

Pathfinder: Salem Witch Trials

Scope note: The Salem witchcraft trials occurred in Salem Village (now Danvers), MA in 1692. About 150 people, including men, women, and children, were imprisoned, and twenty were convicted as witches and executed. This pathfinder was created for the patrons of Salem Public Library and is geared toward adult researchers of many reading levels and research experiences. This guide is meant to educate researchers about the history of Salem Village, the witchcraft trials, and the contexts surrounding the trials. This guide also offers resources that use the Salem witchcraft trials as a case study to examine witch-hunts throughout history and modern-day.

An introduction to the topic appears in:

1. Encyclopedia Britannica. (2007). *The New Encyclopedia Britannica* (15th ed., vol. 10). Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica Inc. (Ref AE 5.E363 2007 v.10)
2. Encyclopedia Americana. (2005). *Encyclopedia Americana* (vol. 24). Danbury, Ct: Scholastic Library Publishing, Inc. (ref AE 5.E333 2005 v.24)
3. Boyer, Paul. (2010). *The World Book Encyclopedia* (vol. 17). Chicago: World Book, Inc. (Ref AE 5.W55 2010 v.17)

Subject heading to use for finding information on this topic : (LCSH)

1. Trials (Witchcraft) (May Subd Geog)
BT: Witchcraft
NT: Sexism in witchcraft trials

Classification numbers:

1. **Dewey Decimal** call numbers:
 1. 133.4: Demonology and witchcraft
 2. 398: Folklore
 3. 973.2: History of North America, United States, Colonial period, 1607-1775
2. **Library of Congress** call numbers:
 1. BF 1562.5-1584: Witchcraft
 2. E 186-199.2: Colonial history 1607-1775
 3. KBR 3646.A55: Trials (Witchcraft)—Early works to 1800

Reference Sources

1. Adams, G.A. (2009). *The specter of Salem: remembering the witch trials in nineteenth-century America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
 1. BF 1576 .A33 2008
2. Demos, J. (2008). *The enemy within : 2,000 years of witch-hunting in the western world*. New York, NY: Viking.
 1. BF 1566 .D46 2008

3. Foulds, D.E. (2013). *Death in Salem: the private lives behind the 1692 witch hunt*. Guilford, CT: Globe Pequot.
 1. BF 1576 .F68 2010
4. Roach, M. K. (2002). *The Salem witch trials : a day-by-day chronicle of a community under siege*. New York, NY: Cooper Square Press.
 1. BF 1575 .R63 2002
5. Rosenthal, B. (2009). *Records of the Salem witch-hunt*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
 1. KFM 2478.8 .W5 R43 2009

Some relevant books on this topic are: (Cite at least four books.)

1. Boyer, P. Nissenbaum, S. (1976). *Salem possessed: the social origins of witchcraft*. Boston, MA: Harvard University Press.
2. Games, A. (2010). *Witchcraft in early North America*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
3. Hill, F. (2002). *A delusion of Satan: the full story of the Salem witch trials*. Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press.
4. Levack, B. P. (2013). *The Oxford handbook of witchcraft in early modern Europe and colonial America*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Journals and/or periodicals

1. Colonial Society of Massachusetts, Colonial Society of Massachusetts Press, 1896
2. Massachusetts Historical Review, Massachusetts Historical Society, 1999

Indexes or databases to use for identifying articles in magazines or journals on this topic are:

1. General OneFile Infotrac
2. ERIC (via EBSCO)

Government documents on the topic:

1. **A Guide to the On-Line Primary Sources of the Salem Witch Trials**
<http://www.17thc.us/primarysources/>

Good sources for statistics on this topic:

1. **The Salem Witchcraft Site**
<http://www.tulane.edu/~salem/index.html>
2. **Le Beau, Bryan. (1998). The Hunted. *The Creighton University Window*. 15 (1). 4-11.**
http://www.creighton.edu/fileadmin/user/creighton-magazine/archive/PDFs/1998_Window_F98.pdf

Biographical information on an individual who has written on this topic or who is prominent in this field:

1. Important Persons in the Salem Court Records

<http://salem.lib.virginia.edu/people?group.num=all>

2. Notable Women Ancestors: Witches

<http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~nwa/witch.html>

Webography

Cornell library division of rare and manuscript collections, witchcraft collections.

<http://ebooks.library.cornell.edu/w/witch/digital.html>

This source documents the history of the inquisition and persecution of witchcraft around the world. With over one hundred fully digitized books and fifteen different research papers available, this website gives an all-encompassing and thorough overview of witch hunts. The amount of material can be overwhelming, but with well thought-out search terms, the user can easily narrow down the results.

The Salem witchcraft site. <http://www.tulane.edu/~salem/index.html>

This source utilizes a narrative approach to the entire Salem Witch Trials. It offers descriptions on everything from the causes, to political issues, to information about Salem Village life in the 1600s. The information is incredibly detailed, but only a single person's point of view. Dozens of charts and data sets are available, outlining various aspects of the trials. There is an extensive bibliography and detailed descriptions of all images used on the site. The site map is incredibly helpful, and acts as an index for people, places, and topics.

Famous American trials: Salem witchcraft trials 1692.

<http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/salem/SALEM.HTM>

This source focuses on the procedures of the actual trials during the Salem Witch Trials of 1692. It includes all manner of sources from the Court, including letters to and from judges, transcriptions of hearings, and even arrest warrants. Since it is maintained by a law school faculty, the sources and information provided focus primarily on legal details. Chronologies are available, many with accompanying images of source material. There are also many lists of people involved in the trial. Notably, there are "teaching tools" and an excellent bibliography for books, periodicals, videos, and links.

Salem Witch Trials: Documentary Archive and Transcription Project.

<http://salem.lib.virginia.edu/>

The Salem Witch Trials Documentary Archive and Transcription Project is an electronic collection of primary source materials relating to the Salem witch trials of 1692. Though it is limited in narrative explanation, this source contains a wealth of information, including artifacts, books, and maps. The “Notable People” section offers short and full essays, images, and citations from primary source materials. There are thousands of digitized manuscripts and transcriptions, various maps of Salem and surrounding areas, and six fully digitized books. These offer some very important contextual information for the thousands of manuscripts available.

Danvers archival center at the Peabody Institute Library.

<http://www.danverslibrary.org/archive/>

This is the Peabody Institute Library’s archives website. Though it does not focus primarily on the trials, there is a lot of information available here. The archivist is Richard Trask, who has written many books on the Salem Witch Trials, and he offers some excellent overviews of the events and of Salem Village. Mr. Trask’s bibliography and recommendations are wonderful, and include selections for adults and children. There is also a 30-minute film, shot in what used to be Salem Village, which includes Mr. Trask showcasing primary source material from the archive.

The Salem Witch Trials: A legal Bibliography.

<http://news.lib.uchicago.edu/blog/2012/10/29/the-salem-witch-trials-a-legal-bibliography-for-halloween/>

This site offers a great overview of the trials. More importantly, however, there is a wonderful bibliography for specific and general resources. The site doesn’t offer much in the way of original critical analysis or information, but this is a great jumping-off point for a new researcher.

The Smithsonian: A brief History of the Salem Witch Trials.

<http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/a-brief-history-of-the-salem-witch-trials-175162489/?no-ist=>

This site is a very reputable source and offers some great content. It gives a wonderful general overview of the trials and offers various related topics and information. It also features a wonderful photo gallery.

The Salem Witch Museum. <http://www.salemwitchmuseum.com/education/index.php>

This is a great resource for all ages. It offers an overview, FAQs for adults and for children, and some photos from the museum. The best feature of the site is the 1962 witch trials sites tour, which allows the user to interact with a map of the towns surrounding Salem Village and explains their significance. With detailed maps available, this is a great tool for someone who is planning a visit to the area.

Discovery Education. <http://school.discoveryeducation.com/schooladventures/salemwitchtrials/>

This source is fantastic for researchers of all ages. It's very interactive and user-friendly, with a great design. It takes the user on a journey through "Life in Salem" which includes religious, economic, and historical contexts. This site also includes an overview and a 6-minute video. There are detailed biographical descriptions of six participants of the trials.

PBS Secrets of the Dead - Case File: The Witches Curse.

http://www.pbs.org/wnet/secrets/previous_seasons/case_salem/

This is a good resource for kids. It is interactive and set up as if the user is a detective working of the "case" of the Salem witch trials. It offers sections such as "clues and evidence" along with an interview of a detective. This source allows users to come to their own conclusions about why the witch hunting began.

National Geographic Education.

http://education.nationalgeographic.com/education/media/salem-witch-trials-interactive/?ar_a=1

I love this website! In the "Experience the Trials" section, it sets the user up as the main character in this story, allowing them to have a first-hand experience going step-by-step through the narrative. It also offers a prologue, epilogue, an "ask the expert" portion, and a great bibliography. This is a one-of-a-kind experience.

Edsitement. <http://edsitement.neh.gov/launchpad-salem-witch-trials>

This website is set up as a lesson-plan in order to get the researcher thinking critically and looking at sources. It offers websites to study and questions to answer. This is a wonderful place to begin if a researcher is trying to narrow down a thesis or focal point. This website is like taking a class at your own pace.

Salem Witch Museum YouTube Channel.

<http://www.youtube.com/user/TheSalemWitchMuseum>

This is a YouTube channel run by the Salem Witch Museum. Every week, a staff member posts a new video regarding the trials. It includes artifacts, historical notes, and even clips from other educational videos. This is a great way to learn about the trials if a researcher doesn't want to pour over a text.

Salem Massachusetts: The City Guide. <http://www.salemweb.com/guide/witches.shtml>

This site offers a collection of images of historical landmarks and sites. It portrays and describes the homesteads and grave sites of many participants in the trials. It allows a user to set up a trip to Danvers and Salem. The images are clear and haunting, and this site offers a spectacular bibliography.

History of Massachusetts: The Salem Witch Trials. <http://historyofmassachusetts.org/the-salem-witch-trials/>

This is a great source from a website that focuses solely on Massachusetts history. It offers an overview in great detail, along with many lists of people and their biographies. There is a lot of related content about specific highlights of the trials and the people involved. The creators are active on the comment boards, and are happy to respond to any questions the user may have. The site is updated frequently.