**The Prisons**

During the terrible witch hysteria of 1692, there were so many people arrested, they were scattered in area village jails as well as in [Salem Towne](https://www.legendsofamerica.com/ma-witchtrialtowns4.html#Salem Town), Boston, and Cambridge. However, for most who were awaiting trials, they were held in the Salem Dungeon and Jail.

All of the jails, intended to hold prisoners only temporarily, were hot in summer and cold in winter, infested with lice, and stank of dung and tobacco. They were described by one visiting Englishman as “suburbs of Hell.” Though all of them were bad, the Salem Jail was said to have been the worst.

Conditions in jail were harsh for those accused of witchcraft. It was rat invested, filthy, and the [accused witches](https://www.legendsofamerica.com/ma-witches.html) were often bound with cords and irons for months. The dungeon was cold, and foul smelling, and kept in total darkness. Located near the north river, during high tide, it often flooded, with water rising to the prisoners' ankles. They were also subjected to insulting, unending examinations and excommunication from the church. The small cells had no bedding and no bars on the cells, as most prisoners accepted their punishment. For those who tried to escape, if they were caught, they would be immediately executed.

Many who were "examined" by authorities, who induced them to confess, were tortured, often by hog-tying their feet to their necks until blood dripped from their eyes and nose. Others were made to stand for long periods in a pillory, for hours with arms outstretched. The examinations for witch marks were humiliating, as the accused were stripped of their clothing and any blemishes pricked with pins and pinched, often in their most private parts. Water was often withheld from prisoners because the authorities believed they would be able to get more “confessions” if the prisoners were thirsty.

A careful tally of every single item used by prisoners was kept during their imprisonment and before anyone could be released they were required to pay their tab. Prisoners were charged for straw bedding and food, and if they could not afford them, they did without. They were also charged for their cells and for prisoners who were poor and could not afford to pay, they were placed in coffin like cells, smaller than a phone booth, in which they could only stand. They were also charged for their cuffs, chains, and the fetters that they were forced to wear, and the cost of examinations for witch marks. The basic fee was two shillings, sixpence a week – about as much as a woman could hope to earn in a week.

If a prisoner was executed, there was a sizable hangman's fee to be paid. Those who were hanged were taken from the jail by oxcart to Gallows Hill. Afterwards, their dead bodies were left swaying for a time, as a lesson to others. When the bodies were taken down, they were then thrown into a nearby ditch. If a prisoner died under these horrible conditions, the family was required to pay for the removal of the corpse. It is estimated that more than a dozen people died in the prisons. One of which was [Lydia Dustin](https://www.legendsofamerica.com/ma-witches-d.html#Lydia Dustin/Dastin), who had been arrested in April, 1692. After spending almost nine months in prison, she was finally found not guilty by the Superior Court of Judicature in January, 1693. However, she could not be released until she paid her jail fees. Unable to do so, she died in jail on March 10, 1693.

Dozens languished in these conditions for months without trials. At one point there were as many as 150 people in the Salem dungeon. The youngest girl accused of witchcraft and imprisoned was four year-old Dorcus Good. Both she and her mother, Sarah Good, were imprisoned in the Ipswich Jail. Sarah was accused of witchcraft in February, 1692. She was tried, convicted and sentenced to death. However, she was pregnant at the time, so her execution was delayed. While she was in jail, her four year-old daughter, Dorcas was arrested and jailed in March. Dorcas would witness the birth of her sister, Mercy Good, who died shortly after probably due to malnutrition, lack of medical care, and unsanitary conditions. She would later also witness her mother being hanged on July 19, 1692. Dorcus would spend over eight months in jail before she was finally released. However, she would never be ok, and by some, judged to be insane.

Of those many people who were accused, 114 were arrested and held for many months in various jails. Forty-three were tried; 27 were convicted and sentenced to death; 19 were hanged; and one was pressed to death with stone weights. As many as a dozen people died in prison, including two nursing infants of jailed women. Two of the accused, who were later found innocent, were too poor to pay their jail fees and had to sell themselves into indentured servitude to obtain their release.

**What Happened to Abigail**

**Account #1**

Even though Abigail Williams accused many [victims](http://historyofmassachusetts.org/salem-witch-trials-victims/) at the beginning of the trials, especially in March, April, and May, she only testified against eight of them: Mary Easty, George Jacobs Sr, Susannah Martin, Rebecca Nurse, John Proctor, Elizabeth Proctor, Mary Witheridge and John Willard and gave her last testimony on June 3, 1692.

After that date, Williams disappears from the court hearings, for reasons unknown. It is possible her uncle, Reverend Samuel Parris, sent her away to prevent her from further participating in the witch trials, just like he sent his daughter away, but there is no evidence of this.

Of the people Williams accused and/or testified against, 15 were executed, one was tortured to death and the others either died in jail, were pardoned, were found not guilty, escaped jail or evaded arrest all together.

**Account #2**

Neither Abigail Williams or Betty Parris ever apologized for their roles in the Salem Witch Trials. Ann Putnam, Jr., was the only afflicted girl who did when she submitted a written apology to the church in Salem Village in 1706.

Although Betty Parris later married and raised a family in Sudbury, Mass, there are no records indicating what happened to Abigail Williams after the Salem Witch Trials ended.

The book [The Salem Witch Trials: a Day by Day Chronicle of a Community Under Siege](http://historyofmassachusetts.org/best-books-about-salem-witch-trials/) states that Williams died in 1697:

*“Abigail Williams, haunted to the end, apparently died before the end of 1697 if not sooner, no older than seventeen.”*

Yet, there is no proof of this though and this particular claim seems to be a vague reference to an anonymous afflicted girl mentioned in Reverend John Hale’s book A Modest Inquiry Into the Nature of Witchcraft.

In Hale’s book, published in 1697, he mentions an anonymous afflicted girl who suffered from “diabolical manifestation” until her death and died a single woman. Since only three of the girls, Abigail Williams, Elizabeth Hubbard and Mary Warren, are unaccounted for in the records at the time, it is possible Hale was referring to Williams.

The location of Abigail Williams’ grave is unknown.

**Account of prosecution against the Proctors**

*Q. Abigail Williams! does this woman hurt you?
A. Yes, Sir, often.
Q. Does she bring the book to you?
A. Yes.
Q. What would she have you do with it?
A. To write in it and I shall be well. — Did not you, said Abigail, tell me, that your maid had written?
A.(Proctor) Dear Child, it is not so. There is another judgement, dear child.
Then Abigail and Ann had fits. By and by they cried out, look you there is Goody Procter upon the beam. By and by, both of them cried out of Goodman Procter himself, and said he was a wizard. Immediately, many, if not all of the bewitched, had grievous fits.
Q. Ann Putman! who hurt you?
A. Goodman Procter and his wife too. — Afterwards some of the afflicted cried, there is Procter going to take up Mrs. Pope’s feet. — And her feet were immediately taken up.
Q. What do you say Goodman Proctor to these things?
A. I know not, I am innocent.
Abigail Williams cried out, there is Goodman Procter going to Mrs. Pope , and immediately, said Pope fell into a fit. — You see the devil will deceive you; the children could see what you was going to do before the woman was hurt. I would advise you to repentance, for the devil is bringing you out. Abigail Williams cried out again, there is Goodman Procter going to hurt Goody Bibber; and immediately Goody Bibber fell into a fit. There was the like of Mary Walcot, and divers others. Benjamin Gould gave in his testimony, that he had seen Goodman Corey and his wife, Procter and his wife, Goody Cloyse, Goody Nurse, and Goody Griggs in his chamber last Thursday night. Elizabeth Hubbard was in a trance during the whole examination. During the examination of Elizabeth Procter, Abigail Williams and Ann Putman, both made offer to strike at said Procter; but when Abigail’s hand came near, it opened, whereas it was made up into a fist before, and came done exceeding lightly, as it drew near to said Procter, and at length with open and extended fingers, touched Procter’s hood very lightly. Immediately Abigail cried out, her fingers, her fingers, burned, and Ann Putman took on most greviously, of her head, and sunk down.*

**What happened to Reverend Parris?**

After the witch trials ended, several members of Reverend Samuel Parris’ congregation fought for years to have Parris dismissed from the church due to his role in the Salem Witch Trials. His dissenters submitted a list of problems they had with Parris, which included a number of issues that were directly related to Williams and the afflicted girls.

Parris responded to these claims by writing an essay, titled Meditations for Peace, in which he stated that God tried to teach him a lesson by allowing the witch hunt to begin in his family.

The essay also states that the fact that some people in his household were accusers (Abigail Williams and Betty Parris) and the accused (Tituba) in the Salem Witch Trials was also a personal reprimand from God.

The essay also excused Betty Parris and Abigail Williams’ behavior during the trials by stating that the Devil sometimes not only afflicts people in the shape of innocent people but also deludes “the senses of the afflicted that they strongly conceive their hurt is from such persons, when indeed it it not.”

As for himself, Parris acknowledged that using “one afflicted to inquire by who afflicts the others, I fear may be and has been unlawfully used, to Satan’s great advantage.”

These acknowledgments did nothing to help Parris or his cause. In 1697, Parris’ dissenters won and Parris was dismissed from his job as minister of the church. He left Salem Village shortly after, taking Betty Parris and, most likely, Abigail Williams with him.

**What happened to the accused who were set free?**

The last Salem witch trial was held in May, 1693; but, for those who had been accused, as well as their families, their lives would forever be changed. Even though Governor William Phips had pardoned all the remaining accused in 1693, the fact that they had been accused would never be forgotten by their neighbors. And, for those who had actually been convicted, it was even worse. Though they were free, they were still considered, in the eyes of law, as "dead", meaning they had no rights of recourse, nor claim to any property they may have previously owned. This was the case in the life of Elizabeth Bassett Proctor, who had been convicted the previous year of witchcraft. Her husband, John Proctor was hanged, and Elizabeth was only spared because she was pregnant. However, by the time she gave birth to her child, the hysteria had ended and she was later released. But, she had no home to return to, as all of the possessions of her and her husband had been seized. She and her children were impoverished. Though she would take her complaints to the courts, her pleas would go unheard because, in the eyes of the law, she was considered a "dead woman." She would eventually prevail, but, not before living for several years in turmoil.

Others, who were pardoned, were forced to remain in jail because they couldn't afford to pay the bill that was owed for their imprisonment, which included everything from room and board, to the price of their shackles. While waiting, one woman -- Lydia Dustin would die, and two more would indenture themselves before they were set free. Numerous more would, like Elizabeth Proctor, return to homes where all their possessions had been confiscated, their fields untended, and their crops dead.

**Apologies from the people of Salem including Ann Putnam**

Ann Putnam, Jr.’s, role in the Salem Witch Trials began in the winter of 1691/92, when some of the afflicted girls reportedly dabbled in fortune-telling techniques, specifically a technique known as the “venus-glass” during which the girls dropped egg whites into a glass of water and interpreted whatever shapes or symbols appeared in an attempt to learn more about their future husbands.

According to the book A Modest Enquiry Into the Nature of Witchcraft by local minister, [Reverend John Hale](http://historyofmassachusetts.org/reverend-john-hale-of-beverly/), on one of these occasions the girls became terrified when they saw the shape of a coffin in the glass:

*“I knew one of the afflicted persons, who (as I was credibly informed) did try with an egg and a glass to find her future husbands calling; till there came up a coffin, that is, a spectre in likeness of a coffin. And she was afterward followed with diabolical molestation to her death; and so died a single person. A just warning to others, to take heed of handling the Devils weapons, lest they get a wound nearby. Another I was called to pray with, being under some fits and vexations of Satan. And upon examination I found she had tried the same charm: and after her confession of it and manifestation of repentance for it, and our prayers to God for her, she was speedily released from those bonds of Satan.”*

*On August 25, 1706, twenty-nine year old Ann Putnam stood before the congregation while Green read it aloud.”*

**Ann’s apology reads as follows:**

*“I desire to be humbled before God for that sad and humbling providence that befell my father’s family in the year about ’92; that I, then being in my childhood, should, by such a providence of God, be made an instrument for the accusing of several persons of a grievous crime, whereby their lives were taken away from them, whom now I have just grounds and good reason to believe they were innocent persons; and that it was a great delusion of Satan that deceived me in that sad time, whereby I justly fear I have been instrumental, with others, though ignorantly and unwittingly, to bring upon myself and this land the guilt of innocent blood; though what was said or done by me against any person I can truly and uprightly say, before God and man, I did it not out of any anger, malice, or ill-will to any person, for I had no such thing against one of them; but what I did was ignorantly, being deluded by Satan. And particularly, as I was a chief instrument of accusing of Goodwife Nurse and her two sisters, I desire to lie in the dust, and to be humbled for it, in that I was a cause, with others, of so sad a calamity to them and their families; for which cause I desire to lie in the dust, and earnestly beg forgiveness of God, and from all those unto whom I have given just cause of sorrow and offence, whose relations were taken away or accused.
[Signed]
This confession was read before the congregation, together with her relation, Aug. 25, 1706; and she acknowledged it.
J. Green, Pastor.”*

Ann was the only one of the afflicted girls to apologize for her role in the Salem Witch Trials. She died 10 years later in 1716, at the age of 37, from unknown causes and was buried with her parents in one of the Putnam family cemeteries in Salem Village.

According to the book Salem Witchcraft by Charles Wentworth Upham, Ann had become chronically ill since the days of the Salem Witch Trials and this illness is what led to her early death:

 While some would eventually make formal apologies, others would only hint at any guilt. The Reverend Samuel Parris of Salem Village conceded errors of judgment, but, mostly shifted blame to others. In jeopardy of losing his job, he made a "Meditation for Peace" sermon, admitting that he gave too much weight to the spectral evidence. However, this would not be enough for the villagers and he was eventually replaced by Thomas Green, who devoted his career to putting his torn congregation back together. Governor William Phips blamed the entire affair on William Stoughton, who would refused to apologize or explain himself, and criticized Governor William Phips for interfering just when he was about to "clear the land" of witches. Stoughton's refusal to take any blame; however, would not hurt him, as he would become the next governor of [Massachusetts](https://www.legendsofamerica.com/massachusetts/). Eventually, a few judges hinted at apologies for their roles in the trials, but, would never assume any real guilt.

12 jurors, who had served in the witch trials, signed a Declaration of Regret asking forgiveness for the error of their judgment.

“We whose names are under-written, being in the year 1692 called to serve as jurors in court at Salem, on trial of many who were by some suspected guilty of doing acts of witchcraft upon the bodies of sundry persons, we confess that we ourselves were not capable to understand, nor able to withstand, the mysterious delusions of the powers of darkness and Prince of the air, but were, for want of knowledge in ourselves and better information from others, prevailed with to take with such evidence against the accused, as, on further consideration and better information, we justly fear was insufficient for the touching the lives of any (Deut. XVII) whereby we fear we have been instrumental, with others, though ignorantly and unwittingly, to bring upon ourselves and this people of the Lord the guilt of innocent blood; which sin the Lord saith in Scripture he would not pardon (2 Kings XXIV 4)–that is, we suppose, in regard to his temporal judgments. We do therefore hereby signify to all in general, and to the surviving sufferers in special, our deep sense of, and sorrow for, our errors in acting on such evidence to the condemning of any person; and do hereby declare, that we justly fear that we were sadly deluded and mistaken–for which we are much disquieted and distressed in our minds, and do therefore humbly beg forgiveness, first of God, for Christ’s sake, for this our error, and pray that God would impute the guilt of it to ourselves nor others, and we also pray that we may be considered candidly and aright by the living sufferers, as being then under a strong and general delusion, utterly unacquainted with, and not experienced in, matters of that nature.

We do hereby ask forgiveness of you all, whom we have justly offended, and do declare, according to our present minds, we would none of us do such things again, on such grounds, for the whole world–praying you to accept of this in way of satisfaction for our offense, and that you would bless the inheritance of the Lord, that he may be entreated for the land.”

On May 9, 1992, the Salem Village Witchcraft Victims' Memorial of Danvers was dedicated before an audience of over 3,000 people. It was the first such Memorial to honor all of the 1692 witchcraft victims, and is located across the street from the site of the original Salem Village Meeting House where many of the witch examinations took place. That same year, another memorial was dedicated in August in Salem. It consists of 20 granite benches near the Old Burying Point. The benches are inscribed with the name of the accused and the means and date of execution.

Finally, on November 1, 2001, acting Massachusetts Governor Jane Swift approved a bill that cleared all the [accused witches](https://www.legendsofamerica.com/ma-witches.html) hanged in Salem in 1692 and exonerated the final five who had not been cleared by the previous amnesty resolutions -- Susannah Martin, Bridget Bishop, Alice Parker, Margaret Scott, and Wilmot Redd.