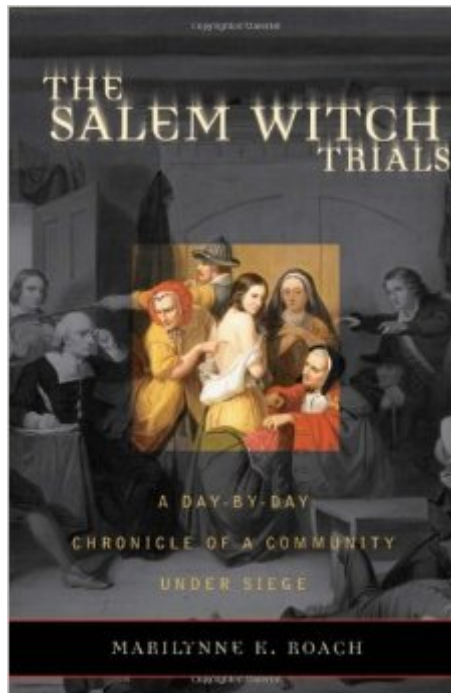


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The Salem Witch Trials: A Day-by-Day Chronicle Of A Community Under Siege



Synopsis

Based on twenty-seven years of original archival research, including the discovery of previously unknown documents, this day-by-day narrative of the hysteria that swept through Salem Village in 1692 and 1693 reveals new connections behind the events, and shows how rapidly a community can descend into bloodthirsty madness. Roach opens her work with chapters on the history of the Puritan colonies of New England, and explains how these people regarded the metaphysical and the supernatural. The account of the days from January 1692 to March 1693 keeps in order the large cast of characters, places events in their correct contexts, and occasionally contradicts earlier assumptions about the gruesome events. The last chapter discusses the remarkable impact of the events, pointing out how the 300th anniversary of the trials made headlines in Japan and Australia.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I am really pleased that there are so many positive reviews of this book, as I believe that it is the one book you need to read first, if you are ever in a position where you need to study the subject. This book may not answer all the questions, but it will unquestionably give you what you need to detect the mistaken answers you may find in other books. The Salem Witch incident is one of the most mysterious in the history of 17th century Protestant religion in both America and in Europe. There were cases of supposed witchcraft up to as recently as 1689 (Salem event occurred in 1692), but no similar incident involving this number of people ever happened anywhere else in Protestant Europe or America. The theories about the causes have centered around searching for scapegoats, perverse understanding of Christianity, and mass hysteria. The only one of those theories which

have any semblance of credibility is the role of what we now call "hysteria". There are descriptions of symptoms of those affected, such as paralysis and blocking of the esophagus which are precisely described in Freud and Breuer's classic work on hysteria. The author goes to great pains to avoid theorizing about any underlying causes of how the event started, how it came to an end, or most relevantly, why the outbreak was so virulent. She just presents the facts, largely as the people at that time actually saw them. The conclusion one tends to draw is that this was a community in high anxiety from possible Indian attacks, with a government in disarray, and an economic slump due to the paralyzed government and squabbles. The accusations were largely done by young women, but they were investigated by civil authorities, not by clerical ones.

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