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Factoring Guilt:
Determining Blame during the Salem Witch Trials

John R. Bergman, Jr.

Introduction

The Salem Witch Trials that took place from February 1692 to May 1693 in Salem, Massachusetts, has remained a controversial topic among historians for the last 320 years. Speculation continues over the causes, why the trials lasted so long, and the types of verdicts that were made during the trials. As part of these debates a new theory has emerged in the past twenty years that shifts the focus from the little girls who made the initial accusations. Historians are now examining the crucial role played by older women and men in the cycle of accusations that put over 150 people in jail and led to the deaths of 25 colonial citizens, including the passing of an unnamed infant that Sarah Good had given birth to while in prison.¹

Everyone knows the “story” of the Salem Witch Trials. During a cold Salem winter in 1692, many young girls from the Salem Village neighborhood began to meet at the house of Reverend Samuel Parris. These girls had nothing to do so they sat around and listened to stories of witchcraft that were told by Tituba, a Barbados slave of Parris. The girls became enthralled with Tituba’s stories of voodoo, tricks and spells, the occult, dancing with the devil around a bonfire, telling fortunes, and learning about the black arts. The connection between these girls, ages nine to twelve years old, and Tituba led the village of Salem into its witchcraft hysteria.²

This belief that the hysteria started with this “circle of little girls” has dominated historical works on the Salem trials. According to the *Salem Observer* (1890), “[t]he terrible witchcraft delusion in Salem in 1692 was caused almost entirely of children. But for a half-dozen young girls, those men and women would not have been [hanged] on Gallow Hills.”³ The tale of

¹ Francis Hill, *The Salem Witch Trials Reader*, (Boston: Da Capo Press, 2000), xv.

² Bernard Rosenthal, *Salem Story: Reading the Salem Witch Trials of 1692*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 11-12.

³ W.S. Nevins, *Salem Observer* (1890). In *Salem Story: Reading the Salem Witch Trials of 1692*, Bernard Rosenthal (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 32.

the young girls did not begin with the *Salem Observer* but with the witch trial participants, who began to write about the Salem Witch Trials. One of the first people to speak of the “circle of little girls” was Cotton Mather who participated in the trials. According to Francis Hill, “Mather’s myth of the ‘afflicted’ girls, [who became] strongly involved in sorcery and magic,” were led by Tituba and John Indian through a witching circle.⁴ Since he was a participant, Mather’s description of the “circle” would greatly influence later historians who would write about the trials.

Due to Mather’s writing contribution on the event, historians began to use his archival evidence to write books that stated that young girls were at the center of the affair. In 1867, historian Charles W. Upham, who was the seventh mayor of Salem, began to become fascinated with the Salem Witch Trials. He turned his interest of the tragic history of the Salem Witch Trials into a book called *Salem Witchcraft*, which argued that the “circle of young girls” were part of a fraud that was pre-arranged by Parris, who worried that he was about to be terminated as Salem Village’s minister. During the trials, Tituba and the young girls influenced and delved on each other’s testimony to cause the controversy. Samuel Drake in *Annals of Witchcraft in New England* (1869) states that these young girls were the key characters that caused the trials to occur. M.V.B. Perley in 1911, Winfield S. Nevins in 1916, and Marion Starkley in 1949 continued to use the circle of little girls to explain the events of the Salem Witch Trials.⁵

Since historians began to play off each other’s texts and did not look into the primary documentation of the trials, the myth that only young girls were involved in the witch allegations became an accepted part of the trials’ history. The “circle of little girls” also became part of

⁴ Hill, 227-228.

⁵ Ibid., 227-231 ; Rosenthal, *Salem Story*, 33; Marion L. Starkey, *The Devil in Massachusetts A Modern Enquiry into the Salem Witch Trials*, (New York: Doubleday, 1949), 29-30; George Edward Ellis, *Memoir of Charles Wentworth Upham*, (Cambridge: Press of John Wilson and Son, 1877), 21, 31-32.

popular culture. Arthur Miller's play *The Crucible* shows accusations being made by both old and young women. Movies and television shows, such as the *Sabrina, the Teenage Witch* episode entitled "The Crucible," suggest that fraudulent accusations were only made by young girls during the whole affair.⁶ The myth of the circle of little girls can also be found in tourist attractions in Salem. For example, Salem's Witch Dungeon Museum, which uses wax figures to tell the trials' story, identifies the circle of little girls as the main cause of the Salem Witch Trials.

A careful reading of the evidence of the official Salem Witch Trials documents, however suggest that men played a major role as accusers and complainants during the Salem Witch Trials. Analysis of the claims, ages, status, geography, and accusations (who, when, and how many they accused) of these men provides a clearer idea of the fundamental role that these men played in the affair.⁷

Accusations Made By Men – Demographics

Men played a prominent role in the trials from the very beginning. During the eight months of accusations from February to October 1692, over 150 people were accused of witchcraft. Of that 150, almost half of them were accused by men. On March 2, 1692, the first men, who consisted of William Allen, John Hughes, William Good, and Samuel Braybrook, joined in some of the first accusations of witches in Salem. William Allen argued that Sarah Good came as a specter to him while in his chamber. He said that Good did not allow him to move and she came in a form of an unusual light. Allen contended that Tituba and Sarah Osborne had both came as beasts and were making strange noises near his home. Also, William

⁶ Heartbreak Films, "The Crucible," *Sabrina, the Teenage Witch*, May 9, 1997.

⁷ There are no official transcripts of the trials in the archives but much documentation of the affair has been found. Information from these documents can be found in Bernard Rosenthal, ed., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

Good argued that his own wife, Sarah Good, may have had a devil's mark. He claimed to the court that his wife had developed a wart that he had not seen before and worried that she had been working with the devil. John Hughes stated in his accusation that he saw Sarah Good come into his home in the shape of a bright lighted grey cat.⁸

On October 3, 1692, the last accusation made by a man was lodged by John Cole, a cooper from Lynn, a city outside of Salem Village. He accused Sarah Cole, a woman from Salem, of tormenting his wife by causing her to see strange sights. He also stated that he too had been afflicted since Sarah Cole had beaten him on the head and taken his breath away while he was praying. By the end of the trials, around 250 accusations were made by about 160 men. These accusations came in the form of letters, indictments, examinations, depositions, testimonies, and complaints. Out of the estimated 250 accusations, men accused around 71 New England citizens throughout the trials.⁹

The men that actively participated in the Salem trials came from all types of backgrounds. Many were farmers while others were brick-makers, hired men, coopers, weavers, captains, and laborers. With this information in mind, it seems to suggest that social standing did not matter when making witch accusations during the trials. The ages of the men complainants ranged drastically during the event. Many of these men's ages were between the late twenties to mid-forties which suggests that a lot of adult men, who were married and had occupations, were making the accusations. Although most of these men were of adult age (ages 22-81), there were several young men (ages 14-24) who stated that they had been victims of witchcraft. This group of young men included John DeRich (16 years old), James Fuller (18 years old), Henry Herrick (21 years old), Humphrey Clark (21 years old), and Samuel Wilkins (19 years old). At the age of

⁸ Bernard Rosenthal, ed., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, 141.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 101-118, 680; Hill, xv.

fourteen, Jonathan Batchelor would become the youngest man known to make an accusation during the trials. Before he made an accusation, Jonathan's uncle, Henry Herrick, stated that Jonathan Batchelor saw Sarah Good on the farm and asked her to leave. Before she left, she threatened the lives of two cows on the Herrick farm. In Jonathan Batchelor's accusation, he stated that Sarah Good had bewitched his grandfather's cattle since they were not in their rightful places on the farm and that many of the cattle let loose in a strange manner after she had threatened him.¹⁰

Several men over fifty also made accusations. This group of older men included: Nathaniel Ingersoll (58 years old), William Brown (70 years old), John Pressy (53 years old), and John Hale (56 years old). One of the oldest known accusers during the trials was an 81 year old man named Bray Wilkins. He accused John Willard of witchcraft on August 4, 1692. In his deposition, he stated that John Willard asked him and his neighbors to pray for him since people were accusing him of witchcraft. Wilkins stated that he did not pray for him and believed that since he did not pray, Willard was causing serious pain in his stomach that lasted for almost an entire day.¹¹

Along with ages, the geographical locations of where men accusers lived were quite different as well. Accusers such as William Good, William Braybrook, Samuel Parris, the Putnam Family, and Benjamin Hutchinson were Salem Village residents. Also, several men from other communities came to Salem to accuse witches. Thomas Borman, John Edwards, and James Fuller, Jr. came from Ipswich. Others traveled from Lynn, Salisbury, and nearby Salem to make their dispositions. The rate of the accused fluctuated over the eight month period. Most of the accusations made by men took place in the months of May and June with an estimated 139

¹⁰ Ibid., 169, 424, 459, 523, 529, 930, 943, 955.

¹¹ Ibid., 176-177, 257-258, 300, 528.

accusations being made during the two month period. By July, allegations made by men tapered off to less than ten accusations for the month. In August, accusations lodged by men began to rise once again, peaking in September. The last accusation lodged by a man took place on October 3, 1692.¹²

Accusations Made

Men lodged a variety of accusations during the trials. Their allegations were typically similar to the charges lodged by women. The most common theme in accusations developed by men involved apparitions or specters of the accused, usually of a woman. Some of the accusers claimed that they saw the accused in the form of an animal. Thomas Borman testified that he saw Rachel Clinton in the form of cat. A cat appeared in front of him and he instantly became afraid. Although he was terrified, he tried to apprehend it due to his curiosity. Boarman stated that after following the cat, he saw a great circle. The cat vanished, but when thinking about the cat, he thought it resembled Rachel Clinton. Many other men claimed to have seen specters of black hogs. Joseph Ring stated that he had seen Susannah Martin transform herself into a black hog. In June 1692, John Westgate accused Alice Parker of turning herself into a black pig. He stated that the pig came running towards him with an open mouth, in an attempt to devour him.¹³

Men also claimed, as well as many women during the trials, that woman came to their homes as apparitions seeking to harm them. These specters came in many forms. Some men stated that these so-called witches came in the shape of a shadow while others said that they were in the form of an unusual bright light. Elizer Keyser argued that George Burroughs came to him in the shape of a strange light when he was at home one night. Due to the event, Keyser felt frightened when he saw it. He blamed Burroughs for the strange light because he had visited

¹² Ibid., 233-234, 246, 270, 927, 930, 936-938,

¹³ Ibid., 168, 360.

Keyser that night. William Beale claimed that Philip English came into his home in the shape of a shadow/darkness. He said the shadow resembled the form of Philip English of Salem. By the next day Beale claimed that he felt ill and had a strong pain in his side. He concluded that English had bewitched him.¹⁴

Each person who made specter allegations seemed to have their own unique story. John DeRich stated that a dead husband and wife had appeared to him and accused George Jacob, Sr. of having killed them. Some men said that they saw people transforming to hideous shapes and creatures, while others suggested that the apparitions threatened to do harm if they did not cooperate with them. Humphrey Clark, who was 21 years old, said that he was quite frightened when he saw the apparition of Sarah Wilds because she shook his bed during the night. When he awoke from the shake, he saw Wilds and jumped right into the corner. Wilds' specter disappeared right after Clark jumped to the corner in his home. Also, Sam Wilkins claimed that John Willard's specter had afflicted him and told him that he would carry him away by the morning, if he did not stop running away from him. Thomas Putnam testified that his daughter Ann Putnam was seeing the specter of Sarah Procter, who was afflicting Ann because she would not sign the devil's book. William Stacy claimed that the specter of Bridget Bishop came into his home and threatened his family while they were in bed.¹⁵

The bewitchment and harming of animals was another common accusation that both men and women made during the trials. Thomas Burman, Jr. claimed that he had seen the specter of Rachel Clinton on his farm. He argued that after he had seen her specter; his cows would not produce milk. He also accused Clinton for killing off one of his healthy cows. John Edwards also made accusations that Clinton had bewitched his pigs and caused them to die. According to John

¹⁴ Ibid., 243-244.

¹⁵ Ibid., 266, 316, 330, 459, 523, 529, 603.

Kimball, Susannah Martin had cursed his cattle after an unfair business transaction for cows. He stated that the curse led to the death of an ox and several of his cattle. In August 1692, John Rogers, claimed that Martha Carrier had caused his cows to become ill and not produce milk. Thomas Gage, a farmer, proclaimed that Sarah Good had an argument with his wife about coming inside the family home. Since Gage's wife refused to let her in the house, Good stated to Sarah Gage that she would regret her decision. The next morning, the family found one of their cattle in a strange manner and would eventually die that same day. Sarah Good also was accused for harming the cattle of both the Abbey family of Salem Village and the Herrick family of Beverly. Additionally, accusations were made against Elizabeth Howe and Sarah Wilds for harming and killing several cows.¹⁶

Horses were also victims of witchcraft. In August 1692, Thomas Bailey accused John Willard of afflicting his mare. He claimed that Willard frightened his mare by projecting strange noises even though Willard was nowhere in sight. In June 1692, Isaac Cummings, Sr., claimed that after a confrontation with Elizabeth Howe's husband about using a mare, Howe cursed one of Cummings horses causing it to fall over dead.¹⁷

Although animals were said to have been bewitched during the trials, several accusations were made by men that stated that they had been afflicted by witchcraft. This form of accusation was quite common in both men and women's allegations. Throughout the trial indictments, several men claimed that they were being tormented by curses and illnesses. Benjamin Gould argued that Giles Corey and his wife, Martha Corey, came into his home at night and pinched him. He also proclaimed that John Procter had caused him enough pain that he could not put on shoes for a couple of days. Stephen Bittford accused Rebecca Nurse and Elizabeth Procter of

¹⁶ Ibid., 165, 168-169, 275, 411, 423, 424, 438, 459, 498, 652.

¹⁷ Ibid., 400, 526.

causing him extreme distress because they had caused a pain in his neck that would not allow him to move. In May 1692, Jarvis Ring proclaimed that Susannah Martin came into his home while he was sleeping and lay upon him. She tortured him by biting him. Bray Williams, stated that John Willard was causing him harm and that the pain did not go away until John Willard was imprisoned.¹⁸

Although there were many accusations that mentioned pinching, biting, and pain, the most extreme bewitchments were about death. In September 1692, John DeRich accused Margaret Jacobs of trying to kill him after he declined to the sign the devil's book. Along with the threats of killing, came the threat of tearing someone apart that was made by both men and women. According to historian Mary Beth Norton, the action of tearing someone apart came from the fear of the Indians, who were seen as devil worshippers. Indians would strip their victims, burn them, cut their flesh, and then eventually kill them. In June 1692, Joseph Ring stated that Thomas Hardy came to him threatening to tear him apart if he did not pay the two shillings that Ring owed him.¹⁹

Also, many accusations were based on oddities that men and women witnessed. Several men accused George Burroughs because he worked with the Indians in his daily life. Since Indians were seen as devil worshippers, it meant that Burroughs was working with the devil. Many men also claimed that George Burroughs had superhuman strengths since he could lift items easily. Simon Willard, in his accusation against George Burroughs, said that he was able to pick up his gun, a seven foot barrel that was extremely heavy, with one hand. Samuel Webber made a similar accusation against Burroughs by stating that he was able to lift and carry a barrel

¹⁸ Ibid., 189, 265,441, 551.

¹⁹ Ibid., 267, 581; Mary Beth Norton, *In the Devil's Snare: The Salem Witchcraft Crisis of 1692*, (New York: Vintage Books, 2002), 135.

of molasses without it being a problem. Additionally, George Herrick and William Dounton proclaimed that George Jacobs, Sr. had a devil's mark (a tett) on his body that was a quarter of an inch long.²⁰

According to historian Richard Godbeer, “[s]eventeenth-century New Englanders used magic to predict the future, heal the sick, to destroy their enemies, and to defend themselves against the occult attack.”²¹ During the seventeenth century, fortune-telling became a great occupation for many diviners because people were always willing to pay money to see what their future would entail, such as love, death, and fortune. Fortunetellers had a number of techniques that they used: palmistry where they looked into the hands of the participant and necromancy, a magical technique where the clairvoyant could communicate with demons, spirits, and the dead. When the Salem Witch Trials occurred, fortune-telling was seen as a crime and fortune-tellers had to be discrete with whom they helped so they would not get caught. During the trials, a couple of men and women were accused of being fortune-tellers. John Hale argued that Dorcas Hoar was using a book of palmistry to tell fortunes and do witchcraft. In September 1692, John Bridges accused Samuel Wardwell of telling a fortune about love and death to another man.²²

In many accusations, several men gave testimony that they had been afflicted in the past. This type of accusation was used primarily by men, not women, during the trials. Bernard Rosenthal's book *Salem Story* argued that people would come forth and make accusations that occurred ten to fifteen years before 1692. He suggests that the accusers used old fabricated stories because there was no way of proving that certain events occurred. Complainants played it

²⁰ Rosenthal, ed., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, 141, 249, 497, 515, 647.

²¹ Richard Goodbeer, *The Devil's Dominion: Magic and Religion in Early New England*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 7.

²²Ibid., 593,645 ; Richard Godbeer, *The Devil's Dominion: Magic and Religion in Early New England*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 24-25, 31-35.

smart and made sure that they would not get caught in their own web of lies. With this in mind, Rosenthal questions why the court did not ask to why the accusers had not come forward when they were first afflicted. The amount of time between when the event “occurred” and the time of the indictment differed for each person making the allegation. Sometimes the event happened a week before the accusation, while others stated that it had been a couple of months or even years since they were afflicted. Jarvis Ring argued that eight years before 1692, Susannah Martin had afflicted him by biting and lying on him as he was trying to sleep. William Stacy argued that Bridget Bishop afflicted his family fourteen years before he made his confession in May 1692. He stated that her specter had come into the house and harmed him while he was in bed. In September 1692, James Carr made an accusation that Mary Bradbury bewitched him twenty years beforehand. He stated that her specter, which came in the form of a cat, refused to allow him to move while he was in bed. He testified that he had to fight the cat specter off to regain his strength.²³

The most common accusation that was made by men, not women, during the trials was allegations that men had witnessed harm being committed on family members and friends. The accusers argued that they had witnessed the bewitchments, which often consisted of pinching, becoming speechless, being oppressed, and blindness. In many cases, the victim of the bewitchment would tell the complainant who was causing them harm. This form of allegation was used throughout the entire eight months of accusations. In May 1692, William Brown accused Susannah Martin of harming his wife. Although not himself a victim, he claimed that his

²³ Rosenthal, ed., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, 315, 330-331, 511, 603, 621, 623; Bernard Rosenthal, *Salem Story: Reading the Salem Witch Trials of 1692*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 19-20, 56-58.

wife had told him that she was being attacked by specter birds, which were pecking at her legs and pricking her with their wings.²⁴

The accused were also charged with the death of the accuser's love ones. In May 1692, James Carr, who had mentioned that Bridget Bishop harmed him, also accused her of causing the death of his children, who was a thriving individual, two years beforehand. By September 1692, a man named John Best, Sr. accused Ann Pudeator for killing his wife. He stated that his wife confessed to him that Pudeator had pinched and bruised her. Best's wife became sick and eventually died. This type of accusation became one of the easiest ways to accuse several people at once. For example, Samuel Parris accused seven people on April 12, 1692, for causing harm to his daughter and her afflicted friends. During this accusation, he stated that his daughter and her young friends had all claimed that the seven people that were being accused had caused them harm.²⁵

Prominent Men during the Trials

With over 250 accusations lodged by men during the trials, there were some men who made more accusations or had more of a role in the affair than others. Undoubtedly, the most prominent man during trial accusations was Samuel Parris. When Reverend Samuel Parris became minister of Salem he began to demand a lot of changes: an increase in his salary and the title to the parsonage. The community refused Parris' demands. He began to ordain his own deacons and in time demanded public penances for trivial matters. Some historians argue that he made several witchcraft accusations because he wanted the community to fulfill his wants and to maintain his role in the community. Historians, like Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum,

²⁴ Rosenthal, ed., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, 181, 150-151, 169,177, 179, 180, 217,233-234, 255, 257, 270, 298, 323, 331, 513, 580, 602,623, 632, 648.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 181, 150-151, 169,177, 179, 180, 217,233-234, 255, 257, 270, 298, 323, 331, 513, 580, 602,623, 632, 648.

suggest that Parris and his supportive clergymen exploited the young girls, who argued that “witches” were causing them harm. Parris convinced the community that there were witches in the community. By doing so, several people began to attend church and Parris was able to earn some revenue. This idea is feasible because two of the young girls that started accusing people of witchcraft were the daughter and niece of Parris.²⁶

John Indian, a slave of Samuel Parris, became one of the most prominent known men during the trials. Although he did not make any formal accusations, he appears as an afflicted individual during examinations and in other people’s dispositions. According to the indictments, John Indian claimed that he was bewitched by several Salem witches. From April to June 1692, John Indian’s actions and abuse would become a major factor to having fourteen people tried for witchcraft. He imitated the response of the young afflicted girls and got away with it.²⁷

On April 11, 1692, John Indian was asked by Judge John Hawthorne on if he knew who was tormenting him. He proclaimed that Goody (Sarah) Cloyce and Goody (Elizabeth) Procter were causing him harm. John Indian stated to the judge that Cloyce and Procter choked, pinched, and bit him until he bled. He also claimed that the two women wanted him to sign the devil’s book. During examinations, John Indian acted as if he was being tormented by sporadically becoming speechless, making accusations of being bitten and cut, and falling into fits. Some of the most prominent people he accused of bewitching him were John Procter, Sarah Good, and Rebecca Nurse.²⁸

²⁶Rosenthal, ed., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, 930, 943, 955, Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed: The Social Origins of Witchcraft*, (New York: MJF Books, 1974): 28-30, 170, 174; Franklin G. Mixon, Jr., “‘Homo Economicus’ and the Salem Witch Trials,” *The Journal of Economic Education*, Vol. 31, No. 2, (Spring 2000), 180-182; Linda Caporael, “The Satan Loosed in Salem?” *Science*, New Series, Vol. 92, Mo. 4234, (Apr. 2, 1976), 21.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 167, 208, 211-212, 228-230, 287, 310, 339, 344,

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 167, 173-175, 180, 196, 229, 287, 339, 344.

The men of the Putnam family, which included Thomas and Edward, were responsible for a majority of the accusations made by men during the trials. Between them, the Putnam Family had accused over thirty people of witchcraft including Bridget Bishop, Rebecca Nurse, John Procter, Sarah Wilds, George Burroughs, Susannah Martin, and Martha Corey. They made accusations from the beginning of March to September 1692. Nissenbaum and Boyer suggest that the Putnam family was very supportive of Rev. Parris during the trials and tried to help him maintain his position of Salem Village's minister. They also stated that the family was well off due to their political and social networking in the community. Ann Putnam, the daughter of Thomas Putnam and the niece of Edward Putnam, became one of the most active afflicted young girls during the Salem Witch Trials.²⁹

The Putnams used Ann to make their accusations. They claimed that Ann was being harmed and tormented by the accused. Although they did not experience the event themselves, they witnessed her pain. The Putnams argued that the accused caused blindness and harm through pricking, biting, and pinching. They also mentioned that the bewitchers choked their young relative and also caused her to go into fits. Many of the indictments made by the Putnams came in groups. For example, Thomas Putnam on April 30, 1692, with the support of Jonathan Walcott, accused six people (George Burroughs, Lydia Dustin, Susannah Martin, Dorcas Hoar, Sarah Morey, and Phillip English) of harming, afflicting, and damaging the bodies of Ann Putnam and other young girls. In May, Thomas Putnam charged nine people of witchcraft with

²⁹ Ibid., 152, 163, 180, 204, 217, 233-234, 365 ; Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed: The Social Origins of Witchcraft*, (New York: MJF Books, 1974), 114, 125-126, 128-129, 131-132; Richard Latner, "Salem Witchcraft, Factionalism, and Social Change Reconsidered: Were Salem's Witch-Hunters Modernization's Failures? *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series. Vol. 65, No. 3. July 2008: 425-426.

the help of Nathaniel Ingersoll, who was a family friend. A couple of the people they accused in May included George Jacobs, Jr. and Sarah Buckley.³⁰

Although he was already mentioned, John DeRich, the sixteen year old boy, played a prominent role during the two months that he was involved (August-September 1692). As a young man, he accused several people including Margaret Jacobs, George Jacobs, Sr., the Procter family, and Giles Corey. Three of the accused would eventually die during the trials. George Jacobs, Sr. and John Procter were hanged while Giles Corey was pressed to death. DeRich made some unique allegations against the people he accused. In one of his accusations he said that Sarah Procter, Joseph Procter, John Procter, and Margaret Jacobs would come to him every day about signing the devil's book. When he denied signing it, the Procters and Jacobs afflicted him. DeRich claimed that Phillip English and his wife Mary Doth threatened to tear him into pieces and suggested that Giles Corey worked with the devil. DeRich made a claim that there was a witch in Boston that was harming him but he could not tell who she was since she remained anonymous. His testimony seemed to be respected during the trials because he was very clear in his details. He used key words in his testimony, such as the devil's book, affliction, death, and being torn apart. His testimony mostly helped confirm that people were witches, since he mostly made allegations against people who had already been accused.³¹

Conclusion

By exploring the past and looking at many archival data, it can be proven that men played a primary role in the accusations of the Salem Witch Trials from the very beginning to the end of the trials. Although there were a group of girls who made several accusations against members of

³⁰ Rosenthal, ed., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, 150-151, 163, 177, 180, 207, 217, 221, 227, 233, 270, 292,295-296, 304, 365,589, 623.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 523-524, 581,588; Francis Hill, xv.

the Salem community, men from all age groups contributed to the affair. These men also came from different areas within and outside of Salem. This information would suggest that age, occupation, and geographical locations did not matter during the trials because men from all types of social backgrounds were making witch claims.

Their accusations, which ranged from saying they were afflicted, that they saw a specter, and were threatened to sign the devil's book, helped verify the importance of men during the affair. Evidence and the amount of accusations lodged by men would prove that they were as superstitious as women during the time period. Many accusations that men made were quite different than the accusations made by women. Instead of saying that they were being tormented, men testified that they had seen other victims being harmed, which is something women did not do during the trials. Also, in several of their allegations, they argue that they had been tormented by witches long before the trials occurred, a month to twenty years beforehand. By using this form of accusation, it would suggest that these men might have believed that they could no longer be under the spell of witches and that they were too superior to be threatened by witchcraft.

Nineteen people would be hanged during the trials due to many of the accusations lodged by men. Several of the people who were hanged for witchcraft during the trials were accused by men, such as Sarah Good, Martha Corey, George Burroughs, Mary Easty, George Jacobs, Sr., Bridget Bishop, John Willard, John Procter, and Rebecca Nurse. They also accused Giles Corey who was eventually pressed to death since he would not confess to dabbling with witchcraft. Some of the people they accused, such as Sarah Osborne, Roger Toothaker, Ann Foster, and Lydia Dustin, would die in prison during the trials. With this new knowledge, the myth of the "circle of little girls" that has become "factual" in today's society can officially be debunked

since there is evidence that proves that men were fundamental in making many of the accusations during the trials. Also, the Salem Witch Trials can be seen as an affair committed by both sexes and not just perceived as only being caused by women, specifically young girls.³²

³² Hill, xv.

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