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A STORM *of* WITCHCRAFT

The Salem Trials AND the American Experience



A Storm of Witchcraft: The Salem Witch Trials

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Salem State University

Almost every society in history has “witch hunts”

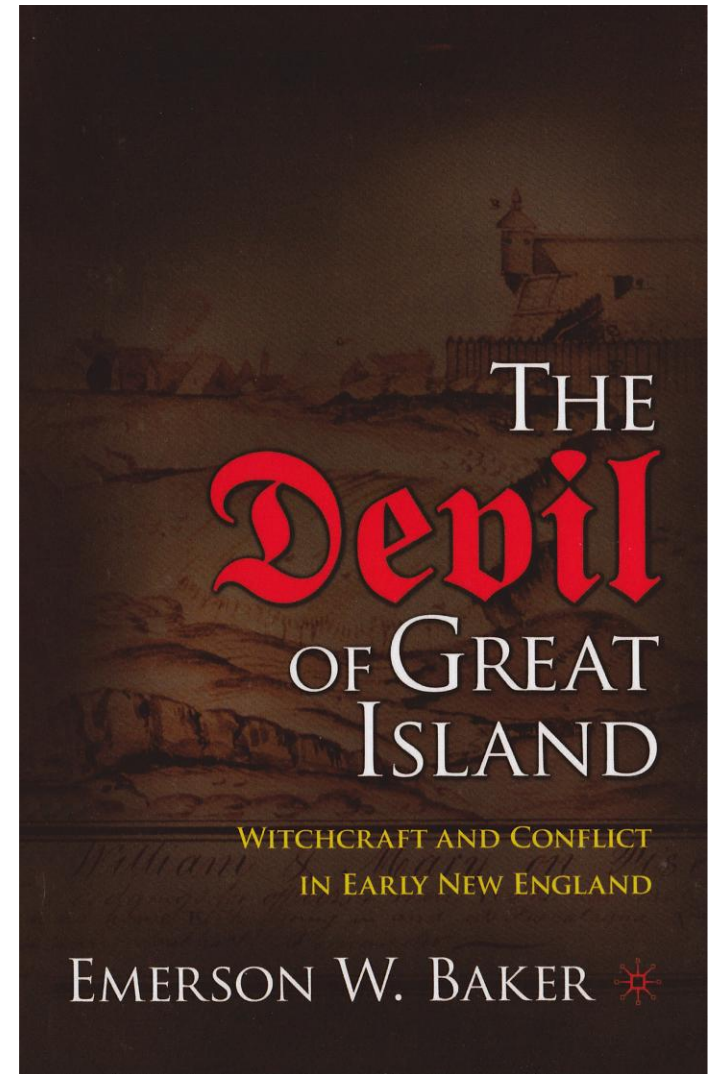
- 100,000 tried during “Great Age of Witch-Hunts” (1400-1775)
- About 50,000 are executed
- Cologne, Germany, 1626-35, approx. 2,000 executed.
- In Hungary about 800 people executed for witchcraft 1710-50



Cologne Cathedral

New England had many witch hunts before Salem's

- More 100 people were accused of witchcraft in New England before Salem
- From 1647-1688, 13 people were executed for witchcraft in Connecticut & Massachusetts.
- In most of these witch hunts, only one or two are accused.



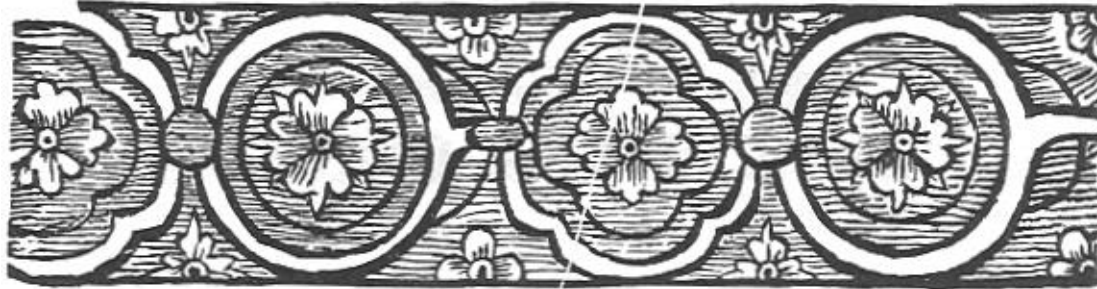
George & Alice Walton, Quakers

- The Waltons run a debauched tavern in Portsmouth, NH (present-day New Castle)
- It is “supernaturally” assaulted with flying stones throughout the summer of 1682



Detail showing Great Island, from Romer's Prospect of Fort William & Mary, 1705, British Library BLL01004987813

Salem 1692-1693: by far the largest witchcraft crisis in American history



- At least 172 people accused of witchcraft
- 156 have surviving legal proceedings
- 19 executed, 1 pressed to death, 5 die in jail
- But by European standards, Salem is not even a large outbreak.
- So why is Salem the witch city?

Salem Trials: a turning point in American history

- The beginning of the end of Puritan New England.
- The beginning of our distrust of government.
 - Complete failure of the government to protect the innocent
 - First real government cover-up
- The victims & their families never let it be forgotten!

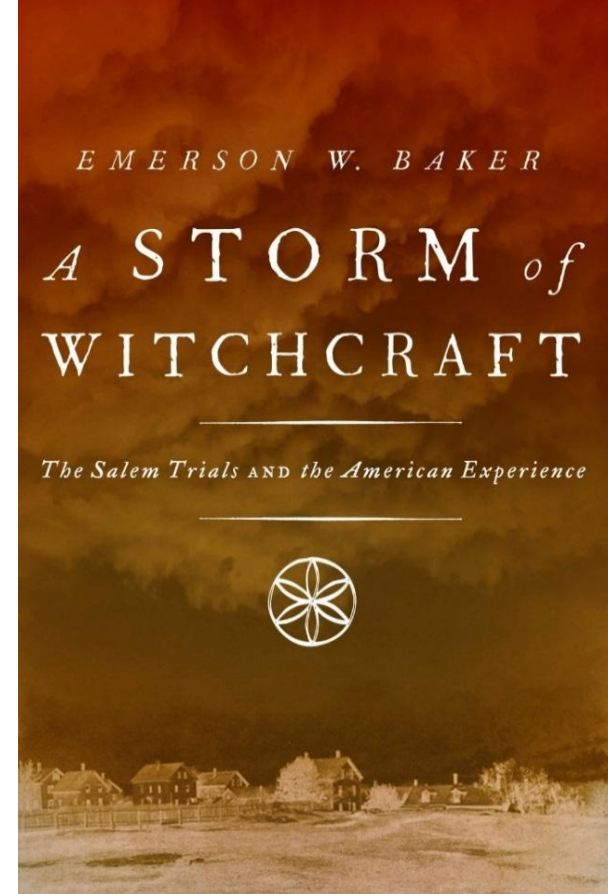


The Examination of a Witch, TH Matteson
Peabody Essex Museum (PEM)

What happened?

A perfect storm created America's largest witch hunt

- Longstanding factionalism in Salem Village
- Colony-wide political instability
- Perceived decline of Puritanism
- Worst weather of the Little Ice Age
- Inflation, high taxes and economic failure
- Military disaster – King William's War
- **All of these are signs of God's displeasure!**



So, what caused the afflictions accusations?



Examination
of a Witch
T.H. Mattson
Peabody
Essex
Museum

- It's a long and complicated story....
- No simple answers!

Mass Conversion Disorder

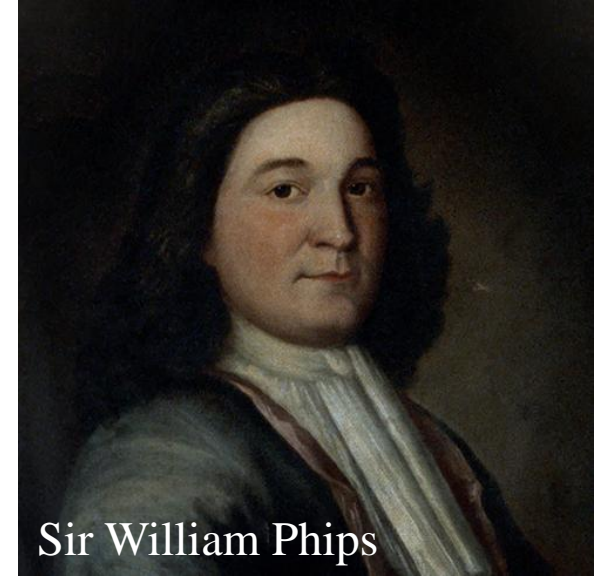
- Hard to diagnose even today.
- Mental stresses uncontrollably “converting” into physical symptoms
 - Not faking or “acting out”
- Target population: teenagers, especially girls.
- Usually starts with high status people
- Le Roy, New York: cheerleaders
- Salem Village: Rev. Parris’ daughter Betty & niece Abigail Williams.



Salem Village Parsonage

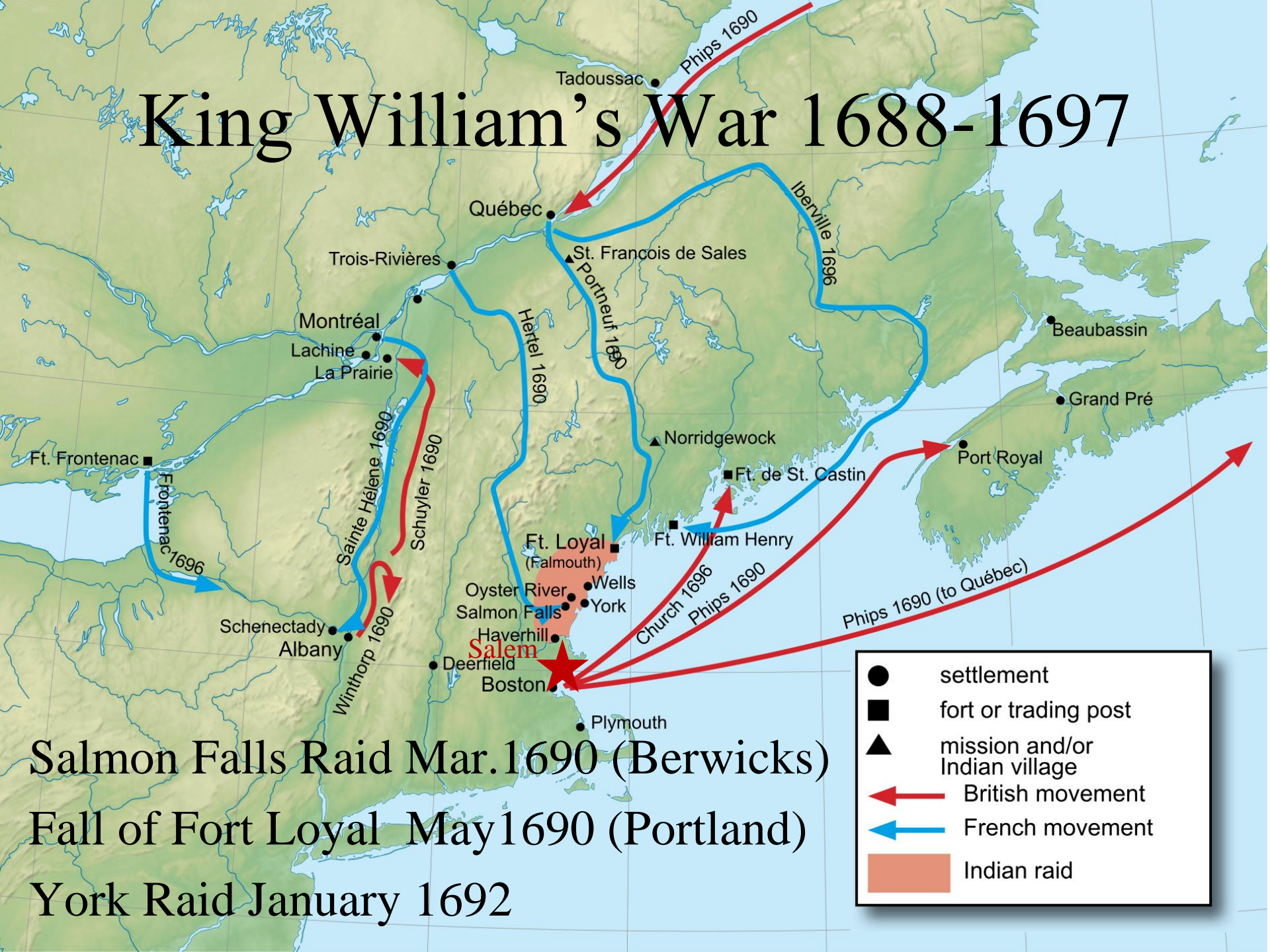
Over 40 people in the Salem witch trials had ties to Maine

- Sarah Churchwell, Abigail Hobbs, Mercy Lewis, Mercy Short & other afflicted accusers
- Rev. George Burroughs & Ann Pudeator executed
- Judges Corwin, Hathorne, Gedney & Sewall own extensive Maine holdings.
- Governor Sir William Phips
- This pattern is not a coincidence.....
- War hysteria grips Salem, many cases of PTSD



Sir William Phips

King William's War 1688-1697



Salmon Falls Raid Mar. 1690 (Berwicks)

Fall of Fort Loyal May 1690 (Portland)

York Raid January 1692

Witchcraft is a gendered crime

- About 75% of accused are women (in Salem 76%)
- Men who are accused tend to be relatives and defenders.
- Afflicted: “girls” & a couple women
 - Plus John Indian & Judge Jonathan Corwin’s son.
- But many men also testify to more typical witchcraft – harm to people & property, poppets, preternatural knowledge, etc..



First accused: “round up the usual suspects!”

- Tituba – Enslaved Native American woman, owned by Rev. Samuel Parris.
- Sarah Good – poor, homeless, “enemy to all good.”
- Sarah Osborne – widowed, she frees and marries her Irish indentured servant, Alexander Osborne.
- But overtime, the accusations spread outward & up



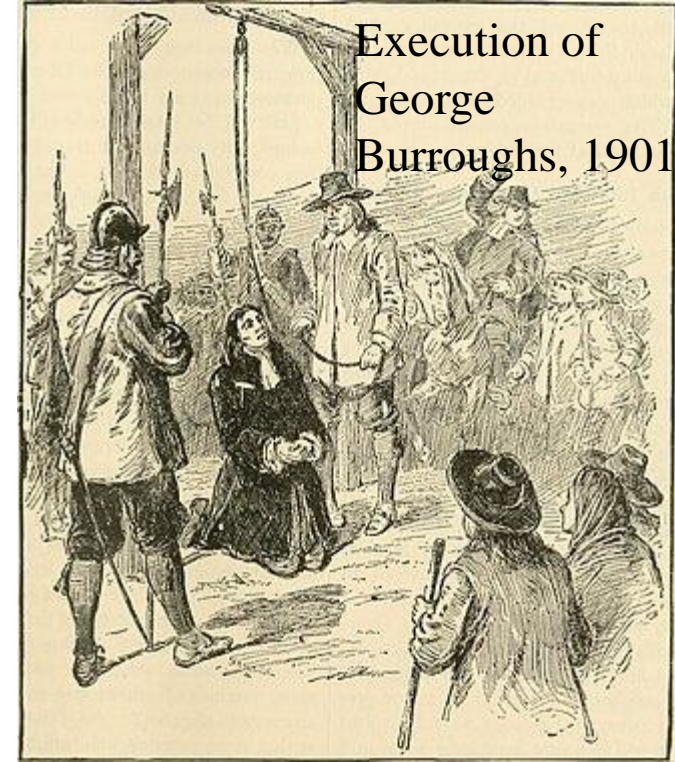
The “afflicted girls” lead tough, stressful lives

- Afflicted are mostly late teens
- Many are servants
- Quite a few are war refugees.
- Some are orphans or had lost a parent in the war.
- Mercy Short loses family in 1690 Salmon Falls
 - She is taken captive to Quebec, then ransomed back
 - Called Satan “a black man, or tawny, like an Indian.”
 - Classic Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

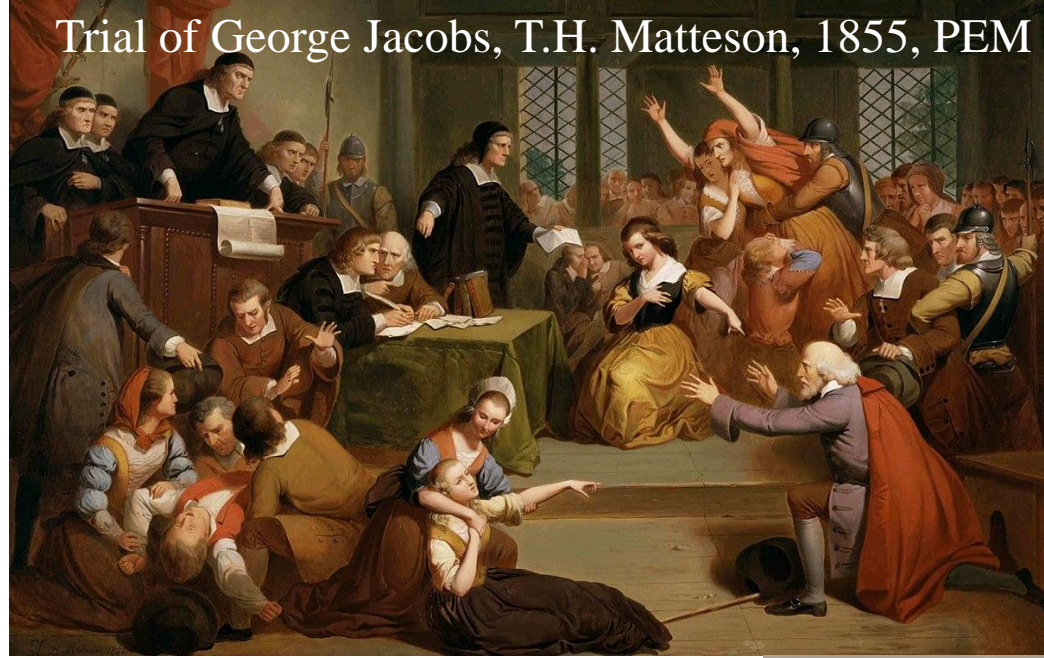


Verbal & physical abuse? Probably

- Specters of most men executed in 1692 beat the afflicted girls and harmed women
- Most of the men had histories of violence.
- John Willard – wife beater
- George Burrough's wives' ghosts say he killed them.
 - He is known for his strength & secretive & controlling ways



George Jacobs hanged Aug. 19, 1692



- 83 years old, and walked with two canes
- His serving girl, Sarah Churchwell claims his specter beats her with his canes
- Sarah is born in Saco, Maine, her family moves to Marblehead in 1675 during KPW.
- Check out the Salem witch trials exhibit at the Peabody Essex Museum.



Jacobs' canes at PEM

What is Spectral Evidence?



- The specter (spirit or ghost) of the “witch” afflicts the victims (called the “afflicted girls.”)
- But only the victims can see the specter!
- In 1692, specters were real. Witches used them to harm. Everyone believed in them. Witches were real!

But spectral evidence is controversial in 1692



- Could a witch use a specter of an innocent person? The judges said no.
- Others disagreed, as Satan was the great trickster.
- The convictions end in Salem, once Governor Phips rules out spectral evidence.
 - He does this once his wife is accused of witchcraft!

Conversion, PTSD,
abuse and war
hysteria do not
explain it all...



- Certainly some fraudulent accusations.
 - Probably more than we like to admit.
- The afflicted seem to become afflicted on cue
- After Bridget Bishop is executed on June 10, there is no turning back...

But, no, the 1692 outbreak was not caused by ergot poisoning!



- You would have to have a communal grain supply for all of Massachusetts!
- Ergot causes gangrene: one's limbs to blacken and fall off! These symptoms were not observed in 1692.
- Ergot: “hallucinogenic 1960s” interpretation of witchcraft.
- Don't believe encephalitis or lyme disease either...

Accusations
were not made
to get the
accused's land

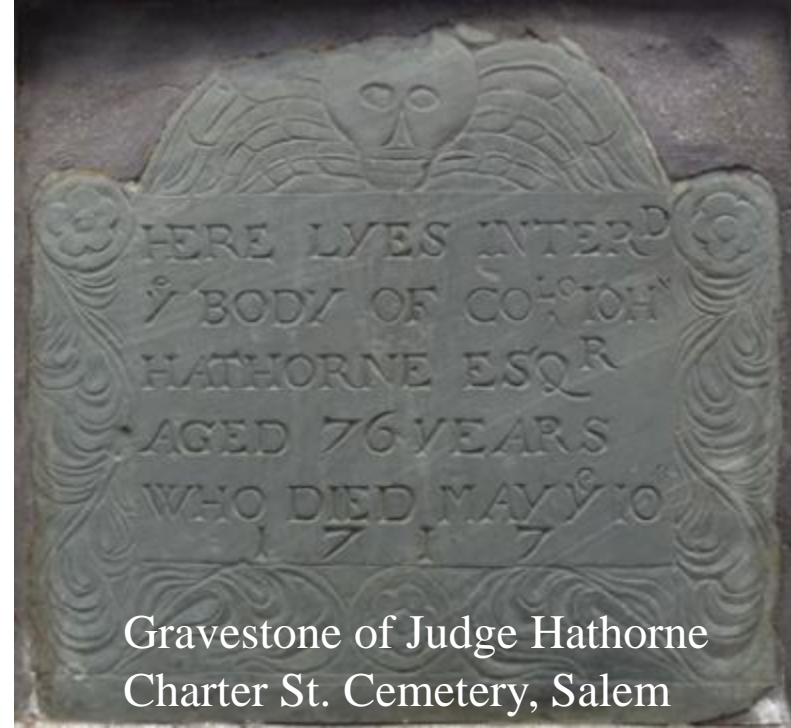


Nurse Farm, Danvers

- Yes, a felon's personal possessions (clothes, cash, furniture, livestock) could be seized.
- But their house and all real estate could not be taken. If executed, it passed to their heirs.
- AND, seized possessions went to the Crown!

The colony's problems
make the judges presume
guilt from the start.

They know Satan is
present!



Gravestone of Judge Hathorne
Charter St. Cemetery, Salem

- Judge Hathorne questions Sarah Good:
 - “What evil spirit have you familiarity with?
 - Have you made no contract with the devil?
 - Why do you hurt these children?”
- Why are they hanging judges?

Why do the judges turn legal precedent on its head?



- Before 1692 if you confessed to witchcraft, usually after “judicial torture,” you were executed
- As recently as 1688 Goody Glover has confessed to witchcraft in Boston and had been executed.
 - But only after physicians confirmed her sanity

But in 1692 only
those who refuse
to confess are
executed.

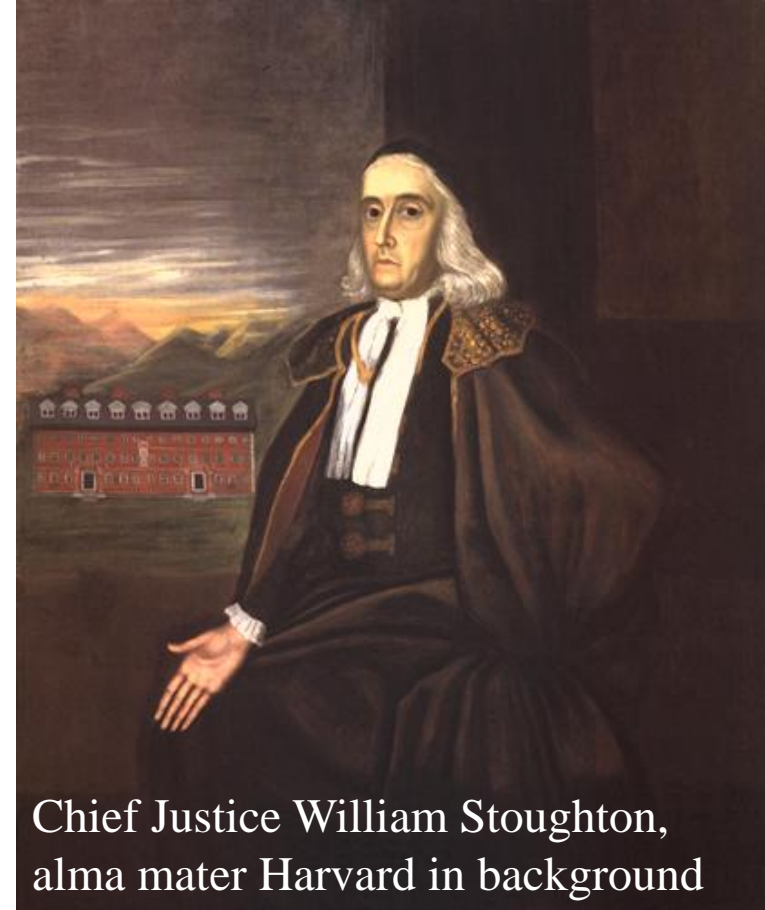


Home of Rebecca Nurse, one of the 19 executed

- All of the 55 people who confess live!
 - The majority of confessors are from Andover
- That is 35% of the 156 formally accused.
 - And, no one bothers to question their sanity, because...
- The Court of Oyer & Terminer try 28 people
 - All are found guilty and sentenced to death.

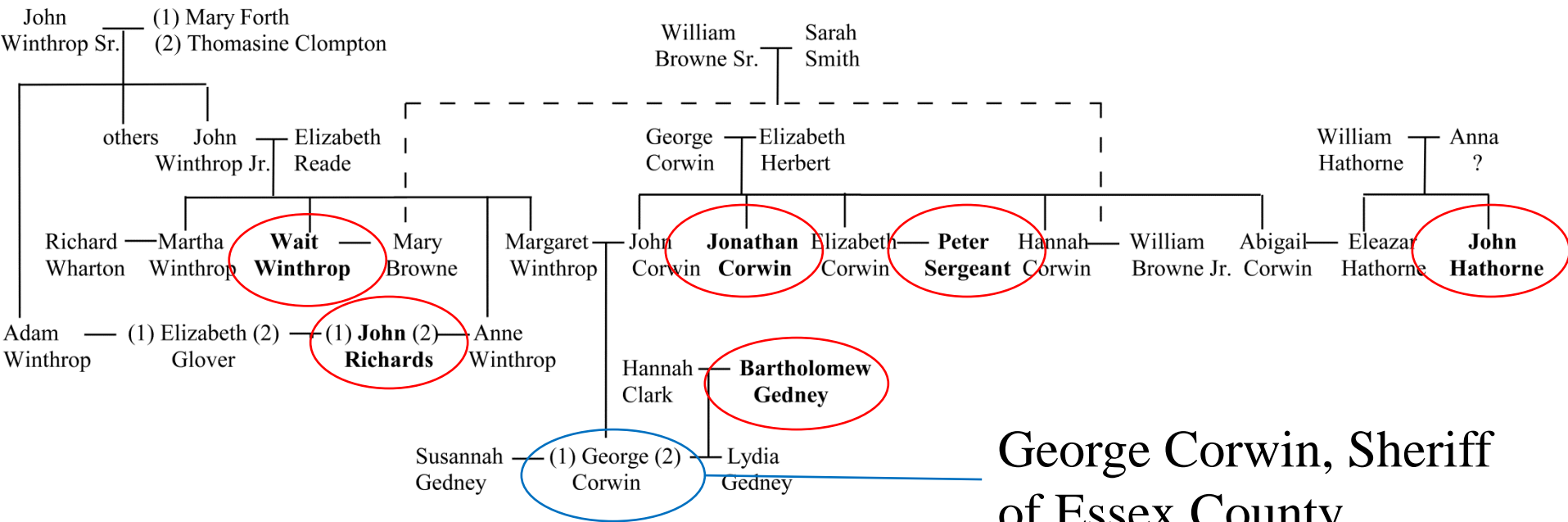
The nine judges have much in common

- Wealthy merchants
- Members of the Governor's Council
- Supporters of the campaign moral reformation.
- A majority had attended Harvard, but none were ministers



Chief Justice William Stoughton,
alma mater Harvard in background

Six of the nine judges were related by marriage



A Partial Reconstruction of the Connections of the Corwin and Winthrop families

Judges of the Court of Oyer and Terminer are in **bold type**.

In 1692 it looked like the “Papist” French and their “Heathen” Indian allies would win King William’s War



- These allies of the Devil were going to destroy the Puritan “City Upon a Hill.”

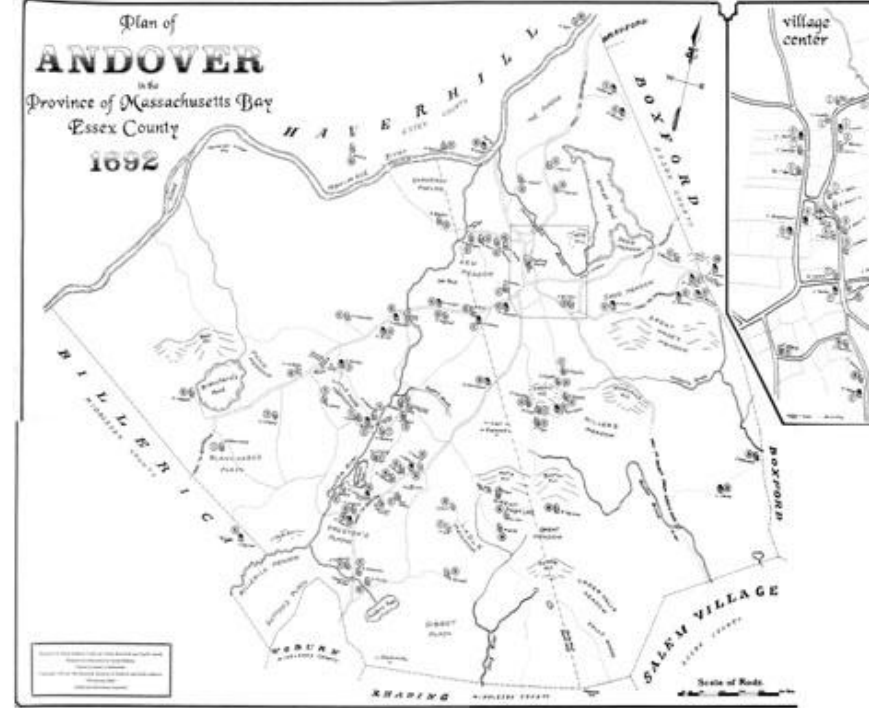
Most judges were high ranking militia officers

- Responsible for the failure of the war in northern New England, against the Natives and the French.
- Most were major speculators in frontier lands.
 - Lands that thanks to the war were now worthless
 - 4 judges own Maine sawmills, destroyed in the war
- Who are you going to blame, yourselves or someone else? Satan???



Col. Wait Winthrop

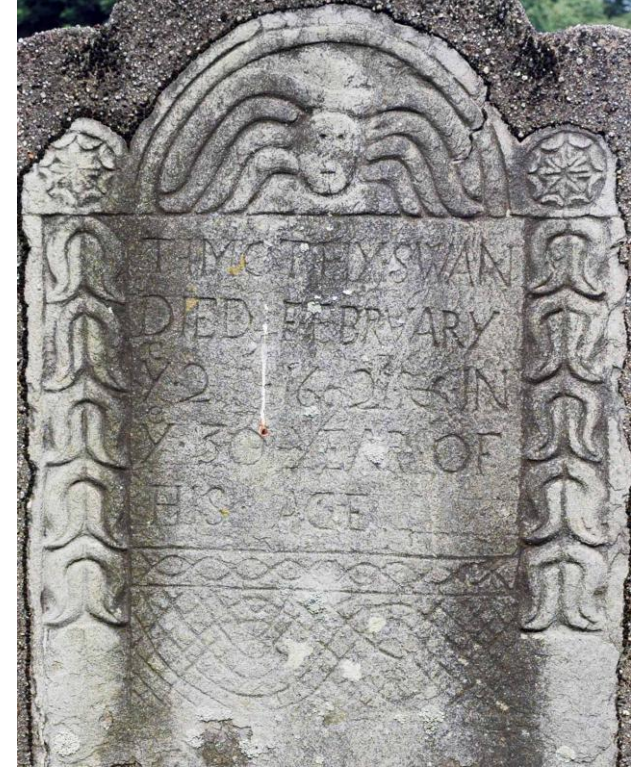
More people in Andover were accused of witchcraft than any other town!



- 45 people from Andover were jailed for witchcraft, out of a population of about 600.
- Three (Martha Carrier, Mary Parker & Samuel Wardwell) were executed.
- Includes present-day Andover & North Andover.
- Andover was on the frontier in 1692.

In July 1692 Joseph Ballard invites two of Salem's afflicted girls to Andover

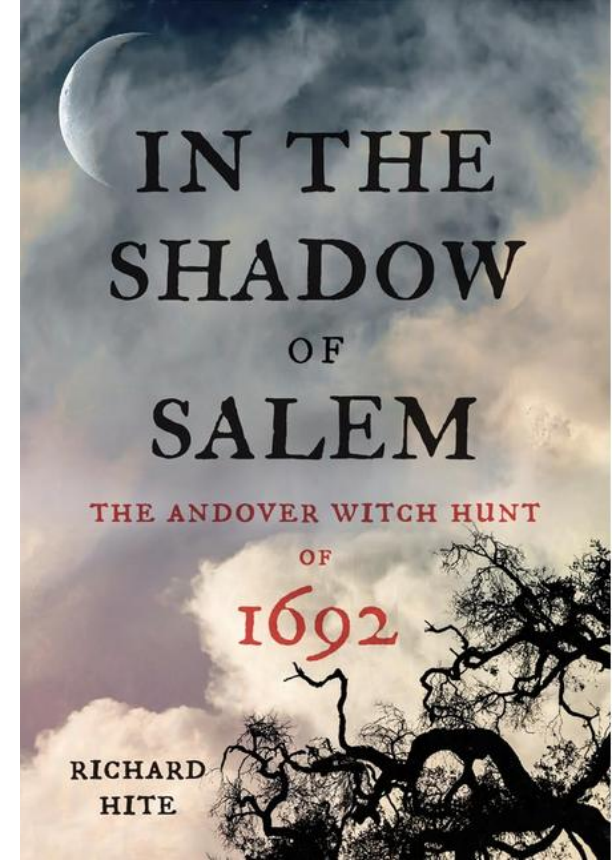
- They come to detect witches.
- One likely was Mary Warren.
- First accuse elderly Ann Foster.
- She confesses to witchcraft, and that there are 305 witches in the country! The Witch hunt grows.
- Her daughter Mary Foster Lacy, and her daughter Mary Jr. will both be accused and arrested. They both confess as well.



Timothy Swan, d. Feb. 2, 1693

We don't know why Ann confessed. But the family had suffered

- An elderly widow, about 75.
- Daughter Hannah Stone murdered by husband Hugh Stone in 1689
- Hugh is drunk & slashes her throat.
- Hannah was pregnant with her eighth child.
- His last words before he is hanged speak of contention in the Foster family.
- In 1690 son Simon Stone was very seriously wounded while on militia duty in Exeter, NH



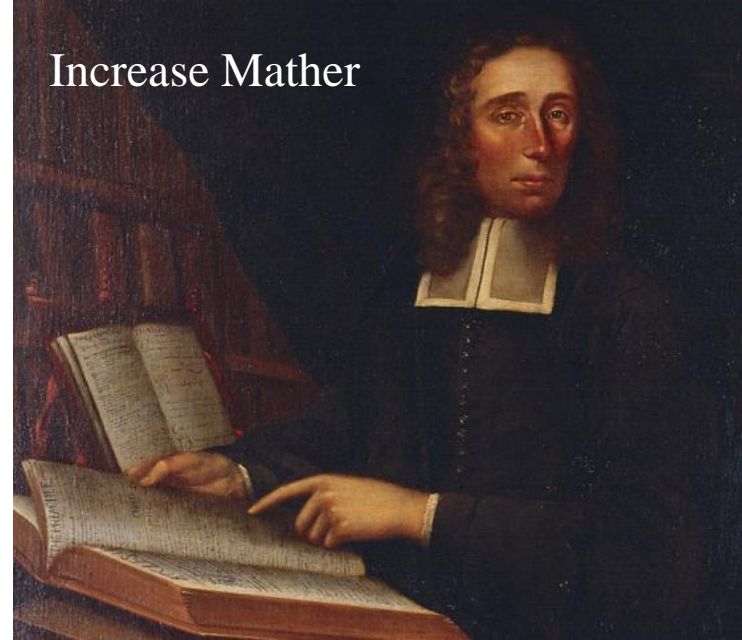
Ann & daughter Mary Lacy are tried & convicted in Sept. 1692

- Among the first confessors to be to be tried.
- They are given a stay of execution to contemplate their souls.
- 8 people who pled not guilty were convicted & executed on Sept. 22.
- These are the last executions. In October Gov. Phips ends the Court of Oyer and Terminer.



Why do the executions stop?

- People begin to realize innocent lives have been lost and began to raise concerns.
 - Everyone who had been tried had been convicted.
 - The trials were becoming rushed.
- They realized they could not be sure who was a witch
 - “It were better that Ten Suspected Witches should escape, than that one Innocent Person should be Condemned.”
 - Rev. Increase Mather (1692)
- Ann Foster and Mary Lacy’s lives had been spared



Increase Mather

But Ann dies in prison, Dec. 5, 1692

*W. I give to my Dear and Loving wife Ann Foster the use and
sole liberty of her body in that end of my house now let in Durham
the terme of her natural life and also three Cowes and twelve
sheep and all my household goods to be at her dispose after
her death as she sees cause among my children*

- Her son Abraham goes to the Salem jail and has to pay £2 10s to reclaim her body.
- We presume he brought her home to be quietly buried. But don't know where.
- Abraham had inherited the family home when father Andrew Sr. died in 1685. Andrew willed Ann half of that house.

Plan of

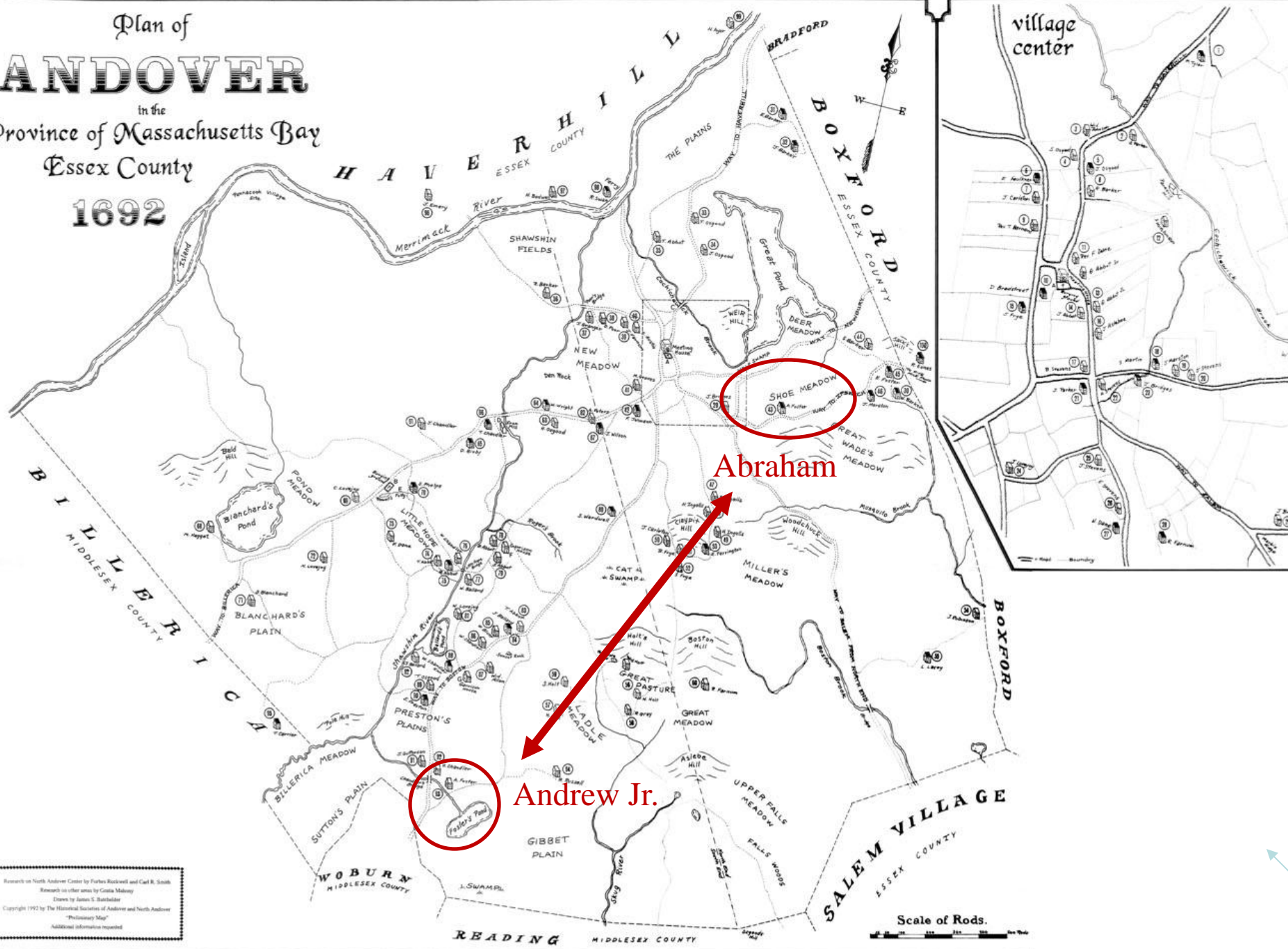
ANDOVER

in the

Province of Massachusetts Bay

Essex County

1692



Research on North Andover Center by Furber Rockwell and Carl R. Smith
Research on other areas by Gaila Mahony
Drawn by James S. Starbuck
Copyright 1992 by The Historical Society of Andover and North Andover
"Preliminary Map"
Additional Information Requested

Plan of

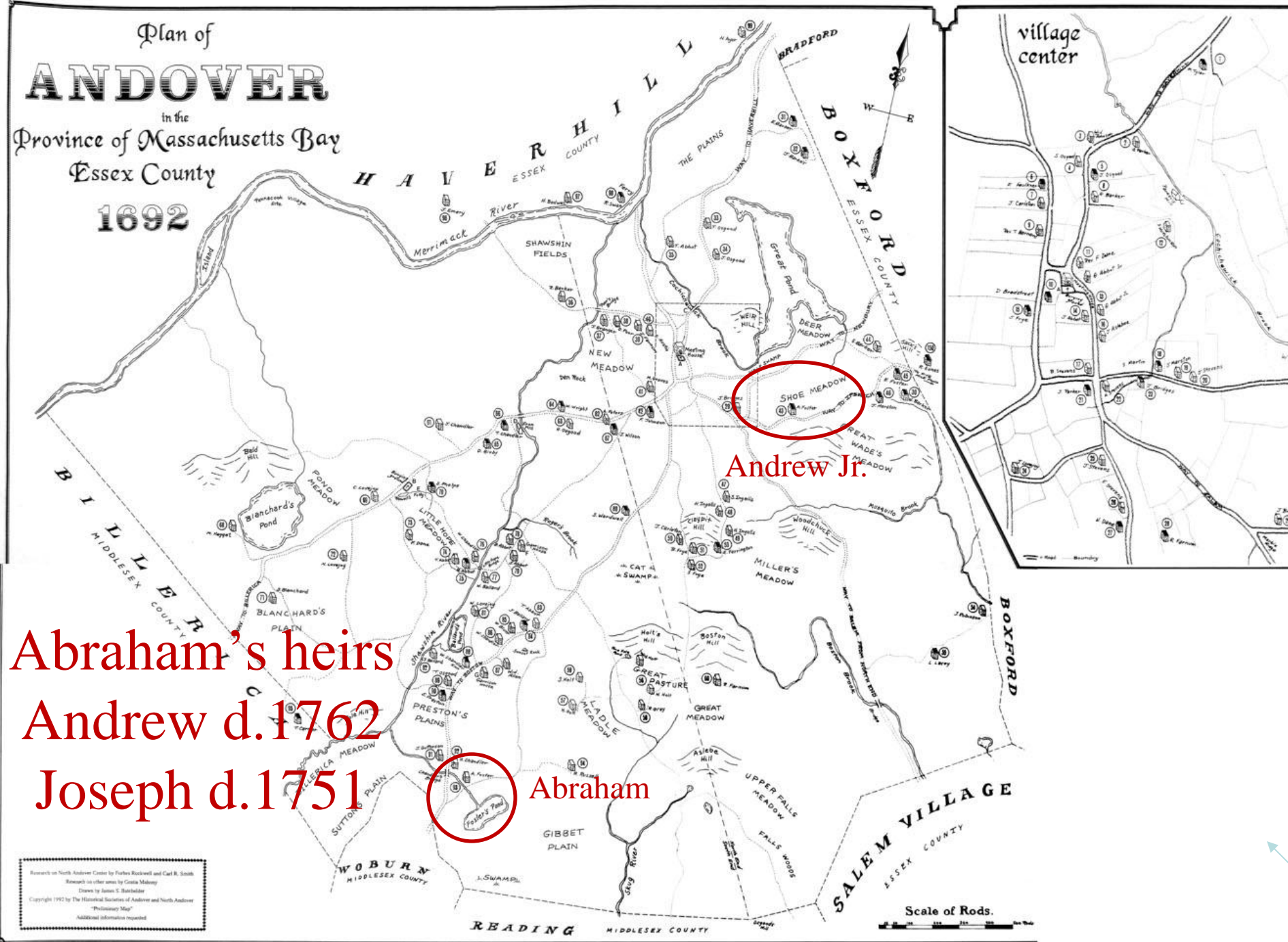
ANDOVER

in the

Province of Massachusetts Bay

Essex County

1692



Abraham's heirs

Andrew d.1762

Joseph d.1751

Abraham

Foster's Pond was only 50 acres back then
It is 120 acres now...



1795 Andover township map
Massachusetts Archives

So, we think we
are a lot smarter
today...



- Remember, witches were all too real in 1692
- Their goal was to destroy your faith and society
- But it is almost impossible to detect this enemy.
 - Witches could be anyone: family, friends, ministers
- So, what do you do?? How to you stop them??
- Swap the word witches in 1692 for terrorists today and you understand their problem

Thanks!

Happy to Answer Questions

