

HADLEY NEWSLETTER

(Hadley, Headley, Hadlee, Hadly, Hadleigh, etc and their related kin)

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Spectral Evidence and the Death of Our Relatives:

Spectral evidence is data that only the accuser(s) can see and without other supporting information. Spectral evidence was admissible in the Salem Witch trials and has been considered a principal reason why “witches” were hanged in Salem, Massachusetts in 1692. It was the assertion of several permissive young girls that led to the death of some members of the Salem community.

Two of our Hadley relatives; **Susanna(h) (North) Martin** and **John Proctor**, were both hanged for being witches and their accusers, amongst others, include one or more young girls.

Susannah was accused, and dare we say *convicted*, of being a witch for not getting wet after being caught in a summer storm. That storm had happened approximately eighteen years prior to her trial. It seems the 52ish-year-old Susannah, depressed after the death of her husband, walked to the home of her neighbors, Sarah Alkinson, after a summer storm had passed. Upon arrival at Mrs. Alkinson’s home, according to the court records, she was “*neither wet nor muddy.*” How could this be? -- unless she were a witch! And based upon this accusation, along with Susannah’s refusing to defend herself, she was hanged on 19 July 1692, along with four other women for various other reasons.

Another instance of the death of a Hadley relative was by the accusations from, perhaps, a pre-teen girl, against John Proctor. That accusation led to the conviction of John as being a witch. She accused the 60-year-old John of “winking at her.” That supposed wink cost him his life on 19 August, 1692, just a month after the death of Susannah Martin. On this date, four additional people were also hanged.

Contrary to popular belief, none of our Christian Hadley “witch” relatives were burned at the stake. For that matter, there were no witches burned at the stake in the US colonies. Years earlier that horrible burning death had indeed taken place in Europe. It was only in the Quaker town of Salem that colonists were hanged and where most of the residents actually believed in witchery. There were a number of locations around Massachusetts where witch trails had taken place, but without any executions. All other convicted witches in the colonies, mostly in Salem, were just put in jail. Some historians have estimated that as many as 400 folks were imprisoned during the hysteria surrounding all the various witch trials, but only twenty-five lost their lives in Salem. Of the twenty-five, nineteen were hanged, five died in jail and one was crushed to death.

In Salem there was a colonist put to death by means other than by hanging. Giles Corey had stones piled upon his chest hoping he would confess. As time passed without a confession, additional stones were added trying to get at the “truth.” As the stones increased, Giles became unable to breath and thus suffocated on 19 September 1692. The Salem community abandoned this stoning procedure after having failed to gain a confession.

As a foot note to the trials, Susannah, along with the “other witches,” were officially exonerated by the Massachusetts Legislature on Halloween 2001.



Editor's Note: *The Hadley Genealogy/Museum Room*, located in the Reformed Church of Port Ewen, NY, has a number of copies of the 16-page pamphlet "Our Ancestral Witch" by Willis D Hadley. Family visitors to our special genealogy room may obtain a free copy, if they wish, of the pamphlet at the time of their visit.

Genealogy is more than statistics:

As we delve into research about our ancestors, many stop their investigation after they have found the name, birth, marriage and death dates for those they are seeking. Important as that information is, it usually cuts short the inquiry in attempting to find out who those ancestors really were. The *New England Historic Genealogy Society* has published a list of ten questions we might wish to consider asking. We are happy to share those questions with you:



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1. What games did they play as a child?
2. Why did they choose their children's names?
3. Do they have any recipes from their parents or grandparents?
4. Were they ever mentioned in the newspapers?
5. What was the first job they ever had?
6. Did they ever get into trouble with the authorities?
7. Did they speak a foreign language?
8. Did they sail across an ocean?
9. Which parent do they identify with most?
10. What kind of music did they appreciate growing up?

It is likely, once our relatives start sharing stories about themselves and/or their ancestors, much additional information is likely to be forthcoming.

It is also possible they might be amenable to having the conversation taped (providing you have a recording devise). Some genealogists have attempted to then write what might be considered, an obituary.

There are many more questions you could consider asking, such as where did they meet their significant other(s), why did they move to a different location, what were their hobbies, what aspirations did they have that were never fulfilled?

In one instance, a Hadley individual informed the interviewer that he really was not a Hadley, even though he had carried that surname his entire life. He let it be known he was born eleven months after his Hadley "father" had died. With that disclosure he terminated the interview.

When you are asking questions, we advise you to be respectful, tactful and not get too personal, unless you are led in that direction.

"I predict future happiness for Americans if they can prevent the government from wasting the labors of the people, under the pretense of taking care of them." Thomas Jefferson

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