



Satan and Salem: The Witch-Hunt Crisis of 1692

Benjamin C. Ray

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The result of a perfect storm of factors that culminated in a great moral catastrophe, the Salem witch trials of 1692 took a breathtaking toll on the young English colony of Massachusetts. Over 150 people were imprisoned, and nineteen men and women, including a minister, were executed by hanging. The colonial government, which was responsible for initiating the trials, eventually repudiated the entire affair as a great "delusion of the Devil."

In *Satan and Salem*, Benjamin Ray looks beyond single-factor interpretations to offer a far more nuanced view of why the Salem witch-hunt spiraled out of control. Rather than assigning blame to a single perpetrator, Ray assembles portraits of several major characters, each of whom had complex motives for accusing his or her neighbors. In this way, he reveals how religious, social, political, and legal factors all played a role in the drama. Ray's historical database of court records, documents, and maps yields a unique analysis of the geographic spread of accusations and trials, ultimately showing how the witch-hunt resulted in the execution of so many people—far more than any comparable episode on this side of the Atlantic.

In addition to the print volume, *Satan and Salem* will also be available as a linked e-book offering the reader the opportunity to investigate firsthand the primary sources and maps on which Ray's groundbreaking argument rests.

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