

The following is a portion of the Salem trial transcript in which Judge John Hathorne interrogates two of the accused—Sarah Osburne and Tituba, a slave from Barbados. As you read, notice the difference in the way the two women respond.

HATHORNE: What evil spirit have you familiarity with?

OSBURNE: None.

H: Have you made no contract with the devil?

O: No, I never saw the devil in my life.

H: Why do you hurt these children?

O: I do not hurt them.

H: Who do you employ then to hurt them?

O: I employ nobody.

H: What familiarity have you with Sarah Good?

O: None. I have not seen her these two years.

H: Where did you see her then?

O: One day a-going to town.

H: What communications had you with her?

O: I had none, only, how do you do or so. I did not know her by name.

H: What did you call her then?

[At this point Sarah Osburne had to admit that she had called her Sarah.]

H: Sarah Good saith that it was you that hurt the children.

O: I do not know if the devil goes about in my likeness to do any hurt.

Mr. Hathorne desired all the children to stand up and look upon her and see if they did know her, which they all did, and every one of them said that this was one of the women that did afflict them and that they had constantly seen her in the very habit that she was now in. . . .

H: Hath the devil ever deceived you and been false to you?

O: I do not know the devil. I never did see him. . . .

[Sarah Osburne was dismissed, and Tituba was called to the stand.]

HATHORNE: Did you never see the devil?

TITUBA: The devil came to me and bid me serve him. . . .

H: What service?

T: Hurt the children, and last night there was an appearance that said to kill the children and if I would not go on hurting the children they would do worse to me.

H: What is this appearance you see?

T: Sometimes he is like a hog and sometimes like a great dog.

H: What did it say to you?

T: The black dog said, "Serve me," but I said, "I am afraid." He said if I did not he would do worse to me.

H: What did you say to it?

T: I will serve you no longer. Then he said he would hurt me, and then he looked like a man.

This man had a yellow bird that he kept with him, and he told me he had more pretty things that he would give me if I would serve him. . . .

H: Did you not pinch Elizabeth Hubbard this morning?

T: The man brought her to me and made me pinch her.

H: Why did you go to Thomas Putnam's last night and hurt his child?

T: They pull and haul me and make me go. . . .

H: How did you go?

T: We ride upon sticks and are there presently.

H: Why did you not tell your master?

T: I was afraid. They said they would cut off my head if I told. . . .

H: Did not you hurt Mr. Corwin's child?

T: Goody [Mrs.] Good and Goody Osburne told me that they did hurt Mr. Corwin's child and would have had me hurt him too, but I did not. . . .

H: Do you see who it is that torments these children now?

T: Yes, it is Goody Good. She hurts them now in her own shape.

from W. E. Woodward, ed., Records of Salem Witchcraft, I (Roxbury, Massachusetts: 1864).

Transcript of Testimony of Abigail Hobbs: Examination of Abigail Hobbs, September 1692

Abigail Hobbs: a fifteen year old girl. She and other members of her family including her father were accused and imprisoned for witchcraft on April 18, 1692. She initially confessed during her multiple examinations in front of local magistrates between April and June. She stood trial in September, remained in prison, and was released when the trials were stopped.

Magistrates: Judge John Hathorne, assisted by Judge Jonathan Corwin

Hobbs: He said he would give me fine things, if I did what he would have me.

Magistrate: What would have you do?

Hobbs: Why, he would have me be a witch.

Magistrate: Would he have you make a covenant with him?

Hobbs: Yes.

Magistrate: And did you make a covenant with him?

Hobbs: Yes, I did, but I hope God will forgive me.

Magistrate: The Lord give you Repentance. You say you saw dogs, and many sorts of creatures.

Hobbs: I saw them at that time.

Magistrate: But have you not seen them at other times too?

Hobbs: Yes.

Magistrate: Where?

Hobbs: At our house.

Magistrate: What were they like?

Hobbs: Like a cat.

Magistrate: What would the cat have you do?

Hobbs: She had a book and would have me put my hand on it.

Magistrate: And did you?

Hobbs: No, I did not.

Magistrate: Well, tell the truth, did you at any other time?

Hobbs: Yes, I did, that time at the Eastward.

Magistrate: What other creatures did you see?

Hobbs: I saw things like men.

Magistrate: What did they say to you?

Hobbs: Why they said I had better put my hand to the Book.

Magistrate: You did put your hand to the book you say?

Hobbs: Yes, one time.

Magistrate: What, would they have you put your hand to their book too?

Hobbs: Yes.

Magistrate: And what would they have you do then, would they have you worship them?

Hobbs: They would have me make a bargain for so long, and do what they would have me do.

Magistrate: For how long?

Hobbs: Not for above 2 or 3 years.

Magistrate: How long did they agree with you for?

Hobbs: But for two years.

Magistrate: And what would they then do for you?

Hobbs: They would give me fine clothes.

Magistrate: And did they?

Hobbs: No.

Magistrate: When you set your hand the last time to the book, how long was that for?

Hobbs: It was for four years.

Magistrate: How long is that ago?

Hobbs: It is almost 4 years. The book was brought to me to get my hand to it for 4 years, but I never put my hand but that once at Eastward.

Magistrate: Are you not bid to hurt folks?

Hobbs: Yes.

Magistrate: Who are you bid to hurt?

Hobbs: Mercy Lewis and Ann Putnam¹

Magistrate: What did you do to them when you hurt them?

Hobbs: I pinch't them.

Magistrate: How did you pinch them, do you go in your own person to them?

Hobbs: No

Magistrate: Do the Devil go for you?

Hobbs: Yes.

Magistrate: And what did he take, your spirit with him?

Hobbs: No. I am as well as at other times: but the Devil has my consent, and goes to hurt them.

Magistrate: Who hurt your mother last Lord's day (Sunday), was it not you?

Hobbs: No.

Magistrate: Who was it?

Hobbs: I heard her say it was Goody Wilds² at Topsfield.

Magistrate: Have you been in company with Goody Wilds at any time?

Hobbs: No, I never saw her.

Magistrate: Well, who are your companions?

Hobbs: Why I have seen Sarah Good³ once.

Magistrate: How many did you see?

Hobbs: I saw but two.

Magistrate: Did you know Sarah Good was a witch, when you saw her?

Hobbs: Yes.

Magistrate: How did you know it?

Hobbs: The Devil told me.

Magistrate: Who was the other you saw . . .

¹ Mercy Lewis and Ann Putnam were two young female accusers. Putnam was 12 years old and the first accuser in the witch trials. She was friends with Betty Parris and was also caught trying to practice magic with her by playing fortune-telling games. In 1706, Putnam apologized for accusing innocent people and claimed that she had been tricked by the devil to accuse the innocent.

² Goody—Short for midwife. Sarah Wilds from Topsfield was hanged on July 19th, the same day as Sarah Good, Rebecca Nurse, and two other women.

³ Sarah Good was a debtor who rented rooms from other people's houses with her husband and two children. She was the first woman to stand trial. She had extreme debt from her first marriage that her second husband had to pay off. He testified against her, and only one person defended her. When one of the accusers brought forth a broken knife tip and said Good had stabbed her with it, a man testified that it came from his knife he had broken in front of the accuser. The judge reminded the accuser to stick to facts and the trial continued. Good continued to deny being a witch and was convicted but her trial was delayed until she gave birth. Her six year old was also arrested

Rebecca Nurse: Rebecca Nurse was an elderly and respected member of the Salem Village community. She was accused of witchcraft by several of the "afflicted" girls in the Village in March of 1692.

Magistrates: Judge John Hathorne, assisted by Judge Jonathan Corwin

Narrator: The examination of Rebecca Nurse was recorded by the Reverend Samuel Parris

Magistrate: Do you see these women who accuse you? Is it true?

Rebecca Nurse: No.

Magistrate: Are you an innocent person relating to this Witchcraft?

Narrator: Here Thomas Putman's wife cried out: Did you not bring the Black man with you? Did you not bid me tempt God & die? How often have you eaten and drunk your own demon? What do you say to them?

Nurse: Oh Lord help me!

Narrator: Rebecca Nurse spread out her hands, and the afflicted went into fits.

Magistrate: Do you not see what a bad condition these women are in? When your hands are loose the persons are afflicted.

Narrator: Then Mary Walcot and also Eliz: Hubbard both openly accused Nurse of hurting them.

Magistrate: Here are these 2 grown persons now accuse you, what say you? Do not you see these afflicted persons, & hear them accuse you?

Nurse: The Lord knows I have not hurt them: I am an innocent person.

Magistrate: It is very awful to all to see these agonies & yet to see you stand with dry eyes when there are so many other people crying.

Nurse: You do not know my heart.

Magistrate: You would do well if you are guilty to confess & give Glory to God.

Nurse: I am innocent.

Magistrate: These women claim that you have come to them as a sprit. Now, what answer do you have to that?

Nurse: I have none Sir.

Magistrate: If you confess & give glory to God I pray God clear you. If you be innocent, or if you are guilty, give me a straight answer: have you any familiarity with these spirits?

Nurse: No, I have none but with God alone.

Magistrate: How did you get sick? The whole town has been talking about your illness.

Nurse: I am sick at my stomach --

Magistrate: Have you no wounds?

Nurse: I have none but old age.

Magistrate: Now when you are here and see such a thing as these women testify that black man is whispering in your ear & birds fly about you, what do you say to it? Do you know if you are guilty?

Nurse: It is all false I am clear.

Magistrate: Possibly you may believe you are no witch, but have you not been led astray by temptations?

Nurse: I have not.

Magistrate: What a sad thing it is that a church member here & now and other of Salem, should be thus accused and charged.

Narrator: Mrs. Pope fell into a terrible fit, & cried out. And then many more fell into sad fits.

Magistrate: Tell us, have not you appeared as a specter to people of the village?

Nurse: I have not, nor never had in my life.

Magistrate: Do you think these (women) suffer voluntary or involuntary?

Nurse: I cannot tell.

Magistrate: That is strange. Everyone else has an opinion. Why don't you?

Nurse: I must be silent.

Magistrate: They accuse you of hurting them, but if you think they are doing this to you on purpose, what do you make of their fits?

Nurse: I cannot tell what to think of it.

Magistrate: Well then give an answer now, do you think these women suffer against their wills or not?

Nurse: I do not think these women suffer against their wills.

Magistrate: Why did you never visit these afflicted persons at home?

Nurse: Because I was afraid I should have fits too.

Narrator: Note: upon the motion of her body, the accusers went into great fits.

Magistrate: Is it not a strange case that when you are examined these persons are afflicted?

Nurse: I have nobody to look to but God.

Narrator: Again, upon moving her hands, the afflicted persons were went into violent fits of torture.

Magistrate: Do you believe these afflicted persons are bewitched?

Nurse: I do think they are

Epilogue: Although a large number of friends, neighbors and family members wrote petitions testifying to her innocence, she was tried for acts of witchcraft in June, 1692. The jury first returned a "not guilty" verdict, but was told to reconsider, and then brought in a verdict of "guilty." Governor Phips pardoned her, but was later persuaded to reverse his decision by several men from Salem. She was excommunicated from the Salem church and hanged on July 19, 1692. Her house in Danvers, the former Salem village, still stands and is open to visitors. A large monument also marks her grave in the Nurse family cemetery on the grounds.