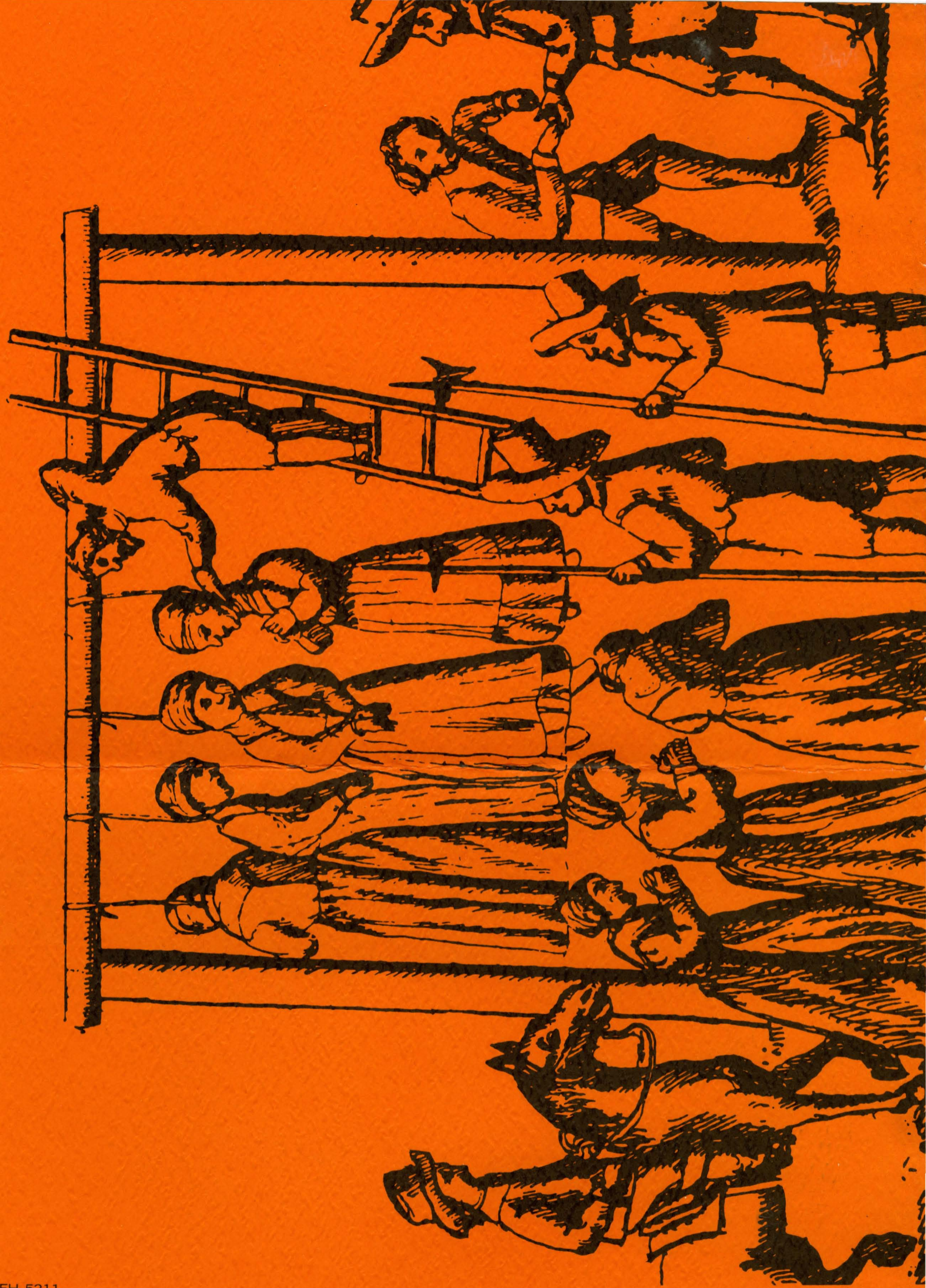


WITCHES AND WAR-WHOOPS FOLKWAYS RECORDS FH 5211
Early New England Ballads Collected and Sung by John Allison

AN EXECUTION OF WITCHES IN ENGLAND, FROM A 17th CENTURY DRAWING

COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE



WITCHES AND WAR-WHOOPS / FOLKWAYS FH 5211

LOOKIE THERE!
DEATH OF GOODY NURSE
LOVEWELL'S INDIAN FIGHT
SUSANNA MARTIN
THE GLOUCESTER WITCH
GILES COREY
BLOODY BROOK
MAMMY REDD
FLUD IRESON
ROBIN GOODFELLOWE

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DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

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WITCHES AND WAR-WHOOPS

Early New England Ballads Collected and Sung by John Allison



FOREWORD

All notes are by John Allison

From the collection of John Allison, and sung by him, these ballads recount that sinister tragedy in the year 1692 when the childish fantasies of a handful of adolescent girls touched off a gruesome event---the Salem Witch Persecutions. Also included are two unusually early ballad items telling of Indian encounters. Another relates the story of the degrading punishment of a sea captain.

John Allison tells us:

"I have, over a span of thirty years, kept up a steady lookout for extremely early ballads which bear on dramatic happenings in American history. A few found their way into my collection as far back as 1931. It was doubtful, I thought then, that I would be able to gather enough material of this nature to form an album. However, as the years rolled by, a sufficient number of these narrative songs have come to light. All except one depict pre-Revolutionary times.

In this presentation there are, to my knowledge, only two ballads of known authorship. Concerning the ballads in general, I have in some instances had recourse to either expansion or contraction wherever it seemed necessary. In the ballad 'The Death of Goody Nurse', I omitted verses which seemed a bit too gruesome. Whittier's version of the Flud Ireson event runs into nine verses. I reduced this to four, finding it expedient to alter some for the sake of clarification. In this the New England poet, it would appear, borrowed, or adapted, the little refrain from some earlier source, for I can remember my father telling of his father reciting similar lines:



GALLOWES HILL - SALEM

DRAWING BY JOHN ALLISON

'Jack the dart,
For his bad art
Tarred and feathered
And carried in a cart . . . '

'Old Mammy Redd' is an extension from only four lines. They appear in a book 'New England Legends' by Samuel Adams Drake (1883). No authorship is credited. However, Wilmot Redd was a real person, and I was able to locate both fact and legend about her and, thus enabled, I enlarged the jingle.

In the matter of melodies, I have applied both contemporary or pseudo-contemporary themes, and through such settings I believe I have fairly well accomplished the feeling and color of the times."

For the most part, the pictures here reproduced, are from Woodblocks cut during the 17th and 18th centuries. In these the nearly universal belief in demonry and witchcraft of the times is quaintly and curiously illustrated.

(All ballad items copyright 1962 by John Allison).

THE SALEM STORY

On the occasion of the bicentennial celebration of the founding of Salem, Massachusetts, Judge Joseph Story, associate justice of the U. S. Supreme Court, addressed the assemblage:

"We may lament then the errors of the times which led to these prosecutions. But surely our ancestors had no special reasons for shame in a belief which had the sanction of their own, and all former ages . . . Let Witch Hill remain forever memorable by this sad catastrophe, not to perpetuate or dishonor, but as an affecting, enduring proof of human infirmity."

Judge Story referred to that catastrophe, the Salem Witch Trials, in which, through fear and the superstitions of the populace and its Calvinistic ministers, the guilty went free and the innocent were sacrificed.

England and Europe had been plagued with witchery in which thousands conducting "malefic practices" had faced the stake. On the other side of the Atlantic, Salem Village in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, became the scene of witch persecutions. Here, in New England, the singular behavior of a handful of young girls began attracting attention.

In the kitchen of the little clapboard parish house, home of the Rev. Samuel Parris, old Tituba held forth with strange incantations as a kind of amusement for Parris' daughter Betty and her cousin Abigail Williams. Tituba was the faithful slave of the Parris family--half Carib and half Negro.

Such demonstrations proved fascinating to the two girls. Tituba would show them tricks and spells, and delve into the mysteries of island voodoo learned in Barbados. Other neighborhood maidens, hidebound by the rigors of their Calvinistic upbringing, would gather at these seances, eager for the excitement denied them in those days of unnatural repression by which their lives were ordered.

But "Black Arts" were, of course, strictly forbidden. Cotton Mather, the Colony's theologian and writer who later came to Salem during the witch trials, had spoken sternly against any person practising "little sorceries by conjuring with sieve and scissors and candle." Obviously, the meetings with old Tituba at the Parris household were held more or less subrosa.

Today psychology points to instances in which adolescent children, under unusual restraint, will take recourse to weird and tricky behavior. This must have been the case with Salem Village's teenagers of 1692. Sparked, apparently, by the old Carib slave, a sort of attention-getting hysteria developed among them--an unconscious attempt at release and a craving for excitement in the atmosphere of sober Puritan restrictions.

It was Betty Parris who first showed signs of unaccountable behavior. Abigail Williams, the older girl in the Rev. Parris' family, soon followed with similar actions. The "affliction" spread like a plague throughout the community. Other maidens began displaying all manner of alarming symptoms that ran the gamut of twitchings, moaning spells, lapses into incoherent mumblings, and what appeared to be convulsions. Throughout the village young girls became obsessed with this inexplicable malady and the "stricken" ones--perhaps with a delicious satisfaction in such exhibitionism--found themselves playing to an awe-struck audience.

Too well, some of the watchers suspected what had occurred. In Boston, only a few years previously, four children in the family of one John Goodwin had behaved similarly, and despite the prayers of Cotton Mather and other ministers, they continued to astound the populace by cutting crazed and indecent capers. The trouble was eventually "discovered" to have been caused by a pathetic old woman known locally as Witch Glover, though her death by hanging did not entirely terminate the antics of these youngsters.

The Salem emergency summoned into that village a half-dozen ministers from outlying towns to consult with the Rev. Parris, who himself was in a somewhat embarrassing position since the first unaccountable manifestations had taken place within his own household.

It was finally decided among these profound men of the cloth that the girls must be persuaded to name those responsible for their dire afflictions. Further, the clergymen concluded, there could be little doubt that Satan had been abroad in the community. He had made a pact with these persons, they reasoned, and had created witches or wizards out of them, endowing them with the malefic power to torture these young souls. Such individuals must be sought out and brought to justice, they said. Did not the Bible clearly state "thou shalt not suffer a witch to live?"

Many of the best minds in the Bay Colony accepted the decision of the ministers, for belief in the existence of witches and devils was as prevalent in the 1600's as the belief in God and Heaven itself. God in his mercy, it was felt, would give these bewitched girls the power to name their tormentors.

Under the pressure of incessant questioning, the "possessed" girls were made to point out specific individuals whose malevolence had bewitched them. At first they seemed unable to do so, but under the prodding of their inquisitors, their tongues and their imaginations loosened, and fanaticism ran riot.

The whole community was caught up in the drama of the situation. The tragic business with its drab morbidity became an extravaganza in which the spotlighted maidens moved in a weird ghost dance, leveling their fingers now and then at off-beat characters in the area--and the pointed finger might well be a sentence of death. A carnival atmosphere prevailed.

In Salem Village and the surrounding countryside, many celebrated by taking holidays while the townsfolk waited the arrival of the prosecutors, clergymen and magistrates.

Salem did have its scoffers, and those whose belief in witchery was scant; there are always individuals during mass delusions who seem able to keep their heads. A respected townsman, calling at the house of one of the bewitched girls, spoke boldly, if dangerously: "If you dare touch with your foul lies anyone belonging to my household," he said, "you shall answer for it!" But such pronouncements were considered heresy. It was safer to remain silent.

As might be expected, unpopular and disliked persons, and the beggars and crones of the vicinity, were the likeliest targets of the possessed teenagers; and even some among the more respected members of the community did not escape. Goodwife Rebecca Nurse had been charged with criminal activity. The girls had seen her "shape"--her astral body--floating about the countryside and abusing nearly every maid in the lists of the afflicted.

Among the "possessed", such young women as Ann Putnam, Mercy Lewis, Susanna Sheldon and Mary Walcott played major roles with outstanding finesse. They were forever seeing shapes where others saw nothing. They swore they had seen persons transmogrified into hogs or cats, and had witnessed witches' sabbaths in which some local resident might be involved. These were sights invisible to all but the girls themselves. Nevertheless, Hathorne, Corwin, and Stoughton, most relentless of the prosecutors, accepted this "Spectral Evidence"--these fantastic, frenetic outpourings--as conclusive proof of the guilt of those whose names had been cried out.

Townsfolk, carried along the wave of hysteria, testified against unfortunate eccentrics in the village and outlying areas. One old woman was proven to have caused the death of a farmer's cow. Witnesses had seen her pause and mumble incantations as she passed the animal.

New England history has the records. Further details are hardly necessary. Let it suffice that the afflicted girls, seated on benches in the front of the courtroom, or writhing on the floor, carried on their egregious antics with a zeal that only youth can sustain; and while some of those whom they accused were exonerated, twenty victims faced Gallows Hill and the Rope.



WITCHES' DANCE

THE BALLADS

LOOKIE THERE!

In its various forms, "Lookie There!" had its origin in the middle ages. It was known, and probably sung, in the early days of New England and, as recently as 1840, the singing Hutchinson family included it in their concerts under the title of "Cape Ann."

Although generally adapted to a bright tune, the song is characterized by an odd kind of awesomeness which points out the widespread superstitions of a populace which was only emerging from the middle ages at the time of the Salem witch trials.

Three farmers went a-hunting,
And the first thing they did find
Was a barn in a meadow,
And that they left behind,
Lookie there!---Lookie there now, run away!

One said it was a barn,
But the others they said nay,
They said it was a church
With the steeple cut away,
Lookie there!---etc.

So they hunted and the halloed,
And the next thing they did find
Was a witch in a cottage
And her the left behind,
Lookie there!---etc.

One said it was a girl,
But the others they said nay,
One said it was an angel
With her wings cut away,
Lookie there!---etc.

One said it was an owl,
But the others they said nay,
One said it was the evil one,
And they all ran away,
Lookie there!---
HE'S COMING AFTER US!---RUN AWAY!

DEATH OF GOODY NURSE

The fanatical frenzy on the part of the ministers and magistrates at the time of the witch trials reached its heights in July of 1692.

Among those accused was Goodwife Rebecca Nurse. Of excellent character and standing in Salem Village, Goody Nurse was seventy-one years old when she was brought before the court for a hearing. Somewhat deaf, she made a poor showing being unable to understand all of the questions put to her by the judges and clergymen.

Like others imprisoned or executed, she was convicted on the "Spectral Evidence" of the teenage girls who had "cried her out," and who claimed they could "feel" her malignant influence. On July 19 she died on Gallows Hill along with four other victims. Once surrounded by her flax garden, Goody Nurse's house still stands ---a mute reminder of black events.

They came upon her like a host
And bade her speak and tell
Why she had sworn a wicked oath
To serve the powers of hell.
"Speak up, speak up," they hoarsely cry---
The minister did swear;
He cursed her with a heavy curse
No mortal man may bear.

"Thou hast bewitched us," cried they all,
And carried her away,
In chains of iron day and night
In Salem jail she lay;
Until at last the door stood wide---
They led her then abroad;
By many an old familiar place
Her trembling footsteps trod.

The women held their babes on high
To see her passing there;
She smelt the wild rose on the wind
That bloweth everywhere.
They scourged her onward up the hill---
This poor old woman meek,
She bravely faced the gallows tree
Though she was faint and weak.

They hanged this weary woman then
Like any felon stout;
Her white hairs on the cruel rope
Were scattered all about.
And many knew her innocent
Of horrid charges made,
And some they heard her final prayer,
"OH, FATHER FORGIVE," she said.



LOVEWELL'S INDIAN FIGHT!

Recounting one of the numerous bloody affairs with the Indians, this ballad portrays the event with amazing accuracy. As a narrative song it may well take its place as the earliest of what historians term "military ballads."

The encounter took place on a fine day in May of 1725 when John Lovewell of Dunstable marched against the Indian town of Pigwacket (now Fryeburg).

He was attacked by a large force. The Indians had formed an ambush on his approach. In the first firing, twelve out of Lovewell's band of fifty fell, including their leader himself, while the survivors fought against heavy odds until sunset.

The ballad was known, and sung during colonial times, and we must be grateful to some unknown balladeer for preserving the event so vividly.

Oh worthy Captain Lovewell came
With fifty men from Dunstable,
The cruel Pequatt tribe to tame
With arms and bloodshed terrible.

Anon there eighty Indians rose
Who hid themselves in ambush dread;
Their knives they shook, their guns they aimed,
The famous Paugus at their head.

What means this dance---this powow dance?
Stern Wyman said, this wondrous art---
He crept full near, his musket aimed,
And shot the leader through the heart.

Fight on! fight on! brave Lovewell cried,
Fight on while Heaven shall give you breath,
An Indian ball then pierced him through,
And Lovewell closed his eyes in death.

'Twas Paugus led the Pequatt tribe---
As runs the fox, would Paugus run,
As howls the wild wolf, would he howl,
A large bear skin had Paugus on.

But Chamberlain, of Dunstable,
(One whom a savage ne'er shall slay),
Met Paugus by the waterside
And shot him dead upon that day.

The chaplain's name was Jonathan Frye,
In Andover his father dwelt,
And oft with Lovewell's men he'd prayed
Before the mortal wound he felt.

A man was he of comely form,
Polished, and brave, well-learned and kind,
And Harvard's learned halls he'd left
Far in the wilds a grave to find.

Ah, many wife does rend her hair,
And many a child cries woe is me!
When messengers the news do bear
Of Lovewell's dear-bought victory.



SUSANNA MARTIN

When Susanna Martin, of Amesbury, was brought to court during the witch mania, her behavior did not follow the pattern of the bowed head and humble demeanor.

Jauntily, and with scorn, she faced her accusers. The "afflicted" girls who had accused so many of being in league with the Evil One, put on one of their best shows of meaning and contortions as she approached. Their behavior, however, struck Susanna as merely funny, and caused her to laugh out in court.

In so serious a gathering of judges and the clergy, her behavior was interpreted as blasphemous, as well as constituting further proof of her conspiracy with Beelzebub.

Witnesses testified to a variety of weird happenings which they laid to her sorcery. One John Allen claimed that she had bewitched his oxen which unaccountably swam out to sea. The ballad here relates further strange accomplishments of this woman described as "comely, with a fine form."

Susanna Martin was a witch
Who dwelt in Amesbury,
With brilliant eye and salty tongue
She worked her sorcery.
And as unto the judges court
The sheriff brought her hither,
The lilacs drooped as she passed by,
And then were seen to wither.

A witch was she, though trig and neat
With comely head held high,
It did not seem that one as she
With Satan so would vie.
And when in court the afflicted ones
Proclaimed her evil ways,
She laughed aloud, and boldly then
Met Cotton Mather's gaze.

"Who hath bewitched these maids?" he asked,
And strong was her reply,
"If they be dealing in black arts,
Ye know as well as I!"
And now the stricken ones made moan
As she approached near,
They saw her shape upon the beam,
So none could doubt 'twas there.

The neighbors 'round swore to the truth
Of her Satanic powers,
That she could fly o'er land and stream
And come dry-shod through showers.
At night, 'twas said, she had appeared
A cat of fearsome mien,
"Avoid, She Devil!" they had cried
To keep their spirits clean.

The Spectral Evidence was weighed,
Then stern the parson spoke,
"Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live,
'Tis written in the book!"
Susanna Martin, so accused,
Spake with flaming eyes,
"I scorn these things for they are naught
But filthy gossips' lies!"

Now those bewitched, they cried her out,
Their voices loud did ring,
They saw a bird above her head---
An evil yellow thing;
And so Susanna Martin died
Beneath a summer sky,
AND STILL IN SCORN SHE FACED THE ROPE---
HER COMELY HEAD HELD HIGH.



THE GLOUCESTER WITCH

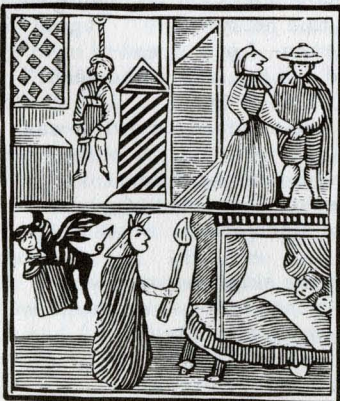
In the century following the severe persecutions in New England, belief in witchcraft had not entirely abated. Many poor souls still bore the reputation of possessing malignant power.

These were often the eccentrics---the poverty stricken, crippled, or recluse individuals of a community. But while children may have feared an old crone or a village gaffer, as time went on, the populace in general began developing an attitude of only pity or scorn for those talked of as being Satan's agents.

Through remnants of the chants and jingles of the children of that period, a spirit of poking mere fun at such unfortunates becomes apparent. Such a jingle is "The Gloucester Witch" or "Old Meg" who, according to Samuel Adams Drake, was an elderly woman by the name of Margaret Wesson living in, or near Gloucester, Massachusetts.

There was a witch known as Old Meg,
She hobbled around with only one leg;
She'd limp into Gloucester a shilling to beg,
And kept all her money nailed up in a keg.
Pity Old Meg---pity Old Meg,
Kept all her money nailed up in a keg.

Oh pity the witch known as Old Meg,
Away she'd hitch on her hickory leg,
They say she needed a rudder and skag
So she could steer better on her wooden peg.
Pity Old Meg---pity Old Meg,
Hitching along on her hickory leg!



NEWCASTLE: PRINTED IN THIS PRESENT YEAR.

GILES COREY

The final stages of witchcraft were reached in the torturous execution of Giles Corey, a farmer residing at Salem Farms.

Corey, eighty years old, was "a man of fine stature and bearing", but he refused to plead concerning accusations brought against his wife Martha. For his refusal to speak, he was condemned on an ancient English statute "to have your body pressed by great weights until you shall be dead."

Further, he was accused of complicity in his wife's sorcery, and of himself being a wizard---or "wizzard" as the old spelling has it.

Giles Corey was a wizzard strong,
A stubborn wretch was he;
And fitt was he to swing on high
Upon the locust tree.
So when before the magistrate
For trial he did come,
He would no true confession make,
But stayed compleatlie dumbe.

"Giles Corey," said the magistrate,
"What hast thou here to pleade
To these that now accuse thy soule
Of crimes and horrid deed?"
Giles Corey he said not a worde,
No single worde spoke he;
"Giles Corey," said the magistrate,
"We'll press it out of thee."

They got them then a heavy beam,
They laid it on his breast;
They loaded it with heavy stones
And hard upon him prest.
"More weight!" now said this wretched man,
"More weight!" again he cried,
And he did no confession make,
BUT WICKEDLY HE DIED.

BLOODY BROOK

The Bloody Brook massacre took place on September 18, 1675. It followed a period of peace and friendly relations with the Indians, maintained between Chief Metacomet (King Philip) and the English settlers. At this time, however, some of the younger braves had again begun raiding activities and attacks on the white colonists.

A picked force of eighty men, "the flower of Essex County," was sent to Deerfield to salvage some grain which had been abandoned there. On their return they were ambushed while trying to extricate a wagon which had become mired.

Outnumbered by a group of Wampanoags, only nine escaped to bring the news of the disaster to Swansea from where they had set out.

O weep ye maids of Essex
For your lads who've died,
While Bloody Brook still ripples
By the mountainside.
Never shall they come again
To see the oecantide,
And never shall the bridegroom
Return unto his bride.

To bring the grain from Deerfield,
They started on their way
With Lathrop as their leader
Upon that sunny day.
Returning now, they rested---
Their beasts began to tire,
When deadly Indian muskets
Blazed out in murd'rous fire.

Brave Lathrop he lay dying,
But as he fell, he cried,
"Let ev'ry man now stand his ground
Until that he has died!"
For the cruel Wampanoags,
No mercy did they show,
Of the eighty lads of Essex
All but nine they were laid low.

O WEEP YE MAIDS OF ESSEX
FOR YOUR LADS WHO'VE DIED,
WHILE BLOODY BROOK STILL RIPPLES
BY THE MOUNTAINSIDE.



OLD MAMMY REDD

The once famous witch of Marblehead---for witchcraft
was not confined entirely to Salem Village---was an
elderly woman named Wilnot Redd (or Reed).

She was believed to possess the power of malignant touch
and sight, and besides other malefic practices, was re-
ported as responsible for "mould" (blue wool) and mildew
conditions with which good housewives had to contend in
the humid summers of the 1690's.

Mammy Redd was tried and convicted of witchcraft chief-
ly on the testimony and gabble of her neighbors. Em-
bodying the lilt of a play song, these lines may well have
served that purpose among New England youngsters in
colony days.

Old Mammy Redd of Marblehead
Sweet milk could turn to mould in churn,
On evil bent with dire intent
Practised in dark her dreadful art.

OLD MAMMY REDD OF MARBLEHEAD
HANGED ON A TREE TILL SHE WAS DEAD.

Old Mammy Redd of Marblehead
At dawn's first glow turned into a crow.
She'd cast a spell on Prue or Nell,
And with a wish drive away codfish.

OLD MAMMY REDD OF MARBLEHEAD
HANGED ON A TREE TILL SHE WAS DEAD.

Old Mammy Redd curst good folks bread,
The crust was full of her blue wool.
Old Mammy Redd could speak with the dead,
With Satan 'tis feared she was evilly reared.

OLD MAMMY REDD OF MARBLEHEAD
HANGED ON A TREE TILL SHE WAS DEAD.

FLUD IRESON

The eerie sight of a man with "body of turkey, head of
fowl" bedeviled by screaming women, would, it seems,
justify the inclusion here of the Flud Ireson ballad.

Skipper Flud (Floyd) Ireson was accused of wilfully pass-
ing by, and refusing help to the crew of the sinking
schooner "Active" in a gale off Cape Cod. When called
to account, he protested that his crew would not allow
him to risk a rescue attempt.

Seized by a shrieking mob of Marblehead fishwives, he
was tarred and feathered and dragged about in an old
dory until the bottom gave way, when he was transferred
to a cart.

In all fairness it should be explained that, after the initial
outburst, Ireson did have a number of vigorous defenders.
Many among the townsfolk upheld his claim that his crew
was near mutiny, and refused to obey orders when
Ireson's own vessel was threatened by the tremendous
seas. And so, it can be assumed that the stigma upon
Ireson's memory may be unjust.

The chanting refrain is done here in the now extinct dia-
lect peculiar to early Marblehead fisherfolk.

Of all the rides since the birth of time,
Told in story or sung in rhyme,
The strangest ride that ever was sped
Was Ireson's ride out of Marblehead.
Tared and feathered in every part,
Skipper Ireson stood in the cart;
The women and maids sang this refrain
As they pulled him along the rocky lane---

Here's Flud Ireson, for his hard heart,
Torr'd an' futher'd an' carried in a cart
By the women o' Marblehead.

Small pity for him, he sailed away
From a leaking ship out on the bay---
Sailed away from a sinking wreck
With his own townspeople upon her deck.
"Lay by---lay by!" they called to him,
Back he answered, "sink or swim---
Brag of your catch of fish agin,"
And off he sailed through the fog and rain---so

Here's Flud Ireson, for his hard heart,
Torr'd an' futher'd an' carried in a cart
By the women of Marblehead.

Sharped-tongued spinsters, old wives grey,
Lent their yells to the fish-horn's bray,
Till "hear me neighbors!" at last he cried,
"What to me is this noisy ride?
Hate me--curse me--I only dread
The hand o' God and the face o' the dead."
Body of turkey, head of fowl,
Wings a-droop like a rained-on owl---was

Old Flud Ireson, for his hard heart,
Torr'd an' futher'd an' carried in a cart
By the women o' Marblehead.

Then the wife of the skipper lost at sea
Said "God has touched him---why should we?"
An old wife mourning her only son
Said "cut his tether and let him run."
With soft relent and rude excuse,
Half in pity they cut him loose,
And gave him a cloak to hide him in,
And left him alone with his shame and sin---

Poor Flud Ireson, for his hard heart,
 Torr'd an' further'd an' carried in a cart
 BY THE WOMEN O' MARBLEHEAD.



PURITANS BEWITCHED

ROBIN GOODFELLOWE

Under the drabness of Puritan existence, we can venture a safe guess that Robin Goodfellowe, a sort of poltergeist, made his presence felt among certain of the Bay Colony's inhabitants. His puckish behavior must, at times, have disturbed their thoughts and sober minds, for Robin was a prankish spirit carried over from medieval times.

ABOUT JOHN ALLISON

As a singer and collector of Musical Americana, John Allison has delighted thousands with his programs of folk ballads. In 1929 he organized "The American Folk Singers," a group heard over the radio and in concert appearances. Somewhat later he formed a family trio "The Allison's" with which these presentations were carried on.

His recorded albums have been praised by historians and reviewers alike. The album "Ballads of the American Revolution" brought him recognition by the Library of Congress as an important researcher in the realm of early American songs. Through him, numerous items of the past have been brought to light. "The Riflemen of Bennington," "Unfortunate Miss Baily," "Old John Webb," and "Tarrytown" are only a few.

A true son of the Hudson Valley, John's forebears were river-dwellers of Dutch and English descent. Before him, his father was singularly gifted in remembering folk tunes and jingles heard as a boy along the broad waters of the North River. From the elder Allison came American ballads and homespun songs, some in Dutch, the first language of the Valley. It was the material which formed the nucleus of the present Allison collection.

Apropos of the program here presented, it is of interest that John's daughter, Joan Allison McGee is a direct descendent of John Willard of Salem Village---one of the twenty executed on Gallows Hill.

Though he made much mischief and was in league with the Satanic fraternity, there was a good deal of the jokester and reveler about him. An agent, perhaps, of the mysterious Merlin, Robin dispensed magic of a whimsical, rather than of a malignant nature.

"Percy's Relics," an ancient and reliable source, carries in verse a version of Robin Goodfellowe's antics, which places its origin before the time of Shakespeare.

From hag-bred Merlin's time have I
 Thus nightly reveled to and fro,
 For my pranks men call me by
 The name of Robin Goodfellowe.
 The ghosts and spirites who haunt the nights,
 The hags and goblins do me know,
 And beldames old my feats have told
 For I go laughing ho--ho--ho!

With a whuh-hoo-hee, and a ho-ho-ho,
 My name is Robin Goodfellowe!

When house and hearth doth sluttish lie,
 I pinch the maidens black and blue,
 The bed-clothes from the bed pull I
 And show them naked all to view.
 Twixt sleep and wake I do them take
 And on the key-cold floor them throw,
 If out they cry, then forth I fly,
 And loudly laugh out ho--ho--ho!

With a whuh--hoo--hee, and a ho--ho--ho,
 MY NAME IS ROBIN GOODFELLOWE!

JOHN ALLISON - photo - E.J.Cyr (1959)



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