

The Tyler Family  
and  
The Salem Witchcraft Trials

By

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October 1997

## Preface

This short paper is not a complete history of the Salem Witch trials. It may not even be a complete history of the Tyler family involvement in those trials. It is a description of what happened in Salem and Andover in 1692-1693 as applied to the Tylers. It is also my best guess of *why* things happened the way they did. But it is only a guess. I suppose if we were being formal here it would be my hypothesis.

There are three generations of Tylers who were part of the witch-hunt. In generation one were Job Tyler and Mary Horton Tyler. In generation two were Moses Tyler and (1) Prudence Blake Tyler (2) Sarah Sprague Tyler; Mary Tyler Post Bridges and John Bridges; Hopestill Tyler and Mary Lovett Tyler. Generation two members not involved were Hannah Tyler Lovett and James Lovett; John Tyler and Hannah Parker Tyler; Samuel Tyler and Hannah \_\_\_\_\_. The third generation children are mentioned as they play their roles in this drama.

I am assuming that you, the reader, has some knowledge of the Salem witch trials and know that Arthur Miller's play *The Crucible* is not necessarily history, but is based on history. You need not be an expert though, since I tried to fill in the details where it was appropriate to do so.

I used both primary and secondary material, and with a couple of exceptions, everything has been published. You can check out the annotated bibliography if you wish to follow up on anything that interests you. I have used the footnoting system typical of scientific articles rather than the system used in historical articles. That should make the paper a little easier to read.

I updated the spelling, capitalization and punctuation of some primary materials so they would be easier to read and understand but otherwise left those documents alone.

## Introduction

Witches seemed to be everywhere in colonial New England. Most people believed in witches (Bailey, 195) and there were probably practicing witches in Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1692. There may have even been witches in Salem and Andover in 1692, as there are today. There were, for example, 58 cases of witchcraft in the colonies from 1645 to 1662 (Hansen, "Andover Witchcraft", 54). So the witchcraft trials in Salem differed only in magnitude. But that difference in size is what made them famous.

Part of the reason that there seemed to be so many witches is based on the definition of "witch." Cotton Mather wrote, "Witches are the doers of strange things. They

really do torment, they do really afflict those that their spite shall extend unto” (Robinson, 217). The law of Massachusetts Bay said that “If any man or woman be a witch, that is, hath or consulteth with a familiar spirit, they shall be put to death” (Hall, 315).

In today’s terms, witches would include people who called themselves witches (not likely in Massachusetts Bay in 1692) plus magicians, mind readers, palm readers, faith healers, futurists and nasty or antisocial people. That takes in quite a little territory.

It made no difference if the witchcraft was “black” magic or “white” magic. Magic by itself was a capital crime, even if no harm came from it. It was a secular heresy (Konig, 173). Colonial law was based on the Biblical injunction not to let a witch live. If the law had been followed every person convicted of being a witch would have been executed. But the reverse was the case in most instances.

Historians look back on the Salem trials and try to figure out why they took place. Here are the leading theories: generational hostility, racial hostility, factional hostility, food poisoning (a rye fungus that caused seizures and hallucinations), extra legal action by the opponents of laws, sexual hostility and the insanity of the afflicted (Hansen, “Andover Witchcraft,” 38). There is certainly a lot of hostility there. There are probably a number of reasons that came together and created the atmosphere that allowed for the witch trials to take place. My favorite is the societal or extra legal theory of what happened.

This theory is best presented by David Konig in *Law and Society in Puritan Massachusetts*. Although the title of his book suggests that he was looking at the entire colony, he was really examining Essex County, the location of both Salem and Andover. His theory is that if the law was against you in Puritan Massachusetts, you went outside the law to get what you wanted. That is overly simplified, but works for our purpose because one of the ways to go outside the law was to threaten the use of witchcraft or to accuse someone of being a witch.

Here is a brief description of that theory: “One widely used technique [of extra legal behavior] was not physical but was spiritual or psychological - the threat of applying malefic magic. Invoking the devil as an ally in petty jealousies and conflicts was not uncommon, for it was merely another extra legal weapon available to those who challenged the established form of law and authority in Essex County.... But it was not their economic characteristics per se that prompted the charges [of witchcraft]. Rather, witchcraft was identified by the people of Essex as a social tool to be used by anyone - regardless of economic factors - for the purpose of overstepping or challenging established authority patterns” (Konig, 144, 178).

## Case Study: Job Tyler & John Godfrey

John Godfrey was not a nice man. He apparently was a roving herdsman who demanded jobs and threatened people when he did not get them. He also caused accidents to happen to these animals, but was never caught doing it. He was also accused of arson, suborning witnesses and theft (Demos, "John Godfrey," 255). He did not limit his activities to extra legal and illegal acts. He also liked to sue people. He usually won, but that did not stop other people from suing him.

While most of these suits involved property, in the spring of 1658 Godfrey sued Abraham Whitaker of Haverhill for debt. In the next few months a number of interrelated cases began that included other people in Haverhill and Job Tyler. In 1659 the court decided the cases in favor of Godfrey (Demos, "John Godfrey," 245). Immediately he was accused of witchcraft. Upham's book (1:428-36) includes several of the depositions, but not Job Tyler's. It is in Calef (3:52) and Hall (124) and most of it is in Brigham (1:6). "The deposition of Job Tyler aged about 40 years, Mary his wife, Moses Tyler his son aged between 17 and 18 years and Mary Tyler about 15 years old. These deponents witness, that they saw a thing like a bird to come in at the door of their house, with John Godfrey, in the night, about the bigness of a blackbird, or rather bigger, to wit, as big as a pigeon and did fly about, John Godfrey laboring to catch it and the bird vanished as they conceived through the chink of a jointed board, and being asked by the man of the house wherefore it came, he answered it came to suck your wife." All of that implied that John Godfrey was a witch since witches were (according to Massachusetts Bay law) usually accompanied by "familiar," birds or animals that traditionally liked to suck on people. We can only wonder why Godfrey was not able to control his familiar if he was indeed a witch. Perhaps when the door opened and the bird flew in, Godfrey tried to catch it. The bird, realizing the jam it was in, was able to get out through a hole in the wall.

The various depositions seemed to work. Godfrey was apparently indicted and tried for witchcraft. He seems to have been acquitted, though he did spend some time in Ipswich jail. When he got out he countersued for slander (Demos, "John Godfrey," 246).

In 1661 John Godfrey sued Job Tyler for debt. He said that Job owed him for 27 days labor on Tyler's farm, along with running errands and for back loans. Job countersued, saying that there were debts on Godfrey's side as well. Moses Tyler's deposition spells it out: "Moses Tyler deposed that his mother dressed John Godfrey and washed his clothes about twenty weeks in one year, and that his father found Godfrey's diet for eleven weeks, which was never satisfied" (Demos, "John Godfrey," 250). The Tylers lost their suit and all their property in Andover (Brigham, 1:10). Part of that loss,

though, was the result of Job's house burning down (Essex County, 4:404, June 1662). Did John Godfrey play a role in that?

From this it looks as if John Godfrey had worked for Job Tyler and had even lived on the Tyler farm after 1659. So it seems that Job and his family had hired and provided board for someone they had accused of being a witch.

And they would accuse him again. In 1665 they again introduced their 1659 deposition as part of a witchcraft accusation that Job and John Remington made (Brigham 1:6; Robinson, 31; Demos, "John Godfrey," 251; Hall, 128). The jury acquitted Godfrey reluctantly, saying "We find him not to have the fear of God in his heart. He has made himself suspiciously guilty of witchcraft, but not legally guilty according to law and evidence we received" (Demos, "John Godfrey," 251).

Considering the fact that witchcraft was a capital crime, people in general and Job Tyler in particular, were distinctly casual in their use of that accusation. People accused of witchcraft sometimes countersued for slander or defamation, civil actions. If accusations of witchcraft regularly made their way to the court system, how many even more casual accusations never made it that far? People in Essex County evidently had a number of reasons for believing others to be witches or for actually accusing them of being witches. Motives seem to be far ranging, as the various historical theories suggest. Those motives seem to be distinctly personal as well. It looks as if Job was using the accusation of witchcraft to get back from John Godfrey what Job had lost to him in the various civil actions. And Godfrey felt the same way. As part of the 1665 trial Nathan Parker told the court that "John Godfrey came into my house and discussing Job Tyler Godfrey said that he could afford to blow on Tyler and not leave him worth a groat." (Hall, 124. A groat is a coin of little value.)

If this short case study demonstrates anything, it demonstrates that accusations of witchcraft were part of everyday life in Essex County. True, John Godfrey and Job Tyler spent more time in court than anyone else in the county, but I suspect that many accusations of witchcraft never made it to court. Calling someone a witch was a common curse, as in Thomas Chandler's testimony in March, 1662: "I going to Job Tyler's house to serve an attachment I did take John Godfrey with me and when I came to said Tyler's house John Care[y] being there said what come you hither for Godfrey you witching rogue..." (Hall, 120).

## The Andover Witch Trials

### How the witch hunt came to Andover

Andover involvement in the witch-hunt had begun in May 1692, when an arrest warrant for Martha Carrier, a citizen of Andover, was issued in Salem. When she was arrested, four of her children were taken into custody. They would be charged as witches in July.

The issue was really joined when two of the afflicted girls were brought to Andover to see what they could do for the wife of Joseph Ballard. She was sick, and would ultimately die of her sickness. Here is what happened, according to a recantation of some of the accused witches in Andover. "...we being informed, that, if a person was sick, the afflicted person could tell what or who was the cause of that sickness: Joseph Ballard of Andover, his wife being sick at the same time, he, either from himself, or by the advice of others, fetched two of the persons [Ann Putnam, Jr. and Mary Walcott] called the afflicted persons from Salem Village to Andover, which was the beginning of that dreadful calamity that befell us in Andover,... Mary Osgood, Mary Tyler, Deliverance Dane, Abigail Barker, Sarah Wilson, Hannah Tyler" (Calef, 3:271-2; Upham 2:402-4). Mary Lovett Tyler was the wife of Hopestill Tyler and Hannah Tyler was their daughter.

### The same as before: Timothy Swan

Timothy Swan was the son of Robert Swan of Haverhill. The Swans lived north of the Merrimack River in what is now Methuen. Swan apparently ran a ferry across the Merrimack, although Robinson calls him "an influential figure in local and colonial governmental circle." (Robinson, 129). Like Job Tyler and John Godfrey, Robert Swan used the courts to settle his disputes, but he was also willing to go outside the law when it was to his advantage. Swan threatened property destruction, killed animals and threatened people. With two of his sons he tore down an opponent's fence and pulled up 146 apple trees (Konig, 141-2). So Timothy knew how to operate outside the established law.

Timothy Swan also knew he was sick. According to his view, he was sick because he had been tormented by more than a dozen people in Andover and Haverhill (Lynch, 15). In some of these accusations he was joined by Ann Putnam and Mary Walcott, but in others he acted alone. He died on February 2, 1693. He is buried in the First Burial Ground in North Andover, near the grave of Moses Tyler.

What is interesting to us is that in late July 1692 he took over from the Salem "afflicted girls" and accused Mary Tyler Post Bridges of being a witch. He quickly followed that up

with accusations against Mary Post, Mary Bridges' daughter by her first marriage, and Rebecca Blake Eames, Moses Tyler's sister-in-law by his first marriage (Robinson, 220, 302-3). He made two more accusations, then dropped from the scene. He probably never went to Salem to testify; at least there are no surviving transcripts.

We may never know what motivated Timothy Swan. But it is fun to speculate so here are a few guesses. He was truly sick and it was an assumption in colonial New England that sickness could be caused by a witch or witches. But whether he was a true believer or a cynic taking advantage of the system really begs the question. Why did he accuse these individual people? It could have been chance. It could have been revenge for some petty jealousy or business deal. Swan's family had shown the capacity for that kind of behavior. It could have been rejection in love. Mary Post was about his age and was not married. It could have been part of a plot to gain land.

Who really knows? There is one theory, a complicated conspiracy theory that I want to probe. That will happen a bit later. For now, let's look at:

#### The rules of the games and how they suddenly changed

Here is my guess about the game of witchcraft and life in colonial Massachusetts:

- √ Witchcraft was a capital crime, but it was very difficult to prove someone was a witch.
- √ Formally accusing someone of being a witch was often punishment enough if the accused had to spend time in jail. Prisoners, for example, had to pay all their own expenses whether they were innocent or guilty.
- √ Accusations of witchcraft were handled by the regular court system and evidence of witchcraft had to comply with the rules of the court.
- √ If the accused was found innocent, he or she would often sue the accuser for slander or defamation. That was the way to get paid back for the costs of being in jail, among other things.
- √ Calling someone a witch was also a common curse not meant to be taken literally. It would be the same as calling someone a "bitch" today without meaning the accused was a female dog. It was often directed at older, outspoken women who lived by themselves.

Those were some of the old rules. For some reason some of those rules changed in 1692. Early in the year there was no governor for Massachusetts Bay. When Governor William Phips arrived in May, after the witch-hunt had begun, he wrote to England for instructions, then left to fight Indians. That exit allowed the continuation or development of some new rules.

- √ Witchcraft was still a capital crime, but became much easier to prove because the court allowed spectral evidence. That is, what the afflicted girls saw in dreams or imagined or appeared to act on them, though invisible to others, was now accepted as evidence.
- √ The punishment of formal accusation changed for the worse. Accused witches were put in leg irons and shackles, denied food and even tortured.
- √ A special court, the Court of Oyer and Terminer, was set up to hear the witch trials. Not only did this court allow spectral evidence, it assumed the accused was guilty unless proven innocent.
- √ Since it was still difficult to get the evidence that would satisfy a jury, the court tried to get as many confessions as it could. That was the reason for intimidation, lack of food, lack of counsel and torture.
- √ The accused still had to pay all court costs, and if found guilty, forfeited all property as well.
- √ Calling someone a witch took on much more meaning.

These changes and others took place during the spring and summer of 1692. The rules changed back in the fall.

#### Moses Tyler as chief conspirator

Enders Robinson did a statistical analysis of the witchcraft accusers in Andover and determined that only 10 people were responsible for all of the accusations. He also added Rev. Thomas Barnard and blacksmith Thomas Chandler as behind the scenes players and concluded that because "...this small and interwoven group of twelve filed all the complaints in the Andover witch hunt, it can be concluded that they formed a conspiracy" (Robinson, 223). He also concluded that the "...dominant member of the Andover conspiracy proved to be Moses Tyler, whose son, Joseph Tyler, was also a member" (Robinson, 129).

What were the objectives of the conspiracy? "The first and fundamental objective of the conspiracy was to break the established power structure of the town.... The second objective of the Andover conspiracy was to discredit the Rev. Francis Dane and his family.... The third objective was to use the witchcraft accusations wherever possible as a means of gaining revenge and settling old grudges. The case of Moses Tyler is foremost here. He was even willing to use witchcraft slander to bring down his own siblings" (Robinson, 131-2).

Having placed Moses Tyler at the head of a conspiracy, Robinson struggled with it. The conspiracy and Moses' role in it did not make a whole lot of sense, but is Robinson's best shot. "The case of the Tyler family is unique and, by all standards, inexplicable. Moses Tyler was a leading member of the conspiracy of accusers in Andover. Using his stepdaughter Martha Sprague as an afflicted girl, Moses Tyler made many accusations. He and his fellow conspirators succeeded in sending a shocking total of eleven members of his siblings' families to prison" (Robinson, 145).

Then Robinson goes further, both admitting that he has no clue, and concluding that the conspiracy must be true because the accusations took place. “Moses Tyler must remain an enigma.... No historical evidence exists, no hints, no rumors to suggest an explanation for his astounding family vendetta. His motivations could have sprung from some twisted form of sibling rivalry, from a paranoid delusional personality, or from a hundred other possibilities. Clearly his character was disordered; here was a man who lacked a conscience, who lacked any sense of guilt” (Robinson, 146).

Let’s look at the “breaking the power structure in Andover” objective. Moses did not live in Andover, although he attended church there. He lived in Boxford where he was part of the power structure. In 1691, for example, he was a selectman in Boxford, where he was also part of a five-member committee to chose a church site. In 1687 he was the third leading taxpayer in Boxford, and continued to increase his holdings year after year (Brigham, 1: 18, 20). Why would he want to break the power structure? Instead he might well have wanted to protect it. The only member of the Andover power structure that Moses Tyler may have wanted to break was Thomas Chandler, the blacksmith that his father Job had struggled with over brother Hopestill’s apprenticeship. But Chandler was supposedly part of the conspiracy.

The entire factual basis for Moses Tyler’s guilt comes down to the fact that Martha Sprague, his stepdaughter, was a leader of the afflicted girls in Andover. As far as I can tell, leadership meant she made more accusations than anyone else.

Martha was sixteen years old in 1692. When her mother married Moses Tyler, she moved into a household of men and boys. Along with her mother, she would have had responsibility for the ten Tylers as well as her two sisters. She may have wanted to get away from all the work (Lynch, 16). Sarah Hawkes, in her confession, admitted to “...making them dance & sing several hours at Mr. Tyler’s house...& Martha Sprague sung at Mr. Tyler’s all day till she was almost killed” (Robinson, 318-9). Martha Sprague made the accusations, but unless we think that Moses Tyler made her make the accusations, there really is not much of a case. Robinson says that Moses Tyler must have been the leader of a conspiracy, but admits that there are no verifiable reasons for that belief and that the accusations against members of his own family just do not make sense.

### Witches and more witches

The legal process was designed to identify as many witches as possible. The afflicted girls would identify a person as a witch. This person would be pressured to confess and identify other people as witches. Reading some of these confessions, it is difficult to believe that there was anyone who was not a witch. Here are the Tyler family members *formally* accused of being witches during the summer and fall of 1692.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Accused</b>
July 28	Mary Tyler Post Bridges, 48; Job's daughter, Moses' sister
August 2	Mary Post, 28; Mary's daughter
August 25	Susannah Post, 31; Mary's stepdaughter
August 25	Hannah Post, 26; Mary's daughter
August 25	Sarah Bridges, 17; Mary's stepdaughter
August 25	Mary Bridges, Jr., 13; Mary's daughter
August 31	Mary Parker, 55; John Tyler's (Job's son) mother-in-law
September 7	Mary Lovett Tyler, 40; Hopestill Tyler's (Job's son) wife
September 7	Hannah Tyler, 14; Mary and Hopestill's daughter
September 7	Joanna Tyler, 11; Mary and Hopestill's daughter
September 7	Martha Tyler, 11; Mary and Hopestill's daughter

Martha Sprague was one of the accusers of Susannah Post, Hannah Post, Sarah Bridges and Mary Bridges, Jr. I presume she also took part in the September 7 "touch test" where Mary Lovett Tyler, Hannah Tyler, Joanna Tyler and Martha Tyler were accused. There will be more about the touch test shortly. There are several sources for lists of accused witches. They don't completely match in terms of people or dates. This list is from Robinson, 145. Other lists are in Boyer and Nissenbaum, 376-8 and Bailey, 200-1.

So the proceedings continued. The afflicted continued to accuse additional people and support these accusations in court. Here is an example from the examination of Mary Parker:

"Upon mentioning of her name, several afflicted persons were struck down as Mary Warren, Sarah Churchill, Hannah Post, Sarah Bridges, Mercy Ward. And when she came before the Justices, she recovered all the afflicted out of their fits by the touch of her hand. She is accused for acting of witchcraft upon Martha Sprague and Sarah Phelps.

Q. How long have you been in the snare of the devil?

R. I know nothing of it. There is another woman of the same name in Andover.

But Martha Sprague affirmed that this is the very woman that afflicted her: the said Mary Parker looking upon Sprague struck her down and recovered her again out of her [fit]." *Records*, 2:154

So some of the accused, besides confessing and naming others, also acted the role of afflicted person. It gets very confusing. Martha Tyler accused George Burroughs; Dorothy Faulkner, Abigail Faulkner, Martha Tyler, Joannah Tyler, Sarah Wilson, Joseph Draper accuse Abigail Faulkner (this included children accusing their mother); Martha Sprague accused Samuel Wardwell; Samuel Wardwell accused Hannah Tyler and Mary Lilly (*Records*, 2:127-8, 134-5, 149, 150).

Reading these confessions it is clear the people said what their judges wanted to hear. Here are two examples. First, part of the confession of Mary Bridges, Jr. “A yellow bird appeared to me out of doors, and bid me serve him. He promised me money and fine clothes, and I promised to serve him, but he gave me neither money nor fine clothes.... She said the next time she saw any such shape, it was a black bird. He would have her serve him and would have her touch a paper. When she did with her fingers, it made a red mark. Then she saw a black man. She owned that she was at the witch meeting at Chandler’s at Andover, and thought there were nearly a hundred [witches] at it” (Robinson, 179).

Sarah Bridges apparently was at the same meeting. She said “she was to serve the Devil 4 years & he was to have body and soul. She admitted she had been to the witch meeting at Chandler’s garrison at Andover & that she thought there were 200 witches there & that they ate bread & drank wine” (Robinson, 184).

It is easy to understand how young girls could be intimidated by the court, but that does not explain the large number of confessions in Andover compared to Salem and other towns. So that is the next question.

#### Why were there so many confessions?

Let’s start with the obvious. People accused of being witches were assumed to be guilty unless they could do the impossible and prove themselves to be innocent. Additionally, since confessions were the ultimate goal of the court, there was considerable pressure on the accused to confess and name others. Enders Robinson blames the large number of confessions on the Rev. Thomas Barnard, the associate minister in Andover, who was in league with Cotton Mather and other conservative ministers (Robinson, 175-7). The senior minister, Francis Dane, opposed the witch-hunt, and was rewarded by several members of his family being accused.

Robert Calef, a Boston merchant during the period, described it this way.

“It may be here further added concerning those that did confess, that besides that powerful argument, of life (and freedom from hardships, and irons not only promised, but also performed to all that owned their guilt.) There are numerous instances, too many to be here inserted, of the tedious examinations before private persons, many hours together; they all that time urging them to confess (and taking turns to persuade them) till the accused were wearied out by being forced to stand so long, or for want of sleep, etc. and so brought to give an assent to what they said...” (Calef, 57-8).

In other words, it was a full scale interrogation, but without anyone to protect the interests of the accused. In fact, life in jail was difficult, and tactics such as the use of leg irons on

shackles, lack of food and sleep, and long periods of interrogation exhausted the accused witches.

What is fascinating from the viewpoint of today's world is the source of some of the pressure to confess. Thomas Brattle, a Boston merchant and later to be treasurer of Harvard University, offered this description in October 8, 1692. "Deacon Fry's wife, Capt'n Osgood's wife, and some others, remarkably pious and good people in repute, are apprehended and imprisoned; and that that is more admirable, the aforementioned women are become a kind of confessours, being first brought thereto by the urgings and arguings of their good husbands, who, having taken up that corrupt and highly pernicious opinion, that whoever were accused by the afflicted, were guilty, did break charity with their dear wives, upon their being accused, and urge them to confess their guilt;..." (Burr, 180)

The best overall description of what happened is by Mary Lovett Tyler, who was accused, along with her daughters, in the September 7 touch test. The touch test resulted in 18 accusations, including Mary Tyler and her three daughters. There are two documents describing that event and some of what happened after it. First there is the recantation signed by Mary Tyler along with Mary Osgood, Deliverance Dane, Abigail Barker, Sarah Wilson and Hannah Tyler (Upham, 402-4). Second, there are the notes from an interview that Mary had with Increase Mather on October 19, 1692 (Massachusetts Historical Society, *Collections*, second series, 3:223-4). Here is an integrated narrative of the two documents. It is long but considering the source, worth it.

"After Mr. Barnard had been at prayer, we were blindfolded, and our hands were laid upon the afflicted persons, they being in their fits, and falling into their fits at our coming into their presence, as they said; and some led us, and laid our hands upon them; and then they said they were well, and that we were guilty of afflicting them. Whereupon we were all seized as prisoners, by a warrant from the justice of the peace, and forthwith carried to Salem; and by reason of that sudden surprisal, we knowing ourselves altogether innocent of that crime, we were all exceedingly astonished and amazed, and consternated and affrighted, even out of our reason;..."(Upham, 2:402-4)

"[Mary Tyler] had no fears upon her, and did think that nothing could have made her confess against herself;...that when she was brought to Salem, her brother [in-law] Bridges rode with her, and that all along the way from Andover to Salem her brother [in-law] kept telling her that she must needs to be a witch, since the afflicted accused her, and at her touch were raised out of their fits, and urging her to confess herself a witch; she constantly told him, that she was no witch, that she knew nothing of witchcraft, and begged of him not to urge her to confess; however when she came to Salem, she was carried to a room, where her brother [in-law] on one side and [Rev.] John Emerson [of Gloucester] on the other side did tell her that she was certainly a witch, and that she saw the devil before her eyes at that time (and

accordingly the said Emerson would attempt with his hand to beat him away from her eyes) and they so urged her to confess, that she wished herself in any dungeon, rather than be so treated: Mr. Emerson told her once and again, Well! I see you will not confess! Well! I will now leave you, and then you are undone, body and soul forever;...” (Massachusetts Historical Society *Collections*, 223-4).

“[O]ur nearest and dearest relations, seeing us in that dreadful condition, and knowing our great danger, apprehended there was no other way to save our lives, as the case was then circumstanced, but by confessing ourselves to be such and such persons as the afflicted represented us to be, they out of tenderness and pity, persuaded us to confess what we did confess” (Upham, 2:402-4).

“Her brother [in-law Bridges] urged her to confess, and told her that in so doing she could not lie; to which she answered, ‘Good brother, do not say so, for I shall lie if I confess, and then who shall answer to God for my lie?’ He still asserted it, and said that God would not suffer so many good men to be in such an error about it, and that she would be hanged, if she did not confess, and continued so long and so violently to urge and press her to confess, that she thought verily her life would have gone from her, and became so terrified in her mind, that she owned at length almost anything that they propounded to her;...” (Massachusetts Historical Society *Collections*, 223-4).

“And, indeed, that confession that it is said we made was no other than what was suggested to us by some gentlemen, they telling us that we were witches, and they knew it, which made us think it was so; and, our understandings, our reason, our faculties almost gone, we were not capable of judging of our condition; as also the hard measures they used with us rendered us incapable of making our defense, but said any thing and every thing which they desired, and most of what we said was but in effect a consenting to what they said” (Upham, 2:402-4).

How could confessing to witchcraft save their lives? Because the law had been turned on its head. Those who confessed to being witches and did not recant their confessions lived. Those who were convicted but would not confess and those who recanted their confessions were hanged. This trend had been developing in Salem, and the citizens of Andover had apparently figured out what was necessary to survive. Confessions and repentance indicated tacit approval of the system. (Konig, 175)

### Recantations and petitions

September was the transitional month in Andover. The Court of Oyer and Terminer met, as it turned out, for the last time on September 17. It convicted seven people from Andover. Robinson says that was because the court wanted to begin the process of confiscating property (Robinson, 163). Even if that were not the fact, the accusations and trials were

straining the economy of Andover. Many of its families had members in jail, and many others had been accused without a jail to house them. It was a potential financial disaster. On September 22 eight convicted witches, including four from Andover, were executed. At the end of the month Governor Phips returned from fighting Indians, but still had no instructions from England. But the executions, the large number of people awaiting trial and the use of spectral evidence apparently convinced him to slow the process and disband the special court. People in jail stayed in jail unless the court would allow bond to be posted for them, and there were many people ready for trial or who had been convicted.

In October confessed witches began to recant their confessions. Mary Tyler Post Bridges told Increase Mather on October 19 “that she had confessed against herself things which were all utterly false, and that she was brought to her confession by being told that she certainly was a witch, and so made to believe it, though she had no grounds so to believe” (Massachusetts Historical Society, *Collections*, 224).

The recantation of Mary Tyler and her daughter, Hannah Tyler, previously quoted, ended by saying “Some time after, when we were better composed, they telling us what we had confessed, we did profess that we were innocent and ignorant of such things; and we hearing that Samuel Wardwell had renounced his confession, and was quickly after condemned and executed, some of us were told we were going after Wardwell” (Upham, 404).

At about the same time the court received a number of petitions asking to post bond so that family members could be released. It is not clear whether these petitions were driven by the economics of the trials or the feelings of guilt in the petitioners or both. Here is a sample petition made on October 12.

“...As for the matter of our troubles it is the distressed condition of our wives and relations in prison in Salem who are a company of poor distressed creatures as full of inward grief and trouble as they are able to bear up in life withal. And besides the aggravation of outward troubles and hardships they undergo and want of food; and the coldness of the winter season that is coming may soon dispatch such out of the way that have not been wed to such hardships.

And besides this, the exceeding great charges and expenses...will fall heavy upon us...which if all put together our families and estates will be brought to ruin....”

Signed, among others, by John Bridges in behalf of his wife and children and Hope Tyler in behalf of his wife and daughter. In December the same two offered bond for Martha Tyler and Joanna Tyler (Bailey, 225, 227).

The witchcraft storm ends, sort of...

Governor Phips' decision to end the Court of Oyer and Terminer slowed the process. According to Calef, a "worthy gentleman of Boston" was accused and responded with a thousand-pound defamation suit (Calef, 3:269). That ended the new accusations in Andover. Since John Godfrey and others had successfully used defamation or slander suits in the past, it is a puzzle that other accused witches had not responded this way earlier.

Governor Phips set up a new Superior Court of Judicature that began to meet in January 1693. Most of the judges on the old court were also on the new court, but spectral evidence was not allowed. As a result, many of the accused were freed immediately, and later in the spring, almost all of the rest were released. No one else was executed.

Here is what we know about what happened to the Tyler family members. Moses Tyler continued to be a political leader and large landowner in Boxford and Andover. He died October 2, 1727 and is buried in the First Burial Ground in Andover. Martha Sprague married Richard Friend, a seaman of Salem, on June 5, 1701. Joseph Tyler, the son of Moses Tyler, who was involved as an accuser, died in 1699 in either Salem or the West Indies. Hopestill Tyler sold all his land in Andover, probably in 1697, and moved with his family to Preston, Connecticut where he was one of the founders of the Preston church (Brigham, 1:17-28).

Here is what happened to Tyler family members accused of being witches:

Mary Tyler Post Bridges was imprisoned, and found not guilty on January 12, 1693

Mary Post was found guilty on January 12, 1693, but released in April

Susannah Post was imprisoned and found not guilty on May 10, 1693

Hannah Post was imprisoned and found not guilty on January 12, 1693

Sarah Bridges was imprisoned and found not guilty on January 12, 1693

Mary Bridges, Jr. was imprisoned and found not guilty on May 12, 1693

Mary Parker was hanged on September 22, 1692

Mary Lovett Tyler was imprisoned and found not guilty on January 7, 1693

Hannah Tyler was imprisoned and found not guilty on January 5, 1693

Joanna Tyler was imprisoned, released on bond and cleared in May 1693

Martha Tyler was imprisoned, released on bond and cleared in May 1693

(Robinson, 352-7)

What witchcraft and magic had actually taken place in Andover? Merchant Thomas Brattle said that the church elders had investigated and found "...that two or three girls had foolishly made use of the sieve and scissors, as children have done in other towns." (Burr, 181) The sieve and scissors was a fortune telling technique, similar to an ouija board, and

the girls involved were probably Rebecca Johnson, Jr. and Sarah Hawkes. Rebecca Johnson had testified that the Rev. Thomas Barnard had taught the girls how to use the device (Robinson, 298, 319; Lynch, 16).

Most of the accusations made against Tyler family members were made by other Tyler family members. Martha Sprague, the stepdaughter of Moses Tyler, had accused Mary Bridges, Jr., Sarah Bridges, Hannah Post, Susannah Post, Mary Parker and was involved in the September 7, 1692 touch test that resulted in accusations against Mary Lovett Tyler and her three daughters Hannah, Joanna and Martha. Nine of the eleven accusations against the family had come from inside it. The other two accusations had been made by Timothy Swan. Martha Sprague had also accused several members of the Rev. Francis Dane's family. Why did Martha concentrate on the families of Moses' sister Mary and his brother Hopestill, and virtually ignore Moses' sister Hannah and his brothers John and Samuel? That's a mystery that may never be solved.

## Bibliography

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*Perspectives*, Urbana & Chicago, 1983. This is a scholarly article, which summarizes other work on the topic. The author does not mention in the article that he thinks that the “afflicted” were just plain crazy.

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Charles Upham, *Salem Witchcraft*, 2 vols., Boston, 1867. The book is a history of the trials, but includes a good deal of documentary evidence. It is poorly organized, though it runs in chronological order.

The Salem Witch Trials were a series of witchcraft cases brought before local magistrates in a settlement called Salem which was a part of the Massachusetts Bay colony in the 17th century. When Did the Salem Witch Trials Take Place? Samuel Sewall, sensible of the reiterated strokes of God upon himself and family; and being sensible, that as to the guilt contracted upon the opening of the late Commission of Oyer and Terminer at Salem (to which the order of this day relates) he is, upon many accounts, more concerned than any that he knows of, desires to take the blame and shame. The Salem witch trials were a series of hearings and prosecutions of people accused of witchcraft in colonial Massachusetts, between 1692 and 1693. Salem Village was the home of a vicious rivalry between the Putnam and Porter families and most of the residents were somehow engaged in this rivalry. It was so bad, that Salem Village citizens would often engage in heated debates that would escalate into full-fledged fighting. Sarah Good was a homeless beggar who was accused of witchcraft because of her appalling reputation. At her trial, she was accused of rejecting the puritanical expectations of self-control and discipline when she chose to torment and scorn children instead of leading them towards the path of salvation. The Salem witch trials were a series of hearings and prosecutions of people accused of witchcraft in colonial Massachusetts between February 1692 and May 1693. More than two hundred people were accused. Thirty were found guilty, nineteen of whom were executed by hanging (fourteen women and five men). One other man, Giles Corey, was pressed to death for refusing to plead, and at least five people died in jail. Salem Witchcraft Trials - The History of Witches and Witchcraft It is difficult to understand why the Salem Witchcraft Trials occurred unless they are taken in context with the history of witches and witchcraft and the general beliefs of people in the late 1600's, when the Salem witchcraft trials took place. People were obsessed with witches and witchcraft during the 1500's and 1600's when there was limited understanding of the cause of devastating events, such as sickness, deaths, poor harvests, drought and disease. Such disasters were believed to be brought about by supernatural

Salem witch trials (1692–93), a series of investigations and persecutions that caused 19 convicted “witches” to be hanged and many other suspects to be imprisoned in Salem Village in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. They were part of a long story of witch hunts that began in Europe in the 14th century. By the end of the Salem witch trials, 19 people had been hanged and 5 others had died in custody. Additionally, a man was pressed beneath heavy stones until he died. Read more below: Three witches. How did the Salem witch trials end? A witch and her familiars, illustration from a discourse on witchcraft, 1621; in the British Library (MS. Add. 32496, f. 53). Courtesy of the trustees of the British Library. The process of identifying witches began with suspicions or rumours. The Salem witch trials were a series of hearings and prosecutions of people accused of witchcraft in colonial Massachusetts between February 1692 and May 1693. More than two hundred people were accused. Thirty were found guilty, nineteen of whom were executed by hanging (fourteen women and five men). One other man, Giles Corey, was pressed to death for refusing to plead, and at least five people died in jail. The Salem Witch Trials were a series of hearings and prosecutions of people accused of witchcraft that occurred in No-Maj (Muggle) colonial Massachusetts in the years 1692 and 1693. The Salem Witch Trials occurred in the settlement of Salem in colonial Massachusetts in 1692 and 1693, and resulted in the executions of twenty people accused of witchcraft, most of them women. Some of these women were actually witches, though they were entirely innocent of the crimes of which they were convicted. Others The Salem witch trials were a series of hearings and prosecutions of people accused of witchcraft in colonial Massachusetts, between 1692 and 1693. Salem Village was the home of a vicious rivalry between the Putnam and Porter families and most of the residents were somehow engaged in this rivalry. It was so bad, that Salem Village citizens would often engage in heated debates that would escalate into full-fledged fighting. Sarah Good was a homeless beggar who was accused of witchcraft because of her appalling reputation. At her trial, she was accused of rejecting the puritanical expectations of self-control and discipline when she chose to “torment and scorn children instead of leading them towards the path of salvation.”