

The devil's snare

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The Devil's Snare: The Salem Witchcraft Crisis of 1692 By Mary Beth Norton

In the Devil's Snare is a book about the Salem Witchcraft Crisis of 1692 in which the towns people accused women and men of using witchcraft to cause unexplained happenings throughout the town. The men and women appeared to be possessed by the devil, nothing else could explain it. In early times people didn't understand reason. Especially the Puritans who only saw God's will and the evilness of the devil.

During the Salem witchcraft crisis, Puritans struggled to decipher communal security and find the truth around them. They believed that Satan recruited humans to do his evil and be servants to him, i. e. witches. The witches had a magical power that allowed them to harm others. To protect the community the judges of the town took it upon themselves to hold jury trials and hang the witches as punishment. Many believed the witches were burned at the stake, however that is untrue. The idea of witchcraft seemed to be the only logical answer to the community.

Nothing else could possible explain the fires, flood, windstorms, droughts, livestock disease, and epidemics raging through the town. These issues needed an explanation. Puritans could not conceive the notion that this could simply be misfortune, due to their belief in Gods will. Witchcraft was the only explanation because many members of the community dabble in it here and there to spell curses or fortune tell. Although the belief in witchcraft was widespread the prosecution of the witches was sporadic and only a few towns executed the witches.

Many towns held trials, because they didn't want to rush to judgment. However it was not easy to prove witchcraft, until 1692 when things turned

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for the worse and problems increased dramatically. Desperate for an answer the towns people finally started to believe this was the only explanation. The town of Salem was an already troubled when the happenings began. Members of the town often fought over pretty much anything. The first witches were teenager girls who saw hallucinations; the town took this very seriously.

The accusations led to formal charges filed against thirty-eight men and one hundred six women. Prosecutors were able to obtain fifty-four confessions, which was used as evidence to execute twenty people (fourteen women and six men). Mary Beth Norton wrote this book as if she was on a witch hunt herself. She had a one way direction of writing and was not objective to both sides. If she were on the jury of the Salem Witches she would have convicted them herself. I did not like the book because I felt it left me hanging, longing to know the other side of the story.