

Witchcraft

Before the Revolutionary War, from 1600 through 1740, 13 of the American states made up the New England colonies. These states were Delaware, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Georgia, Connecticut, Massachusetts Bay, Maryland, South Carolina, New Hampshire, Virginia, New York, North Carolina, and Rhode Island and Providence Plantations. The people who lived there were sent by King James to claim the land for England, despite the fact that the Native Americans were already living there. This later caused many massacres to happen, and, paired with bad weather, illness and bias, people began to blame witches for their troubles and attempted to root them out. This led to numerous witch trials, such as Salem and Fairfield, and the Hartford Witch Panic, along with other tragedies, such as the hanging of Mary Dreyer, the expulsion of Roger Williams and the persecution of many Puritans for sinning. After this brief introduction you will begin to learn all about this topic...

WITCHCRAFT.

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During colonial times, witchcraft was not imagined as green-skinned hags zooming across full moons. People were genuinely afraid of witches, and there was mass hysteria caused by trying to root them out. The public belief was the devil would pick a person and start pressuring him/her to sign his book with him/her blood. If said person signed the book they had basically sold their soul in exchange for magic, power, or their greatest desire. Now a witch, the person was supposed to seek people out and hurt them in as many ways as possible, and try to get them to sign the devil's book. In order to prove themselves worthy of God, people would seek out the witches and hang them, burn them at the stake, or stone them to death, despite the fact that the devil was told by God to do these things to retaliate for their sinning. During a witch trial, anyone

who wasn't perfectly average could be a suspect, people who were rather rich or rather poor, people with too many or too little children, not coming to church or even speaking out against the hysteria could get you in serious trouble. At the height of these trials, all a child had to do to condemn somebody to death was throw a temper tantrum. Even ministers were named witches for offering comfort or hesitation instead of frightening sermons that fed even more panic and hysteria. The strange logic in this was that God was releasing the devil to make his subjects pay for their sins or lack of worship, but despite this, some people often practiced these arts themselves. Folk magic, as it was often called, involved many practices that today we may find silly, or may find being practiced. Today you will learn many of these practices, along with the history, origin, happiness and tragedy that apparently occurred at the time. You will hear about the ups and downs of the devil's art and learn the real deal instead of hyped up, stereotypical bubbling cauldrons, foolish wand waving, and sparks flying from old men's hands.

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Much like children disobeying rules like staying up late or playing with forbidden objects, many colonial girls and boys did some sort of fortune telling at some point. Did you know that in Salem two girls tried to find out who they would marry by using folk magic and saw death. They panicked and, believing that they had done something unholy, they accused others of wrongdoing in order to purify themselves. These girls are even suspected of being Betty Parris and Abigail Williams, the initiators of the Salem witch trials! Many other rituals included things we still do today, such as keeping a horseshoe over a door or even putting witch balls in gardens to keep witches away (did you know that witch balls were the original Christmas ornaments). However, many rituals were just apothecary-related cures to help with colds, fevers

,headaches,etc. But some people even went as far as to do forbidden things like fortune telling but this could get you in serious trouble during witch trials. Ways of fortune telling in colonial times involved tea leaves, palmistry, and even rolling bones to determine where to hunt for food and furs (did you know that this eventually led into the beginning of gambling)

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In Colonial America, many people thought that magic was horrible in many ways, and involved disgusting and scandalous practices. People thought that witches would even dance naked to please the devil. Witches Many people faced with torture confessed untruthfully, and fanned the hysteria further. Some individuals thought that others may have been worshipping and/or helping the devil behind each others' backs; this divided family and friends; people were accused of crazy things like sending out their souls to hurt others; supernatural evidence was if anything encouraged. Instead of innocent until proven guilty, people were guilty until proven innocent; many people even started to accuse others to prevent themselves from being accused. Folk magic was considered a dangerous way to invite demons into the real world, similar to how we avoid talking about bad fortune or bad times in history to prevent it from happening again. However, some witchcraft was thought to keep witches away and some was thought to cure illnesses. Before Christianity set in there were people called "white witches," "cunning women," and wise men/women who used rituals to help others. But they all stopped or faced charges for witchcraft and were hanged, jailed, burned or tortured. These violent practices were passed onto the colonies from Europe. Fortunately the practice of burning witches was never practiced in Colonial America, yet many suspects were tortured

until they confessed and were killed.

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Many people believe that the Salem witch trials may have been caused by a grain mold called ergot, but this theory has actually been disproven in many ways;for example, the fact that this mold can be fatal, and none of the supposed “victims” of witchcraft died, the fact that only certain members of each household were affected, as and the fact that the girls were unable to read any religious texts could not be scientifically linked to any sort of poison or illness. This is really a bit of an attempt to justify what could not really be justified;

what most likely happened is the fact that the people in this village were raised to fear the supernatural to the point of distinct terror. Therefore when people were under high death rates and already believed that women had a more lustful and easily manipulated nature than men(which is not true whatsoever)it was easy to believe that witches were among them when local girls began suffering strange seizures People quickly began to grow skittish and blame anyone that they knew wasn't perfectly normal;this usually applies to all colonial witch trials.

The intentions of the girl accusers are still speculated today ranging from being starved of attention, thinking it was all a game, being pressured by other colonists, or even just believing that this was the right thing to do.

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During colonial times, being a witch hunter was a very profitable profession because they were paid by the government and families to discover the witches.As of many con artists and scammers today, many of these supposed witch hunters used fake or impossible means to find

“witches” such as weighing them against a stack of bibles, using retractable knives to test for familiars ,or asking how many times they've been married despite the high death rates that spiked in colonial America.At the height of the hysteria,random women could be blamed for a man's recklessness; such was the case when a man who shot and killed by another man, Lydia Gilbert, of Windsor, Conn., was convicted and sentenced to death for causing the incident through her witchcraft.

Being accused of witchcraft was nearly impossible to escape, and sometimes it was even considered as a way to get somebody killed in order to gain somebody else's fortune or property.Being accused of witchcraft was nearly impossible to escape, and sometimes it was even considered as a way to get somebody killed in order to gain somebody else's fortune or property.

Rooting out witches was really comparable to any sort of purge in world history, the beggars and people too ill or poor to support themselves were often accused, and many of those who were rich or women that could support themselves were accused of using dark arts to gain their good fortune. Many people who had been married more than twice were also accused of killing her previous husband through witchcraft, despite the high death rates in colonial America or the cause of death being completely logical and accounted for. The ways of finding a witch were actually very simple, you pick someone others won't protest for, then you convict them, repeat until there is nobody left fitting the requirements.

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Tools for witchcraft were not very common in colonial times due to the fact that the people living there probably never dared to practice any sort of witchcraft; but there are accounts of the judges apparently

discovering some sort of artifact that was the case when ... and there is also the blasting rod that is now housed in the BOSCASTLE MUSEUM OF WITCHCRAFT. Witches were often thought thought to have animal or spiritual help that was summoned through their familiar.(did you know that the broomstick was really a staff slathered in a addictive mixture of herbs that cause psychosis) But the familiar was generally for young witches that were still getting used to their newfound powers.

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Contrary to tools for witchcraft in colonial times, there were many ways to find them.Witchfinders would have pins and knives to stab familiars, and many early mechanisms like the noose to kill witches and the witches cradle, and dunking chair to make witches confess.The witchfinders also used natural resources like the sink or float test, where the witch would be bound and thrown in the water, and if she floated the water, which represented purity had rejected her, therefore, meaning she was a witch.Colonial citizens also used many artifacts to keep witches away, such as witch balls, witch bottles, witch cakes , holy water, and a holy cross.

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The usual punishment for the New England colonies was hanging, and contrary to popular belief; there is no evidence to anyone ever being burned alive in American history. Although some were simply left to rot in jail, there were many seemingly crazy ways to get a witch to confess such as the colonial dunking chair, the prick test and and the tear test. The dunking test was to tie somebody to the end of a seesaw-like contraption with one end in the water, and the person at the end was dunked in the water until they confessed, this was closely associated with the supposed “trial by water” were a witch was thrown and watched to see if she would sink or float, occasionally a rope would be tied around the person's waist to prevent drowning, but drowning was common and if you floated you would be swiftly Hanged. The prick test was to prick and stab people with pins and knives

until the testers found a place that was seemingly numb and didn't bleed, the trick with this test was using dulled needles and retractable knives so when the person was seemingly stabbed or pricked, there was no reaction. And the tear test, if the witch was crying, she was considered to be innocent because only the innocent could cry; but you could still be convicted for “the devil may be allowing you to shed tears.”and being weighed against a stack of bibles, which is just completely unlikely.these were all considered reasonable ways to find a witch in colonial times.

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Today, many people practice religions such as Occultism, Witchcraft, Satanism, Neo-Gnosticism, Paganism and Norse Religion in Scandinavia. Many millennials* practice these religions to find an escape from the corporate and technologic world and feel free to do so because, unlike colonial times, Christianity does not rule with an iron fist. We attempt to build a society where all religions are treated equally and fairly. We have different beliefs and cultures, some of which are considered to be more “mainstream” than others: Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Judaism. My spin on this part of this topic is of utmost respect, because we all have a right to our beliefs.This period of suspicion and condemnation of people targeted as witches shook the United States in colonial times, and has helped inspire many books, movies, plays, and poems. It also helped us all to begin walking the path towards empathy and acceptance toward other cultures, ideas and beliefs.

Oxford Handbook of **Witchcraft** in **Early** Modern Europe and **Colonial** ...

List of people executed for **witchcraft** - Wikipedia

Witchcraft in Colonial Virginia

Before Salem, the First **American Witch** Hunt - History in the Headlines

A Brief History of **Witches** in **America** | Mental Floss

Halloween History: The **Witch** Trials That **America** Forgot | Time