointed commander in chief of all Massachusetts militia forces in New Hampshire and Maine. A year before her own marriage, while she still lived in Salisbury, Ann Putnam had witnessed a violent argument between Major Pike and the Reverend John Wheelright during which the town of Salisbury divided itself into factions around the two men. Wheel-

59. Testimony of Susanah Sheldon against John Willard, in *The Salem Witchcraft Papers*, ed. Boyer and Nissenbaum vol. 3, p. 837.

60. Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, p. 135.

right had succeeded one morning in having Pike excommunicated when during an Indian alarm he took advantage of the absence of the soldier's supporters from the meeting house.<sup>61</sup>

On 13 September 1677 the Massachusetts government severely reprimanded both individuals: Major Pike for having:

. . . shewed himselfe too litigious in impeaching him [Wheelright] with soe many articles under his hand, thereby creating great disturbance to the church & place, & alsoe much contempt of sd. Wheelright's person & office. . . . But neither can wee excuse Mr. Wheel- of too much precipitancy in pronouncing a sentence of excommunication against sd. Pike without further triall for repentance according to the vote of the church if he repent.<sup>62</sup>

Ann Carr's brother William was one of Pike's supporters who signed a complaint against Wheelright in May of 1677. The Massachusetts officials castigated these men for having contributed greatly to the disruption of the town:

Wee cannot but condemne that evill practice of those of the church & towne that did endeavour in their petition to the Generall Court to eject off Mr. Wheelright from his ministry.<sup>63</sup>

In 1685 another scandal engulfed the Carr family, and again Major Robert Pike was involved, as revealed in a reference from the diary of Samuel Sewall:

Mr. Stoughton also told me of George Car's wife being with child by another man, tells the father, Major Pike sends her down to prison. Is the Governour's grandchild by his daughter Cotton.<sup>64</sup>

Mrs. Putnam's perception of these negative events might have had a direct bearing on her reaction to the 1690 massacres; being herself a

61. "Salisbury Marriages," *Vital Records of the Town of Salisbury, Massachusetts to the end of the year 1849* (Topsfield: Topsfield Historical Society, 1915), p. 299; notice of Pike commission, 30 May 1690, Massachusetts Archives 36:101a.

62. Remonstrance of 13 September 1677, Massachusetts Archives 10:63.

63. Massachusetts Archives 10:63.

64. Samuel Sewall, *The Diary of Samuel Sewall*, ed. M. Halsey Thomas, vol. 1, 1674-1708 (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1973), p. 70. The husband of the imprisoned woman was Ann Putnam's brother, George Carr, Jr.

victim of early parental separation and an individual who probably felt considerable ambivalence toward her family, the fragmentary reports of an Indian massacre at Salmon Falls, only fifteen miles from where she had spent her childhood, might well have revived these feelings in the adult Ann Putnam, and made her anxious for the safety of relatives or family friends, and she could have manifested that anxiety to her daughter. The evidence in a preponderance of recent studies concerning the effects of war and natural catastrophe upon children suggests that the most vulnerable children in such situations are those whose mothers are easily agitated and whose fathers react angrily or aggressively. There is no evidence of isolated children being particularly disturbed; rather, "each problem proved to be that of a disturbed family."<sup>65</sup>

A striking modern example of a "vulnerable" child's hallucinating devils and witches can be found in an early 1970s report of an eleven-year-old Catholic girl from Northern Ireland who, after having been subjected to a gas attack and to contact with a bloodied body, had the first of her hallucinations. She said that the figure she saw was "a tall man with a big hat, brightly colored coat and frightening eyes. He was, he said, a Protestant, because he was 'evil' and was trying to kill her."<sup>66</sup>

Normally, following a disaster or some other frightening experience, children attempt to comprehend what has happened to them through play-acting, or by constantly talking about the episode—a means of "ventilating" those aspects of the event that most trouble them. Attentive parents recognize the signs and respond, but if the parents are not alert to the signs or remain too anxious in the aftermath, the signs are not perceived, and the child shows nervous symptoms instead. In 1692, in Salem Village, the girls described sensations of biting, strangulation, convulsions, and hallucinations. The combination of the parental distance endemic to New England Puritanism and the tensions of factional conflict doubtless prevented the Salem parents from recognizing what was wrong with their children.<sup>67</sup>

Further, the quality of communication in 1690 probably resulted in the children's learning about the massacres in successive waves of rumor and misinformation as messengers, soldiers, and other witnesses

65. Morris Fraser, *Children in Conflict: Growing up in Northern Ireland* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), p. 75.

66. Fraser, *Children in Conflict*, pp. 66-67.

67. On mastering of anxiety through ventilation see, Fraser, *Children in Conflict*, p. 84.

traveled south to Boston with inflated reports of casualties and destruction. In addition, many of the girls were approaching marriageable age and were powerless to stop the departures of eligible men in their early twenties to the "eastward" and the war. As many as seven men ranging in age from sixteen years to their mid twenties perished in King William's War:

1690

April 17, John Bishop (18 years) killed with ye Indians.  
September 21, Nicholas Reed (18 years) Edward Putnam's man killed with ye Indians.

1691

July 3, Godfrey Sheldon (24 years) killed by ye Indians.  
July 4, Thomas (18 years) killed at Casko.  
July 5, Edward Crocker (19 years) killed at Casko.  
July 6, George Bogwell (16 years) killed at Casko.

1693

June, William Tarbell, soldier at ye Eastward.<sup>68</sup>

If the girls' different anxieties relating to Indian massacre had remained unresolved from the spring of 1690 to the time of the York massacre in January 1692, that incident would have revived all of the old fears and uncertainties surrounding Salmon Falls and Falmouth in March and May 1690, perhaps accounting for the apparent concentration of afflictions and arrests on specific days and weeks in the spring of 1692.

This was not the first example in New England of witchcraft accusations being generated by Indian war. At the town of Scituate in Plymouth Colony in March of 1677, Mary Ingham was accused by Mehittable Woodworth of being the cause of her violent fits (fig. 3). While at the time of Ingham's accusation the town was entirely free of an Indian menace, exactly one year earlier, in March of 1676, the town of Scituate remained under constant threat of Indian attack for two months.<sup>69</sup>

68. List of village men who were killed in the war, from "Reverend Samuel Parris's Record of Deaths at Salem Village During his Ministry," *NEHGR* 36 (1882): 188.

69. Mehittable Woodworth was born 15 August 1662, "Scituate Births," *Vital Records of the Town of Scituate to the end of the year 1849*, vol. 1 (Boston: Stanhope Press, 1909),

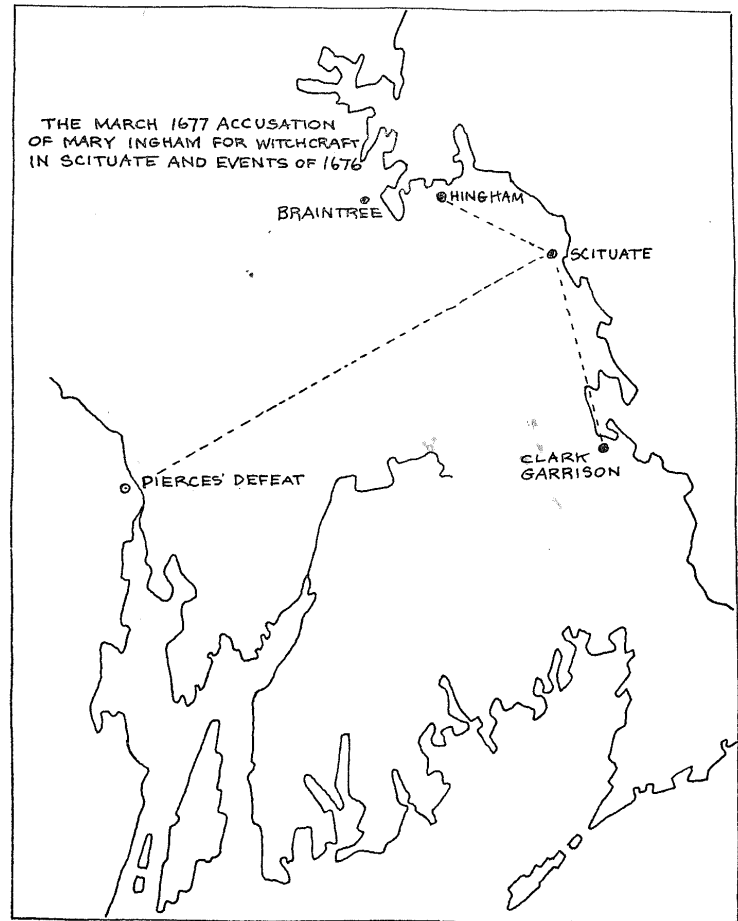


FIGURE 3

p. 418; Ingham case, 6 March 1677, in *Records of the Colony of New Plymouth*, ed. Nathaniel B. Shurtleff, vol. 5, 1668-1678, Court Orders, (Boston: William B. White, 1856), p. 223.

From late February of 1676 Indian raids had occurred within a ten-mile radius of Scituate on the average of once a week with assaults upon Weymouth, Braintree, Bridgewater, and Attleborough. Then, on Sunday, 12 March 1676, the Indians penetrated to the center of Plymouth and massacred eleven persons at Clark garrison house. Less than two weeks later, Capt. Michael Peirse of Scituate and forty-two soldiers—fourteen of them Scituate men—were massacred by the Indians five miles north of Providence.<sup>70</sup>

On 19 April 1676 the destruction of the war reached the immediate environs of Scituate when John Jacob was killed by the Indians at the adjacent town of Hingham. The following day the Indians burned five houses at Hingham and then advanced south to Scituate and burned nineteen houses in the town; exactly one month later on 20 May 1676 the Indians attacked again and destroyed the mill of Cornet Robert Stetson, father to Robert Stetson, Jr., whose house had been burned in April. Plymouth Court records of July 1676 reveal a controversy between the Stetson and Woodworth families involving the birth of an illegitimate child to Elizabeth Woodworth that was apparently fathered by Stetson, Jr.<sup>71</sup>

Mehitable Woodworth was probably a “vulnerable” child long before February 1676, and the progress her phobia took can be easily traced from the moment of the first attack near her town and her correct anticipation of a second, a third, and fourth visitation. The embarrassment of a local scandal and the targeting of the Stetsons by the Indians might also have frightened her.

Hysterical behavior triggered by the first or second anniversaries of critical events was the common element in both the Scituate and Salem Village episodes. In late February of 1692 Tituba (Samuel Parris’s Carib Indian slave), Sarah Osborne, and Sarah Good were the first women to be arrested for witchcraft. Three more women were accused in March. On 18 March 1692—the second anniversary of Salmon Falls—Ann (Carr) Putnam claimed to have been afflicted by the specter of Martha Cory, stating that Cory had “tortured me so as I cannot express, ready to tear me all to pieces.” Goody Cory was summarily arrested as was

70. Douglas Edward Leach, *Flintlock and Tomahawk*, pp. 166–67; Samuel Deane, *History of the Town of Scituate* (Boston: James Loring, 1831), pp. 123, 126.

71. Stetson-Woodworth controversy, 22 July 1676, in *Plymouth Colony Records*, ed. Nathaniel Shurtleff, vol. 5, Court Orders.

Rebecca Nurse, also largely as a result of “severe spectral afflictions which befell the elder Ann Putnam between March 19 and 24.”<sup>72</sup>

The cluster of arrests for witchcraft in late May 1692—the anniversary of Falmouth or Casco—was quite large; thirty arrests were made in a twenty-day period. Of those, ten arrests occurred on 28 May and were the result of spectral afflictions experienced by Mary Walcott. Among those arrested that day were Capt. John Alden, Martha Carrier, and Martha Toothaker—the Billerica woman who had dreamed of fighting Indians. A fourth arrestee, Capt. John Floyd of Rumney Marsh, had, like Alden, associations with the York massacre, having been in command of the militia (including Salem men) which had found the town in ruins. On 27 January 1692 he had written to his superiors, “The 25 of this instant I having information that York was destroyed made the greatest hast that I could w<sup>t</sup> my Company for their reliefe if there were any left w<sup>e</sup> I did hardly expect.”<sup>73</sup>

The “afflicted” may have accused men who had been prominently involved in the prosecution of the Indian because of the simple conviction that persons who had been in close contact with the Indians and survived were in fact witches; those who had died, like Godfrey Sheldon, were true Christians. This assumption would have been consistent with the Puritan belief that Indians and witches were synonymous, and may even have been responsible for the process of affliction itself. The “afflicteds’” perception of Indian war had always been a distorted one, especially for the three seventeen-year-olds, Mary Walcott, Mercy Lewis, and Susanah Sheldon, who were infants in 1675 and 1676. In the early 1680s, when these girls were between five and six years of age, King Philip’s War was still a vivid memory—the ruins, the wounded, and the widowed women were very likely all around them. And the Puritans produced a considerable war literature: histories, captivity narratives, and memorial sermons, which further contributed to the symbolization of the war. Just how much the “afflicted” knew about Philip’s War from this literature is impossible to determine. It does, however, seem plausible that at some time while they were growing up, the girls became familiar with the “cenotaphic” hills in

72. Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, pp. 146–48.

73. Massachusetts Archives 37:257; petition of Charles Mackarly of Salem for compensation for injuries sustained while a corporal in Captain Floyd’s company, 1692? Massachusetts Archives 37:318.

the village which, although bearing the names of earlier owners of the properties (Davenport, Leach, Smith, Thorndike, and Whipple) also seemed to memorialize their direct descendants who fought or were killed by Indians in King Philip's War. The map shown in figure 4 shows the location of the hills and the properties of individuals (called "accusers" and "defenders" by Boyer and Nissenbaum) who represented opposing factions in the witchcraft dispute.

By 1692 the village girls' fear of the Indian had advanced to such an irrational state that they were unable to think directly about him; instead, they used the witch as his symbolic substitute—and a witch was any person who distressed either the girls or their parents. As previously noted, the "afflicted" would also have held such people responsible for the failure of their parents to supply needed emotional support.

The charging of the Reverend George Burroughs, "the little black minister from Casco Bay," is the best illustration of how actively the girls sought agents of the war at a symbolic level. Burroughs was regarded as the source—even the mastermind—of the spectral assault which emerged from his "eastward" domain, and the "afflicted" girls had been inclined to perceive the world typologically—especially in light of Samuel Parris's encouragement to reduce complex disagreements to distinctions of good and evil. The influence of Parris and their ingrained fear of the Indian made it easy for the girls to see the "eastward" as an allegorical hell, and even to interpret the events of the war as signs that the end of the world was approaching.

Evidence for a too-literal misreading of Revelations in 1692 comes from two sources—Deodat Lawson, who heard the possessed Mercy Lewis sing:

Thou art worthy to take the book and to open the seals thereof:  
for thou wast slain and has redeemed us to God by thy blood.  
Revelations 5: 9

and from occasional reference to the existence of a seal on the forehead of a specter of the witch's victim—possibly traceable to Revelations 9, which is most suggestive as a plan for the infestation of the region by witches, in that it describes an assault by locusts following the opening of a "bottomless pit."<sup>74</sup>

74. Lawson, *A Brief and True Narrative*, in *Narratives of the Witchcraft*, ed. Burr, p. 161.

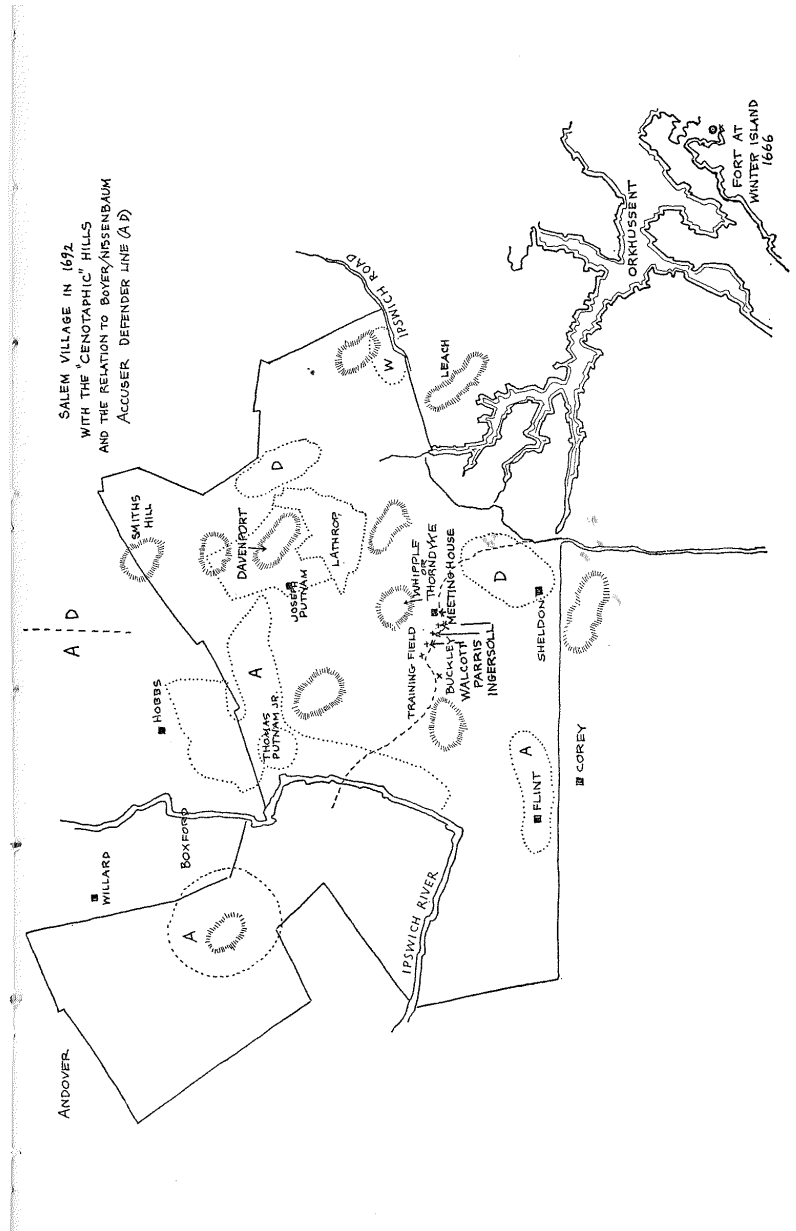


FIGURE 4



The act of opening the pit was represented by "the smoke of a great furnace [which darkened] the sun and the air," an image of which the York massacre could be a symbolic equivalent. The locusts which appeared had been "commanded [not to] hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree, but only those men which have not the seal of God in their forehead," and the pain which they were to inflict was to cause "the torment of a scorpion when he striketh a man." The parallel between the Biblical locusts and the Essex County witches is evident even in the description of their appearance:

And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions.

And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron: and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle.

And they had a king over them which is the angel of the bottomless pit.

Revelations 9: 8,9,10

Abigail Williams, who lived in the Reverend Parris's home was, with the minister's daughter, one of the first to have been afflicted, displaying behavior imitative of these locusts in the presence of Deodat Lawson. The incident occurred on 19 March 1692, and Lawson noted that she was "hurried with violence to and fro in the room, sometimes making as if she would fly, stretching up her arms as high as she could, and crying 'Whish, Whish, Whish' several times." Abigail next debated with a specter, and then retreated from it "to the fire and begin to throw fire brands about the house, and run up against the back, as if she would run up chimney."<sup>75</sup>

In this compact allegorical drama, Abigail Williams seems to have performed the parts of both the locust and its victim. Mercy Lewis had attempted to inform Lawson in the same indirect way with recitations against the heathen, but Lawson and his colleagues never understood the New Testament allusion, and the frustrated girls soon advanced from play-acting to "fits."

In February of 1692 Abigail Williams developed an illness and suffered with "pains in her head and other parts" throughout that month. This illness, which was coincident with Tituba's first supposed contact with the devil, is significant because the devil had constantly advised

75. Lawson, *A Brief and True Narrative*, in *Narratives of the Witchcraft*, ed. Burr, p. 153.

Tituba to "doe hurt" to the children "and pinch them." Tituba attempted to resist the devil and to ignore his orders, but said she was coerced into obedience:

they hall me [away] and make me pinch Betty, and the next Abigail, and then quickly went away altogether.<sup>76</sup>

Like the children, Tituba was also hallucinating, but for different reasons. The emphasis upon physical injury in her fantasies—particularly acts against Elizabeth Parris—seems derived from a psychological conflict made worse by her frequent dislocation from a familiar place. Tituba's impulse to pinch seemed to Abigail Williams like the torments of the Biblical locusts, and as further reinforcement, Tituba as an Indian could be linked at a symbolic level to the fiendish Indians of the "eastward."

## VI

The more accurate historical understandings of the witch hunts have during the last few decades resulted largely from an effort to comprehend the event more as a social phenomenon than as a crime. Practically all of the agents involved in the events of 1692—witches, judges, and ministers—have been perceived as having behaved as the culture expected they should; but this objectivity has not been extended to the "afflicted" girls. While they are no longer accused of fraud, it has become easier to dismiss them as being insignificant. The spectrum of analysis regarding the cause of the afflictions has embraced ergot poisoning, hysterical symptoms owing to fear of magic, and antecedents of the revivalism of the eighteenth century. The Indian war and the complex of fears which it might have generated would, in contrast with these other conjectures, help to make the girls' behavior comprehensible as a contemporary and appropriate response under very real emotional stress.<sup>77</sup>

The 1692 witch hunt was very much a product of King William's War, which seemed not only to have exacerbated village factionalism, but to have promoted the further alienation of Salem Village from Salem Town. For two and a half years, Samuel Parris had—on a weekly basis—impressed upon his congregation the fact that they might be

76. Examination of Tituba, in Samuel G. Drake, ed., *The Witchcraft Delusion in New England: Its Origins, Progress and Development*, vol. 3 (1866; reprint ed., New York: Burt Franklin, 1970), pp. 187–94.

77. Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, pp. 23–30.

betrayed, and that they would have to be vigilant to survive. Less sophisticated persons might have easily confused his rhetoric with admonitions about the war in the "eastward"; and among these less-sophisticated individuals were the female children who were deprived of an active role in the war and were thus forced to stand helplessly by as spectators to the massacres. The magnitude of the witch hunts increased, because these same girls influenced the spread of accusations into the frontier towns of Andover and Billerica, where massacres had taken place and where the people were uneasy.

New England Puritanism transformed the anxieties of children in wartime into a witch panic, because Puritans regarded the relationship of Indian and witch as fundamental to a perception of Indian war; nor was theirs a religion which could accommodate itself to the needs of children or be sympathetic in dealing with their fears. Finally, Puritanism was oriented toward Biblical symbolism, which greatly affected the colonists' outlook upon the present. Indian wars and captivities were described in epic language, and the Indian's power was exaggerated so that his defeat would appear more meaningful and heroic. The mundane and the accidental aspects of Indian war should have helped the girls to see the Indians more realistically, but the Puritan emphasis was on the heathen's devil-inspired omniscience and omnipotence; it is thus not difficult to see how fear of Indians evolved into a deep-rooted belief that they were creatures of the devil. It is somewhat ironic that this dark vision of the Indian is clearly apparent even in an official directive to one of the men who would himself later be accused of witchcraft. The instructions that were delivered to Capt. John Alden following his assignment to redeem the York captives from the Indians reminded him that:

it will be necessary that you represent unto them their baseness, treachery and barbarities practised in carrying on of this warr. . . haveing alwaies declined a fair pitch battle acting [instead] like bears and wolves.<sup>78</sup>

This grisly analogy shows how much the Indian's diabolic nature seemed to be an established reality in 1692, not only to the "afflicted" of Salem Village, but to the authorities of law and order as well.

78. Instructions to Captain John Alden, 5 February 1692, Massachusetts Archives 37:305.