

Station #2- Salem Witch Trials

Document #1- Tryal of Susanna Martin in Salem, June 29, 1692

Background: Susanna Martin was tried for witchcraft in Salem, Massachusetts, in the summer of 1692, during the height of the crisis there. Cotton Mather, a prominent Boston minister, published summaries of the testimony against her in the following year in The Wonders of the Invisible World, a book that sought to defend the colony's effort to root out the witches who he believed were doing the devil's work. "The New-Englanders are a people of God settled in those, which were once the Devil's Territories," he wrote. "The devil is now making one Attempt more upon us." Mather compiled the following testimony, but he is quoting witnesses who also must be treated, in a sense, as authors: witnesses with their own ideas and purposes, which may have been similar to Mather's but were not identical. In the bizarre stories they tell, we get a glimpse of how early New Englanders believed that the devil used people like Susanna Martin to act in the world.

"Susanna Martin, pleading Not Guilty to the Indictment of Witchcraft brought in against her, there were produced the evidences of many persons very sensibly and grievously Bewitched; who all complained of the prisoner at the Bar, as the person whom they Believed the cause of their Miseries.

IV. John Atkinson Testify'd, That he Exchanged a Cow with a Son of Susanna Martins, whereat she muttered, and was unwilling he should have it. Going to Receive this Cow, tho' he Hamstring'd her, and Halter'd her, she of a Tame Creature grew so mad, that they could scarce get her along. She broke all the Ropes that were fastened unto her, and though she were Ty'd fast unto a Tree, yet she made her Escape, and gave them such further Trouble, as they could ascribe to no) Cause but Witchcraft.

V. Bernard Peache testify'd, That being in Bed on a Lords-day Night, he heard a scrabbling at the Window, whereat he then saw Susanna Martin come in, and jump down upon the Floor. She took hold of this Deponents Feet, and drawing his Body up into an Heap, she lay upon him near Two Hours; in all which time he could neither speak nor stirr. At length, when he could begin to move, he laid hold on her Hand, and pulling it up to his mouth, he bit three of her Fingers, as he judged, unto the Bone. Whereupon she went from the Chamber, down the Stairs, out at the Door. This Deponent thereupon called unto the people of the House, to advise them of what passed; and he himself did follow her. The people saw her not; but there being a Bucket at the Left-hand of the Door, there was a drop of Blood found on it; and several more drops of Blood upon the Snow newly fallen abroad. There was likewise the print of her two Feet just without the Threshold; but no more sign of any Footing further off. . . .

VI. Robert Downer testified, That this Prisoner being some years ago prosecuted at Court for a Witch, he then said unto her, He believed she was a Witch. Whereat she being dissatisfied, said, That some Shee-Devil would Shortly fetch him away! Which words were heard by others, as well as himself. The Night following, as he lay in his Bed, there came in at the Window the likeness of a Cat, which Flew upon him, took fast hold of his Throat, lay on him a considerable while, and almost killed him. At length he remembered what Susanna Martin had threatned the Day before; and with much striving he cryed out, "Avoid, thou Shee-Devil! In the Name of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, Avoid! " Whereupon it left him, leap'd on the Floor, and Flew out at the Window. . . .

VIII. William Brown testify'd, that Heaven having blessed him with a most Pious and prudent wife, this wife of his one day mett with Susanna Martin; but when she approach'd just unto her, Martin vanished out of sight, and

left her extremely affrighted. After which time, the said Martin often appear'd unto her, giving her no little trouble; and when she did come, she was visited with Birds that sorely peck't and Prick'd her; and sometimes a Bunch, like a pullets egg, would Rise in her throat, ready to Choak her, till she cry'd out, "Witch, you shan't choak me!" While this good Woman was in this Extremity, the Church appointed a Day of Prayer, on her behalf; whereupon her Trouble ceas'd; she saw not Martin as formerly; and the Church, instead of their Past, gave Thanks for her Deliverance. But a considerable while after, she being Summoned to give in some Evidence at the Court, against this Martin, quickly thereupon this Martin came behind her, while she was milking her Cow, and said unto her, "For thy defaming me at Court, I'll make thee the miserablest Creature in the World." Soon after which, she fell into a strange kind of Distemper, and became horribly Frantick, and uncapable of any Reasonable Action; the Physicians declaring, that her Distemper was preternatural, and that some Devil had certainly Bewitched her; and in that Condition she now remained. . . .

Note, This Woman was one of the most Impudent, Scurrilous, wicked creatures in the world; and she did now throughout her whole Trial discover herself to be such an one. Yet when she was asked, what she had to say for her self? her Cheef Plea was, That she had Led a most virtuous and Holy Life!"

Document #2- Age and Sex of Accused Witches (where known)

Age	Male	Female	Total
Under 20	6	18	24
21-30	3	7	10
31-40	3	8	11
41-50	6	18	24
51-60	4	8	12
Other	3	6	9
Total	30	88	118

Document #3-Victims of Witchcraft by Age and Sex

Age	Male	Female	Sex unknown (Animals)	Total
0-9	8	6	3	17
10-19	8	12	0	20
20-39	49	19	0	68
40-59	10	18	0	28
60+	1	2	0	3
Total	76	57	0	136

Document #4-Female Witches by Presence or Absence of Brothers or Sons (1620-1725)

Action	Women without Brothers or Sons	Women with Brothers or Sons	Total
Accused	96	62	158
Tried	41	23	64
Convicted	25	8	33
Executed	17	2	19

