

Powerpoint
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The Salem Witch Trials: Sociopolitical Hysteria, Systematic Persecution of Women, or Ergot Poisoning?

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Introduction

History of Salem

It is Founded by Puritans in the County of Essex, Originally called "Salem Village". Now known as Danvers; As Salem

experienced new growth in commerce, a new class of wealthy merchants arose. Merchants competed with farmers over tax revenue, control of land and religion (Figure 3) & (Figure 4).

Social Unrest Erupts

- A. Religious differences arose among the Protestants, the Quakers and the Anglicans.
- B. Many disputes arose between the farmers and merchants over land and taxes.
- C. The farmers asserted their rights to have their own church, and their own minister.

My Church is Better than Your Church!

Political power moved away from the founders' Protestant Church

- A. In 1689, Samuel Parris moved to Salem from Barbados to become the Preacher in the new "Village Church", attended by the farmers
- B. The Villagers and Towns people became adversaries.

C. Rev. Parris brought his 10 year old daughter, Betty, and niece Abagail Williams with him.

Betty Parris and Abagail Williams Were Among the First to "succumb" to Witchcraft?

- A. Signs of being possessed included:
- B. Seeing visions & hearing voices,
- C. Changes in color & appearance of the skin
- D. Screaming out in pain
- E. Fits (convulsions)

William Griggs, MD, physician to the family said, these afflictions:

"were of 'supernatural origin'"

- A. Neighbor Mary Sibley suggested that Tituba, the Barbadian slave, bake a "witch cake" containing Betty's urine.
- B. Following a round or two of "water boarding" and a few other "friendly persuasions",
- C. Tituba confessed to being a Witch and named four others as witches.
- D. What could account for all of this?.

Could it be Satan? (Figures 1 & 2).

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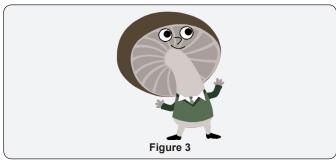
Figure 1



Figure 2

The Mushroom From Hell

- A. LSD and other ergot alkaloids are produced by various fungi.
- B. Once such fungus is claviceps purperea, a purple fungus that produces ergots and grows on rye grain in cold, damp conditions (Figure 3).



Effects of Ergot Alkaloids

- A. Vaso-constriction of blood vessels leading to gangrene and leaving a black color to the skin
- B. Intense pain
- C. Abortions
- D. Hallucinations, seizures
- E. Recurred throughout history (9th -16th centuries) when stored rye grain became wet and fungus grew on it
- F. Last episode Pont St. Espirit, France, 1951.

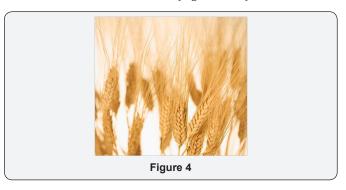
Le Pain Maudit "The Accursed Bread"

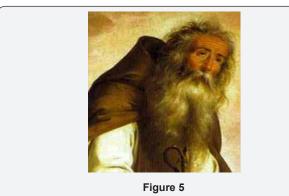
- A. Ignis sacer (holy fire)
- B. Feu sacre

- C. Heilige Feuer
- D. Dancing Mania
- E. Pestis igniaria
- F. St. Anthony's Fire

St. Anthony's Fire

- A. Caused by ergot fungus growing on rye grain
- B. Those afflicted feel as if their fingers and toes are on fire due to vasoconstriction
- C. They jump around and scream out in pain
- D. Ergot alkaloids are related to LSD and cause hallucinations and abortions (Figure 4 & 5).





Hostility Escalates Many Legal Actions Ensue

Sir William Phips, Governor of Massachusetts, created a special court of "Oyer and Terminer" to try all the "Witch Cases" . In the end, 17 Women and 7 Men were tried for:

- A. Practicing Witchcraft
- B. Demonic Possession
- C. Affiliating with Satan

Don't Take Pharmacology from Strangers.

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