March 2022

“Memories Rescued from the Mire of Oblivion”: The 1885 Rebecca Nurse Monument and Salem Witch Trials Commemoration

Alaina K. Scapicchio
University of South Florida

“Memories Rescued from the Mire of Oblivion”: The 1885 Rebecca Nurse Monument and Salem Witch Trials Commemoration

by

Alaina K. Scapicchio

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
with a concentration in Public History
Department of History
College of Arts and Sciences
University of South Florida

Major Professor: Philip Levy, Ph.D.
Brian Connolly, Ph.D.
J. Scott Perry, Ph.D.

Date of Approval:
March 8th, 2022

Keywords: bicentennial, memorial, dedication, reconciliation, Puritan.

Acknowledgements

I would like to begin with a heartfelt thank you to the staff at the Phillips Library of the Peabody Essex Museum, who guided me through a massive number of documents in a two-day period due to Covid restrictions. That material has been invaluable to this research, and they were all extremely helpful during that process.

I cannot fully express how grateful I am to have had the kind words, constructive comments, and endless support of my fellow students. They have made the project better and often provided its author with a smile when she needed it most. Thank you to Jasmine Riche, whose passion and vulnerability inspire me constantly; to Alissa Roy, a devoted scholar and overall great friend; to Nick Colecio, a selfless friend and editor; and to Scott Miller, Kylie Dillinger, Patrick Horan, and Matthew Baber, to name just a few.

I would be remiss not to recognize my colleague Sherine Hamade with a paragraph all their own. Throughout our time in this program, Sherine has been there to offer me a steady hand. They have selflessly provided me with all kinds of help, lightening my load when we were both under the same pressure. We spent many a day enjoying pizza or shawarma discussing and formulating our research and many sleepless nights as we saw it to completion. My work and my life have been enriched by their insights and care, and for that I am truly grateful.

I have also been honored by the support, kindness, and constructive comments of Dr. Darcie Fontaine, Dr. Stephen Prince, Dr. Fraser Ottanelli, Dr. Jennifer Knight, Dr. Michelle Hughes Miller, and Dr. Alena Pirok. Dr. Julia Irwin has provided feedback on numerous iterations of the project and has always steered me towards becoming a better writer. I am very

grateful for her compassion and reassurance throughout this process. I am also very thankful for the time and guidance of both my committee members Dr. Brian Connolly and Dr. Scott Perry. I have been taking classes with Dr. Connolly since my first semester at USF as an undergraduate in fall of 2016. He has played a pivotal role in my development as a scholar for which I am truly grateful. Unfortunately, I have not had the opportunity to take a class with Dr. Perry, making his decision to join my committee that much more meaningful to me. He has approached this project with infectious excitement and enthusiasm, and I have benefitted immensely from his kindness.

I owe the biggest debt of gratitude to my advisor, Dr. Philip Levy. This project would not be what it is without his selfless guidance. However, in the interest of following his suggestion and keeping this brief, I will save the drawn-out appreciation for another iteration. The work continues.

I am eternally thankful to Ciara, for showing me the true meaning of supportive friendship. She saw the vision before I could and continues to push me to dream big. Her diligence and perseverance have motivated me, demonstrating the true strength women possess.

I would not be here without the endless love and support of my family. They have been my biggest fans through everything. There are no words to describe how indebted I am to them for all the sacrifices they made to pave a path for me. Now, as I forge my own path, I am grateful to know they are always behind me, to cheer me on in the highs and guide me home for the lows.

Finally, my deepest and most inexpressible gratitude goes to Chris. For every load of laundry handled, every meal cooked, and every night he spent on the couch alone as I worked, looking over at me to offer a supportive glance now and again. He has believed in me and the importance of my efforts when I could not. He is in my mind and my heart through everything, and all I do is to better our lives and the lives of those we love.

Table of Contents

Abstract

This thesis is a study and contextualization of the 1885 Rebecca Nurse Monument and dedication in Danvers, Massachusetts, which took place around the bicentennial anniversary of the Salem witch trials. It places this nineteenth-century commemoration in conversation with the other centennial anniversaries of the witch trials. The Salem witch trials have been studied extensively by historians who have sought to determine the causes of the widespread panic. Other scholars have examined the memory of 1692 in later generations, paying particular attention to the landscape of modern Salem and their tourist economy. Few scholars, however, have given extended consideration to the commemorations that have taken place at the centennial anniversaries of the trials. I argue that doing so allows for a deeper understanding of the shifts in memory as well as purposes for commemorating every hundred years. A close reading of the sermons and speeches delivered at the 1885 dedication, together with retrospective accounts of the day, reveals the motivations and anxieties of the descendants of witch trial victims, accusers, and religious leaders. Overall, by closely examining the Rebecca Nurse Monument, this study places the action of commemoration at its center rather than the events of 1692.

"Memories Rescued from the Mire of Oblivion": The 1885 Rebecca Nurse Monument and Salem Witch Trials Commemoration[1]

In March of 1692 Rebecca Nurse was seventy-one years old and in declining health. That spring though, several girls and a few adults in the community accused her of using witchcraft to torment them with spectral afflictions. The group took their cues from Ann Putnam Sr. and her daughter of the same name. The younger of the Putnam women began to be troubled by the spectral visage of Rebecca Nurse midway through the month. A little over a week later, Ann Sr. experienced a spectral attack that lasted for nearly two hours, during which Nurse threatened to "tare" out her "sole" if the elder Putnam would not sign her "little Red book."[2] The afflictions of these two Putnam women led a few men in the family to file a formal complaint against the elderly Nurse.[3] Until then, Nurse had been a well-respected wife, mother of ten, and grandmother. She was a member of the Salem Town church and frequently worshiped there and at the church in Salem Village.

Such was her status that just before her arrest, a few concerned members of the community called on Goodwife Nurse to inform her that several of the afflicted had named her

[1] William P. Upham, *Account of the Rebecca Nurse Monument* (Salem, MA: Salem Press, 1886), 6. Folder 1, Essex County Collection, Phillips Library at the Peabody Essex Museum, Rowley, Massachusetts.
[2] Mary Beth Norton, *In the Devil's Snare: The Salem Witchcraft Crisis of 1692* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002), 61.
[3] Norton, *In the Devil's Snare*, 62.

as a suspected source of their torment.[4] The party found the elderly woman recovering from a recent illness that left her housebound and unaware of the frenzy that was boiling over around the village. Nurse had heard that some local girls had been suffering and she told her visitors that she "was greved" for the afflicted girls, and though she had not yet visited, she "went to god for them."[5] When her guests told Nurse the disturbing news that in fact she was being blamed for the girls' afflictions, the elderly woman sat for a while, taken aback by this disturbing news. Nurse affirmed her innocence and responded with the piety befitting of her station, saying "if it be soe the will of the Lord be done."[6] She also wondered aloud "what sine hath god found out in me unrepented of that he should Lay such an Affliction upon me In my old Age."[7] The next day Goody Nurse was arrested along with the four-year-old child of an accused witch already in jail. A few days later Nurse would undergo her first examination in court and be sentenced to remain in captivity during her trial.[8]

As the courts' proceedings developed during the late spring and early summer of 1692, Goody Nurse and her family worked hard to prove her innocence to the magistrates. Some thirty-nine friends and neighbors joined in their effort and signed a petition which testified that in all the years they had known Nurse, they had never suspected her of practicing witchcraft or any of the maleficent crimes of which she stood accused.[9] At first it seemed as though their efforts were

[4] Goodwife was a prefix used in Colonial America in the same way we use Mrs. today, and it is often abbreviated as Goody in both historic and modern texts.
[5] Norton, *In the Devil's Snare*, 61.
[6] SWP No. 94.11, "Statement of of [sic] Israel Porter, Elizabeth Porter, Daniel Andrew and Peter Cloyce for Rebecca Nurse, March 24, 1692," Salem Witch Trials Documentary Archive and Transcription Project, University of Virginia, accessed January 1, 2022, https://salem.lib.virginia.edu/n94.html#n94.11. All quotations are replicated using the spelling and capitalization documented in the transcriptions.
[7] SWP No. 94.11.
[8] Emerson W. Baker, *A Storm of Witchcraft: The Salem Trials and the American Experience* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 21.
[9] SWP No. 94.9, "Petition for Rebecca Nurse, ? [sic] May 1, 1692," Salem Witch Trials Documentary Archive and Transcription Project, University of Virginia, accessed January 8, 2022, https://salem.lib.virginia.edu/n94.html#n94.9.

successful when the twelve-man jury sitting for the trials acquitted Rebecca Nurse. But her larger travail was not yet over. Upon hearing the not guilty verdict, the court "manifested their dissatisfaction," and Chief Magistrate William Stoughton immediately asked if the jury had fully considered a comment Goody Nurse made during her trial, which he believed implied her guilt.[10] The jury asked Nurse to explain her comment, but the elderly woman "being something hard of hearing, and full of grief," by her own account, did not respond to the question.[11] The jury deliberated once more and this time convicted Nurse of witchcraft. The elderly woman wrote an appeal to the court to explain the meaning of her words and how her ill health and poor hearing hampered her defense. Her pleading changed nothing. Even a reprieve granted to her by Massachusetts Bay Colony Governor William Phips was revoked after scrutiny from a local "Salem Gentleman," whose true identity is still a mystery.[12] Rebecca Nurse was executed by hanging on July 19th, 1692. She professed her innocence until the rope took her life.

Throughout the duration of her trial, Nurse's family and the surrounding community gathered to witness as she fell from grace. One hundred and ninety-three years later, Nurse's direct descendants, the descendants of those who persecuted or protected her, and the successor institutions of the churches that condemned her gathered in the same locale to venerate and

[10] The comment in question occurred when Deliverance and Abigail Hobbs, accused and confessed "witches" themselves, came to testify against Rebecca Nurse during her trial. Goodwife Nurse said, "What, do these persons give in Evidence against me now, they used to come among us." The magistrates took "come among us," to mean that all the women had previously been involved with the Devil and practiced witchcraft together before the trials, which would have accounted for Nurse's familiarity with them- making her guilt unquestionable. The incident is discussed in Norton, *In the Devil's Snare*, 225; Bernard Rosenthal, *Salem Story: Reading the Witch Trials of 1692* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 93-94. Primary source documents relating to this incident can be found online: ("manifested their dissatisfaction") SWP No. 94.32, "Declaration of Thomas Fisk, Juryman, + [sic] July 4, 1692," Salem Witch Trials Documentary Archive and Transcription Project, University of Virginia, accessed January 14, 2022, https://salem.lib.virginia.edu/n94.html#n94.32; SWP No. 94.33, "Appeal of Rebecca Nurse, + [sic] July 4, 1692," Salem Witch Trials Documentary Archive and Transcription Project, University of Virginia, accessed January 14, 2022, https://salem.lib.virginia.edu/n94.html#n94.33.

[11] SWP No. 94.33.

[12] Norton, *In the Devil's Snare*, 225-226; Rosenthal, *Salem Story*, 93-94.

commemorate the fallen woman. On July 30th, 1885, this descendant community met at the former homestead of Rebecca Nurse to dedicate a monument to her memory. Theirs would be the first physical commemoration to any victim of the Salem witchcraft crisis of 1692. Located in the rectangular family burying grounds at the old Nurse homestead, the monument is a column made from light and dark varieties of New England granite, known for their durability and polished finish.[13] Resting atop a grassy mound slightly raised from the rest of the earth, the column is a sizable eleven feet tall, its view is unobstructed by any other graves. The "shady grove" is lined with towering pine trees which convey the age of the location and enhance the venerability of the space.[14]

The dedication of the Rebecca Nurse Memorial around the bicentennial anniversary of her execution marks a significant moment in the development of the witch trials' commemorative landscape. Later commemorations would include more of 1692's victims and bring them and their stories out of the "mire of oblivion," but Nurse was the first one to be honored in this way. [15] The dedication day's events demonstrate the ways that the community interacted with the memory of the fallen woman and the trials nearly two centuries later. A close reading of the sermons and speeches delivered that day, together with retrospective accounts of the dedication, reveals the underlying motivations inspiring this event and how commemorating 1692 at that moment fit into the commemorators' larger world views.

---

[13] William P. Upham, *Account of the Rebecca Nurse Monument*, 25.
[14] ("Shady grove") "Rebecca Nourse - Hanged as a Witch 200 Years Ago - Honored Today by Hundreds of Her Descendants," *Boston Daily Globe*, July 30, 1885, https://newscomwc.newspapers.com/image/431001344; Kirk Savage has noted the connections between trees and memory in the nineteenth century in his study of the monumental landscape of Washington D.C. See Kirk Savage, *Monument Wars: Washington, D.C., the National Mall, and the Transformation of Memorial Landscape* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 91-94.
[15] W. P. Upham, *Account of the Rebecca Nurse Monument*, 6.

Three central themes shaped Rebecca Nurse's monument dedication around the 200th anniversary of the trials: regret, reconciliation, and recovery. These sentiments came up time and time again as various speakers discussed Nurse and the column to her memory. Though the descendants of the elderly woman led the day's events, sharing the commemorative process with the community gave other descendants anxious about their family's witch-hunting past the opportunity to express regret for their ancestors' repudiated deeds. Nurse's progeny also gave the contemporary representatives of the churches who excommunicated and denied the pious woman protection in 1692 the opportunity to express regret on behalf of their institutions. The commemorative events of 1885 allowed the descendent community of the persecutors of the witchcraft panic to simultaneously reconcile with their past and with the descendants of the elderly woman. This commemorative effort at restoring harmony among this once splintered community was the perfect opportunity to usher in the recovery of the memory of the martyred woman at the bicentennial of her death.

The commemorative events surrounding the Rebecca Nurse Monument dedication also served another purpose for the community. According to Michael Kammen, during the late nineteenth century, the "reputation of American Puritanism was really in a state of disputed disarray."[16] Over the course of that century, the bicentennial of the Plymouth landing and the Civil War served to replace the Puritan with the Pilgrim in the national imagination of New England.[17] The Puritans had become associated with religious fanaticism and intolerance, a

[16] Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (1991; repr., New York: Vintage Books, a Division of Random House, Inc., 1993), 214.
[17] Gretchen A. Adams, *The Specter of Salem: Remembering the Witch Trials in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 135-148; Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory, 206-214;* Joseph A. Conforti, *Imagining New England: Explorations of Regional Identity from the Pilgrims to the Mid-Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 171-196.

troublesome record from which the Pilgrims were free.[18] The events in and around Salem in 1692 proved to be a prime example of the consequences of Puritan excess. Many of those who came to honor Nurse at her column's dedication in 1885 were Congregationalists, the religious descendants of Puritanism. Their speeches and commentary on the events of 1692 during the monument's dedication demonstrate an awareness of this shifting understanding of Puritanism and they continuously tried to balance chastisement with reverence for their religious forebears. The Rebecca Nurse Monument dedication, therefore, also became the vehicle through which the descendants of the Puritans could rehabilitate the image of their ancestors.

To understand the ways the Salem witchcraft crisis altered the perceptions of Puritans in the nineteenth century it is first necessary to examine the events of 1692 themselves. For most Americans, the name Salem alone conjures historical associations with witchcraft. However, misinformation and myth shroud these events from clear view. Consider notions of the Salem witch trials in popular culture; these depictions perpetuate the common misconception that accused witches were "burned at the stake" in 1692.[19] Therefore, discussion of the memories and commemorations of the events necessitates a review of the basic outline of the trials and their historical context.

The leadership and many of the people who would settle Massachusetts Bay Colony were predominantly English Calvinist Protestants, known today as Puritans, who sought to rid the Anglican Church of what they saw as vestiges of Catholicism. They came to the New World to establish a "city upon a hill," so that the "eyes of all people" could look to them as a shining

[18] Adams, *The Specter of Salem*, 143-144; Conforti, *Imagining New England*, 172.
[19] Adams, *The Specter of Salem*, 96.

example of their model of Christian piety.[20] But despite their Biblical focus, they were also Englishmen and women, and so brought to America with them the then-prevailing early modern beliefs in folk magic and witchcraft.[21] The Salem Witch Trials of 1692 were not the first nor last instance of witchcraft accusations in the North American colonies, but they were the most significant in scale and intensity.[22]

In January of 1692, two young girls within the household of Reverend Samuel Parris, the minister of Salem Village in modern-day Danvers, began to have strange fits which caused their bodies to writhe and twist and their mouths to clamp up, seemingly choking as they were "bitten and pinched by invisible agents."[23] After a month of prayer and fasting Parris finally sought consultation with a doctor who believed the girls to be "under an Evil Hand," which led the community to quickly suspect witchcraft was causing their afflictions.[24] These fits spread "plague-like," in the words of the Reverend himself, to other young girls, adolescent and adult women, and one man in the Village and other surrounding communities.[25] Once afflicted the victim would see spectral visages of their neighbors, and some people they knew only by name, who could then mentally and physically torment them, tempting them to sign the Devil's book and become a witch.[26]

---

[20] "John Winthrop Dreams of a City on a Hill, 1630," in *The American Yawp Reader: A Documentary Companion to The American Yawp*, eds. Joseph L. Locke and Ben Wright, accessed Feb 14, 2022, https://www.americanyawp.com/reader/colliding-cultures/john-winthrop-dreams-of-a-city-on-a-hill-1630/.
[21] Richard Godbeer, *The Devil's Dominion: Magic and Religion in Early New England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 5; Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971), 437.
[22] Godbeer, *The Devil's Dominion*, 181.
[23] Adams, *The Specter of Salem*, 10; Norton, *In The Devil's Snare*, 18-19.
[24] Norton, *In The Devil's Snare*, 19.
[25] Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed: The Social Origins of Witchcraft* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), ("plague-like") 3; Norton, *In The Devil's Snare*, 305.
[26] Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, 147-148; Godbeer, *The Devil's Dominion*, 179-180; Norton, *In The Devil's Snare*, 28-30.

The first accused women "fit standard profiles" of those typically thought to be witches- women who were outsiders to the community due to their abrasive character or low status.[27] However, as the afflictions spread, so too did the accusations, and the tormented began to name individuals of higher status in their communities such as respected church members and even ministers.[28] This contributed to the widespread panic as colonists began to understand that those who would typically be safe from such accusations could no longer rely on their pious reputations. By the beginning of June, at least fifty accused witches were in jail and the county called for a special court of Oyer and Terminer—empowered to issue death sentences— "'to hear and determine' in French legal terminology," to address the growing number of cases.[29]

One of the reasons the Salem Witch Trials were so different from other witchcraft panics in the North American Colonies was because the court allowed the use of "spectral evidence." In other words, occurrences that only the tormented victims could see and experience. As the trials raged on, the afflicted were often brought into the courtroom with the accused to see if their torments would be exacerbated by being in the same room with the "witch." The writhing and screaming of the afflicted could then be witnessed by numerous adult men in the community who would then corroborate as witnesses against the accused.[30] Other cases of witchcraft in Colonial New England often ended in acquittal, some jail time, or banishment from the colony,

[27] John Putnam Demos, *Entertaining Satan: Witchcraft and the Culture of Early New England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), see chapter three specifically; Carol F. Karlsen, *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman: Witchcraft in Colonial New England* (1987; repr., New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1998), see chapters two and three specifically; ("fit standard profiles") Norton, *In The Devil's Snare*, 44; Rosenthal, *Salem Story*, 87; Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 474-475, 519-534.
[28] Adams, *The Specter of Salem*, 14; Norton, *In The Devil's Snare*, see chapter two specifically.
[29] Frances Hill, *The Salem Witch Trials Reader* (Boston: Da Capo Press, 2000), xx-xxi; Norton, *In The Devil's Snare*, ("to hear and determine") 169.
[30] Adams, *The Specter of Salem*, 16; Norton, *In The Devil's Snare*, 27-28.

execution was rarer and, with the exception of Salem, required fairly substantial evidence.[31] Another significant factor which made the Salem events unique was the use of confession. In 1692, those who confessed to the crime of witchcraft were spared while those who denied the allegations and professed their innocence were often executed, the opposite of typical witchcraft cases in New England.[32]

By the end of 1692, nearly two hundred people had been arrested on suspicion of practicing witchcraft. At least five people died in prison, including the infant child of an accused woman. One man had been pressed to death with stones to induce him to enter a plea for trial. Throughout that fateful summer, the bodies of five men and fourteen women swung lifeless from trees atop what is now known as Proctor's Ledge.[33]

Historians have debated the meanings of the trials just as have generations of Americans. Many have written about the events of 1692 offering a vast range of possible causes for both the girl's afflictions and the widespread panic that ensued. In fact, historians have written so much about the trials that Tony Fels had enough material to write a monograph solely on a shift in the historiography of the trials in the post-war era.[34] Modern historians who have sought to determine the key factor that instigated the events of 1692 and other New England witch panics have advanced numerous interpretations. Though their analyses differ, many of these scholars seem to have an abiding sensibility that the events reflected other issues taking place within the society in and around Salem.

---

[31] Godbeer, *The Devil's Dominion*, see chapter five specifically; Karlsen, *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman*, 5, 267-271.
[32] Baker, *A Storm of Witchcraft*, 154-160; Norton, *In The Devil's Snare*, 305-306.
[33] The twenty executed witches are verified by multiple historians but the estimations for the number of accused imprisoned and the number who died in jail vary. Adams, *The Specter of Salem*, 12; Baker, *A Storm of Witchcraft*, 10-11; Hill, *The Salem Witch Trials Reader*, xv-xxii.
[34] Tony Fels, *Switching Sides: How a Generation of Historians Lost Sympathy for the Victims of the Salem Witch Hunt* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2018).

Writing in 1974, Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum were the first social historians to reinterpret the trials, and their *Salem Possessed: The Social Origins of Witchcraft* would become one of the "single most influential" monographs on the Salem trials.[35] Turning away from a close chronology of the events of 1692, they instead focused on the social conditions that preceded and surrounded them. Boyer and Nissenbaum argued that the politics of regional and religious factionalism were played out through the trials, with accusers attacking those who directly represented or resembled their opponents, in a "deadly game of psychological projection."[36]

John Putnam Demos and Carol F. Karlsen, followed and each avoided making Salem their primary focus and instead looked at characteristics of other New England witchcraft cases comparatively. In *Entertaining Satan: Witchcraft and the Culture of Early New England*, Demos used a number of case studies to determine the nature of witchcraft belief and accusation through examining biography, psychology, and sociology. Karlsen's *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman: Witchcraft in Colonial New England*, was an example of women's history as it was practiced in the 1980s. Her lens focused on the reality of the gendered bias toward women in colonial witchcraft accusations by providing close readings of a number of case studies. Notably, both historians found witchcraft accusations to reflect the needs of the communities in two ways: they assigned blame for misfortune and functioned as a means of social control.[37] Though these works did not devote much space to the Salem events directly, they provided welcomed context on witchcraft in the region generally.

[35] Fels, *Switching Sides*, 19.
[36] Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, 146-147("deadly game"), 182, 188-189.
[37] Demos, *Entertaining Satan*, 304-308; Karlsen, *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman*, 181.

Mary Beth Norton's study developed around something that Karlsen merely mentioned in her book.[38] Her 2002 work *In The Devil's Snare: The Salem Witchcraft Crisis of 1692* focused on the relationship many involved in the trials had to northern frontiers which had experienced violent encounters with Native Americans. Grounded in a thorough chronology of the trials and enhanced by genealogical research of its participants, Norton's study has come to sit alongside Boyer and Nissenbaum's earlier work as a leading monograph in the field.[39] She also found the trials to have served a purpose for those involved, this time, for releasing anxieties surrounding attacks by Native populations.[40]

Other single origin theories have abounded, including religiously based sexism, political turmoil, and even the popular but unpersuasive idea that ergot contaminated rye created mass hallucinations.[41] Bernard Rosenthal was the first to articulate the current consensus, which states that multiple factors precipitated the unfortunate events.[42] The title of Emerson W. Baker's book, the most recent in the canon on the subject, sums up the sentiment well: *A Storm of Witchcraft*. This "perfect storm" consensus agrees that political and religious factionalism, governmental turmoil, Native American conflict, and patriarchy, along with a variety of other factors, combined to create the perfect conditions that would exacerbate the witchcraft panic and cause the tragic events of 1692.

---

[38] Norton, *In The Devil's Snare*, 5; Karlsen, *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman*, 226-228.
[39] Fels, *Switching Sides*, 78.
[40] Norton, *In The Devil's Snare*, 298-300.
[41] Elizabeth Reis, *Damned Women: Sinners and Witches in Puritan New England* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997); Linnda R. Caporael, "Ergotism: The Satan Loosed in Salem?" *Science* 192, no. 4234 (1976): 21–26, http://www.jstor.org/stable/1741715; Hill, *The Salem Witch Trials Reader.*
[42] Bernard Rosenthal, *Salem Story*; Baker, *A Storm of Witchcraft*; Godbeer, *The Devil's Dominion*, see chapter six specifically; Marilynne K. Roach, *The Salem Witch Trials: A Day-By-Day Chronicle of a Community Under Siege* (New York: Cooper Square Press, 2002).

While scholars have long debated the meanings of the events of 1692, the people of eastern Massachusetts have commemorated the witch trials and its victims. There has been little scholarship though on these monuments and memorials and how they both recall the trials and fit into the larger history of commemoration. Many scholars have studied the significance of public commemorations as modes of collective memory.[43] David Glassberg asserts that public commemorations can "make places visible by linking what ordinarily cannot be seen— a community's values and reminiscences, its history— to features in the physical environment."[44] Monuments are more than just polished stones with inscriptions then, they are a way for communities to ascribe meaning to history on the landscape.

In *The Past is a Foreign Country*, David Lowenthal argued that the past "conjured up is, to be sure, largely an artifact of the present."[45] He explained that because commemorations are often built to remember something from the past they are inherently different from that they wish to recall.[46] Although they may be different from the lived past, the durability of monuments allows them to become part of the historical record as they capture both a reflection of the past and the significance that era held to its creators.[47] David Glassberg has studied not only the ways in which monuments are representative of their creators but how successive generations of

---

[43] John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992); Kenneth E. Foote, *Shadowed Ground: America's Landscapes of Violence and Tragedy*, Revised and Updated (1997; repr., Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003); David Glassberg, "Public History and the Study of Memory," *The Public Historian* 18, no. 2 (1996): 7–23; David Glassberg, *Sense of History: The Place of the Past in American Life* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001); David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Savage, *Monument Wars*; Dell Upton, *What Can and Can't Be Said: Race, Uplift, and Monument Building in the Contemporary South* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015); James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993); James E. Young, *The Stages of Memory: Reflections on Memorial Art, Loss, and the Spaces Between* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2016).
[44] Glassberg, *Sense of History*, 124.
[45] Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country*, xvi.
[46] Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country*, 321.
[47] Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country*, 324.

community members also ascribe their own meaning to the object.[48] In *Sense of History: The Place of the Past in American Life* he used a unique WWI memorial in the town of Orange, Massachusetts to demonstrate how a single community's understanding of war changed over a period of nearly 75 years. Glassberg's case study speaks to the ability of monuments to take on new interpretive lives as different constituencies mold them to fit into narratives that have modern relevancies.

Though the public can imbue monuments with collective memory or meaning, most scholars of memory and monument building have been quick to point out that commemorations rarely imply community consensus. John Bodnar advanced this premise in his study *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century*. He asserted that "public memory emerges from the intersection of official and vernacular cultural expressions."[49] Official culture, as defined by Bodnar, originates from leadership positions at various social levels who seek to reduce competing interests and keep continuity in representations of the past in order to present an idealized version of reality.[50] Conversely, representatives of vernacular culture can come from a variety of backgrounds and they typically ground their representations of the past in lived experience rather than idealism.[51] Both groups though, use memory to define their adherence to either form of cultural expression and as a tool to shape the past, present, and future according to those views.[52]

The work of James E. Young has been influential in the field of memory studies. He has argued in multiple works that meaning-making relating to monuments is an ongoing process and

[48] Glassberg, *Sense of History*, 52-57.
[49] Bodnar, *Remaking America*, 13.
[50] Bodnar, *Remaking America*, 13-14.
[51] Bodnar, *Remaking* America, 14-15.
[52] Bodnar, *Remaking America*, 15.

that by studying the processes of their creation we "invigorate the[ir] very idea" can begin to understand how humans simultaneously shape and are shaped by these objects.[53] Young believes that monuments are representative of "collected memory" rather than collective, a term which acknowledges that individuals, even when commemorating a common loss, each bring their own unique memories to the process of creation.[54] Young's arguments echoed the aforementioned scholars and he built upon them by examining the creation of memorials to tragedies such as the Holocaust, September 11th, and a mass shooting in Norway. These case studies demonstrated the concept of "collected memory" and further advanced his argument that the meaning of a memorial is never set in stone.

Kirk Savage examined a similar process in *Monument Wars: Washington D.C., the National Mall, and the Transformation of the Memorial Landscape*. In his study on the creation of the National Mall, Savage found that the "interplay of aspiration and practice" in relation to the creation and later use of memorial spaces demonstrates the shift from monuments as symbols to monuments as actors in the history of the nation.[55] Using the Lincoln Memorial to demonstrate the extreme difference in intent and outcome, Savage argued that the "subjectivity of memorial space" is not easily controlled, even in the heart of the Nation.[56] Looking at modern monuments and memorials, Dell Upton also considered intent versus reception in his essay "Why Do Contemporary Monuments Talk So Much?" He argues that modern commemorators rely more heavily on text and contextualization to ensure that viewers come away with their

[53] Young, *The Texture of Memory*, ("invigorate") 14, 15; Young, *The Stages of Memory*, 16-17.
[54] Young, *The Texture of Memory*, xi; Young, *The Stages of Memory*, 68.
[55] Savage, *Monument Wars*, 11.
[56] Savage, *Monument Wars*, 310.

intended message rather than leaving room for ambiguity.[57] Upton and Savage recognized that the creators of monuments desire a particular message to be portrayed through the placement of the object within the public landscape.[58]

All of these scholars suggest that monuments and memorials should be viewed as markers of memory. Memory can function in at least three different conceptual planes at sites of commemoration.[59] The 1885 Rebecca Nurse Monument serves as a useful example to demonstrate these levels of conceptualization. The first and most basic is that memorials are meant to revive memories of that which they were created to commemorate. In the case of the 1885 monument that was Rebecca Nurse, a Salem witch trials victim. Next, commemorations also reflect the contemporary moment in which they were designed and dedicated. At this level of memory, the monument acts as a potential source within the historical record, as Lowenthal suggested.[60] The current study uses the Rebecca Nurse Monument as a source to determine the nature of commemoration in the bicentennial era of the witch trials. Finally, commemorations are also imbued with the memories of those who created them relating to that which they sought to commemorate. So, while any visitor to the Rebecca Nurse Monument may bring with them their own understanding of the elderly woman, what they see at the site is a reflection of her shaped by the nineteenth-century creators of the monument. Therefore, the way Nurse's

[57] Dell Upton, "Why Do Contemporary Monuments Talk So Much?," in *Commemoration in America: Essays on Monuments, Memorialization, and Memory*, eds. David Walter Gobel and Daves Rossell (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2013), 24-26.
[58] Upton, "Why Do Contemporary Monuments Talk So Much?," 20; Savage, *Monument Wars*, 18-22.
[59] Upton makes a similar argument in "Why Do Contemporary Monuments Talk So Much?" What he terms the "three rules of thumb about monument-building," are that monuments always have a message, they "*interpret*" the subjects they honor, and they are offered by special interests who "claim to speak for everyone." See pages 20 and 25 specifically.
[60] Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country*, 324.

descendants remembered her can be understood from a simple examination of the monument as well.

***

Commemorations of the witch trials have tended to occur close to the end of each succeeding century. The impending arrival of the 92nd year awakens the old stories once more and Americans begin to reflect again on what this episode in national history means. Anniversaries typically generate widespread local or national interest in the history of the event being remembered which can result in a variety of public engagements with the past.[61] The creation of new physical features on the landscape such as monuments are one such engagement that the present study will examine in particular. Each iteration of the remembrance of the trials can be characterized by its own unique occurrences, but when examined together they demonstrate that generally, anniversaries have encouraged the public to consider the past more deeply. Memory scholar Edward Linenthal has argued that landmark anniversaries, such as centennials, "privilege the commemorative voice, one that speaks with the authority of the witness."[62] Reminiscences of Salem's witchcraft panic every hundred years have allowed generations of New Englanders to pass judgment on the validity and overall meaning of the trials just as seventeenth-century witnesses had in 1692. These judgments over time have prompted commemorative actions of various kinds, from written considerations to physical memorials.

[61] Bodnar, *Remaking* America; Tammy S. Gordon, *The Spirit of 1976: Commerce, Community, and the Politics of Commemoration* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2013); Dwight T. Pitcaithley and Rolf Diamant, "Final Centennial Thoughts," *The George Wright Forum* 33, no. 3 (2016): 257–70; M. J. Rymsza-Pawlowska, *History Comes Alive: Public History and Popular Culture in the 1970s* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2018).
[62] Edward T. Linenthal, "Struggling with History and Memory," *The Journal of American History* 82, no. 3 (1995): 1097.

The centennial anniversary of the witchcraft panic occurred amidst a backdrop of post-Revolutionary zeal during the formative years of the United States national government in 1792. Scholar of memory and the witch trials Gretchen Adams argued that it was during this period that the Salem witchcraft metaphor was being developed as a moral lesson for the new American citizenry on the consequences of "failing to control the passions," "bowing to the tyranny of leaders," "rejecting reason and order," and of "accepting foreign influences."[63] Even though Americans sought to create a distinct identity from their former colonizers they still needed to look to their colonial past for both triumphs and failures from which to anchor their fledgling national character.[64] Adams argued that one of the ways "prominent thinkers" accomplished this was by printing moral lessons such as the Salem trials in a vast number and variety of children's textbooks in the early nineteenth century.[65] These textbooks emphasized that the Puritans had been under English influence when the panic erupted, inherently shifting the blame to their former mother country.[66] It was important for readers to understand that "Salem witchcraft happened *in* America but it was not *of* America."[67] Thus, they distinguished themselves simultaneously from both the superstition of their ancestors and the loyalty of their progenitors to English ideals.

Eighteenth-century Americans, therefore, were not so inclined to create a physical memorial to the victims of the trials but demonstrated an awareness of the events around the centennial anniversary through written references to the controversial events both in textbooks and periodicals. A contribution was submitted to the *Rural Magazine* just two years after the

[63] Adams, *The Specter of Salem*, 55.
[64] Adams, *The Specter of Salem*, 39-40.
[65] Adams, *The Specter of Salem*, on the use of textbooks generally see chapter two.
[66] Adams, *The Specter of Salem*, 57-58.
[67] Adams, *The Specter of Salem*, 58.

centennial of the trials recalling the "great delusion," of trying and executing witches in Massachusetts.[68] The author recalled how in 1692 the "credulity, delusion, and infatuation," of the colonists "plunged the whole province into horror and bloodshed."[69] He conceded though that one positive outcome from the events at Salem was that it "rendered the whole business suspicious; and from that period till now, any person that has attempted to take the trade in America, has passed for a fool or a knave."[70] The author closed their article by noting that the unfortunate practice still takes place in Europe and reminds the reader that "one of these *silly witches* cannot do any hurt but by her *tongue*."[71] By emphasizing the backwardness of Europe in contrast to Americans who had learned from their ancestry, this contributor to the magazine also perpetuated the image of Salem as a progressive moral lesson. Another article appeared in the *Time Piece; and Literary Companion* in 1798 in which the author discussed various theories on what caused the decline in the belief in witchcraft over the last 35 years.[72] After pondering the effects of war and politics, he stated his opinion to conclude the article, arguing "'every generation grows *wiser* and *wiser*;' I will add, *better and better*—and— not a word more."[73] Other articles pointed to the "narrow views and bigoted zeal of the last century," the "ridiculous superstition and absurd belief" of those who perpetuated the Salem crisis, each hinting at or directly noting the progress that had been made by Americans in the present age.[74]

---

[68] H, "Spirits, Ghosts, and Witches," *Rural Magazine, or, Vermont Repository: Devoted to Literary, Moral, Historical & Political Improvement* Vol. 1, June 1, 1795, American Periodicals, 319.
[69] H, "Spirits, Ghosts, and Witches," 319.
[70] H, "Spirits, Ghosts, and Witches," 320.
[71] H, "Spirits, Ghosts, and Witches," 320. Emphasis in original.
[72] "Witchcraft," *Time Piece; and Literary Companion* Vol. 2 Iss. 104, May 14, 1798, American Periodicals, 2.
[73] "Witchcraft," 2. Emphasis in original.
[74] ("narrow views") "The Following Specimens are Offered as Curiosities," *The American Magazine, Containing a Miscellaneous Collection of Original and Other Valuable Essays in Prose and Verse, and Calculated Both for Instruction and Amusement* Vol. 1, Iss. 1, December, 1787, American Periodicals, 50; ("ridiculous superstition") "Article 80: Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Societu [sic] for the year," *The Monthly Anthology, and Boston Review Containing Sketches and Reports of Philosophy, Religion, History, Arts, and Manners* Vol. 2, Iss. 12, December, 1805, American Periodicals, 659.

After considering the 1792 centennial anniversary of the Salem witch trials one can analyze the changes in the ways that the event was remembered nearly one hundred years later at the bicentennial. Leading the commemorative charge in the nineteenth century was the descendants of Rebecca Nurse, who created an organization expressly for the purpose of dedicating a monument to the memory of their late ancestor. Those remembering the trials around 1892 were no longer concerned with demonstrating progress in relation to the separation from Britain. Now, the descendant of both Nurse and other participants from the trials who still remained in northeastern Massachusetts sought to illustrate how much Protestant thought and tolerance had progressed. A close analysis of the Rebecca Nurse Monument dedication demonstrates this shift in thought and allows one to see how commemoration was used as a vehicle of collective memory.

***

Few scholars have given extended consideration to the Rebecca Nurse Memorial, its dedication, or the broader bicentennial commemorations of the trials. Historians who have mentioned it at all typically use the event as a case study or minor detail in a larger project.[75] Analysis of the memorial dedicated by Nurse's descendants is often a footnote in a discussion of the larger and better-known memorial and historic landscape of Salem, Massachusetts.[76] In 1692, the modern-day town of Danvers was known as Salem Village and it neighbored Salem Town, the area known today as the city of Salem. The city's name association with the trials has led

[75] The scholars I have found to be engaging with the Rebecca Nurse Monument and/or dedication are as follows: Baker, *A Storm of Witchcraft*, 272-274; Daniel A. Gagnon, *A Salem Witch: The Trial, Execution, and Exoneration of Rebecca Nurse* (Yardley, PA: Westholme Publishing, LLC, 2021), 260-271; Marion Gibson, *Witchcraft Myths in American Culture* (New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2007), 57-67; Rosenthal, *Salem Story*, 86, 90-94, 106, 206.
[76] Baker, "Witch City?" in *A Storm of Witchcraft*, see 272-274 for Nurse Memorial specifically; Gibson, *Witchcraft Myths in American Culture*, 57-67.

many scholars to focus on Salem at the expense of Danvers, even though that area was central to the story of 1692 as well.

Marion Gibson, author of *Witchcraft Myths in American Culture*, is one of the scholars who used Rebecca Nurse's memorial as a way to transition into discussing Salem's commemorations of the trials.[77] Gibson offered a brief description of the organization created by Nurse's descendants and their commemorative efforts before shifting to an analysis of the memorial erected in Salem for the 300th anniversary of the trials. In doing so, she argued that the Danvers community "turned" to Salem "for leadership and resolution," to guide their commemorative impulses.[78] One could argue that some similar themes are present at both dedication ceremonies, however, her conclusion that Danvers looked to Salem for guidance in their commemoration during the bicentennial is simply inaccurate considering Salem would not commemorate the trials for another hundred years after Danvers bicentennial dedications. Gibson also confused two of the key participants at the 1885 dedication, Reverends from Salem and Danvers, which made her overall argument less convincing.[79]

Local Danvers Historian Daniel Gagnon wrote the most in-depth treatment of the Rebecca Nurse Memorial.[80] His article compared the Nurse column to the comparative commemorative silence surrounding George Jacobs Sr, a crippled elderly man accused of wizardry by members of his own household. Gagnon questioned why Nurse's memory was so cherished while Jacobs was largely forgotten. He argued that the actions of each accused person's family members in 1692 affected the ways in which they were remembered and

[77] Gibson's discussion of the Rebecca Nurse Monument can be found in *Witchcraft Myths in American Culture*, 57-67.
[78] Gibson, *Witchcraft Myths in American Culture*, 66.
[79] Gibson, *Witchcraft Myths in American Culture*, 60-61.
[80] Daniel A. Gagnon, "Skeletons in the Closet: How the Actions of the Salem Witch Trials Victims' Families in 1692 Affected Later Memorialization," *The New England Journal of History* 75, no. 2 (2019): 32-73.

commemorated in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. His discussion of the Rebecca Nurse Memorial dedication also serves to reject the argument advanced by Marion Gibson. Gagnon argued compellingly that it was Danvers residents who took charge in creating a memorial to a victim of the trials in the nineteenth-century, long before Salem would accomplish the same goal.[81] In fact, Gagnon's interpretation is correct, but he still used the Nurse commemoration as an end point in a larger examination on how the actions of the witch trials victims' families and the writings of later historians affected the commemorations of two victims. Examining the Nurse Monument's dedication in the context of the centennial anniversaries of the witch trials places the action of commemorating at the center of this study rather than the events or aftermath of 1692.

Gagnon also corrected Gibson's confusion of the two ministers to further his point about Danvers being the first community to commemorate the trials.[82] His proper identification of the ministers is useful, but the emphasis on the difference of these two divines that both scholars advance is misplaced. Rather than focusing on what made these two church leaders different, concentrating on their similarities provides us with new insights. This new perspective allows for a deeper understanding of what led the communities of these once afflicted areas to come together in the nineteenth century to express their regret, experience reconciliation, and recover the memory of the martyred woman. A close examination of the minister's words also allows us to glean insight into a deeper issue New Englanders were facing in the late 1800s.

[81] Gagnon, "Skeletons in the Closet," 36, 52-54. Gagnon condensed his 2019 article into about eleven pages for the final chapter ("Redemption" pp. 247-271) of his book *A Salem Witch*. In the book he primarily focuses on Danvers as a commemorative leader rather than the comparative examination he offers in his article.
[82] Gagnon, "Skeletons in the Closet," 53-54.

Gretchen Adams provided a useful framework for the close reading of sources I present below which illuminates these new cultural anxieties. Adams traced the development of Salem as a cultural metaphor and examines the changing perceptions of the event throughout the nineteenth century.[83] She showed that the ways in which Salem was invoked during the sectional crisis and Civil War altered the overall perception of the history of New England generally.[84] This establishes an important backdrop for the Danvers commemoration. During the late nineteenth century, the Puritans, once nationally recognized as the ideal settler, were losing their prime spot in history to the Pilgrims, a group with a less problematic past.[85] This shift in national perception left the descendants of the Puritans in an interesting spot, finding it necessary to at once defend their ancestors while simultaneously acknowledging their past errors. Daniel Gagnon argues that "this displacing of the Puritans in the national consciousness in favor of the Pilgrims did not significantly affect Nurse's descendants' view of their ancestor."[86] His interpretation is accurate, but it needs to be qualified. The descendants' view of *their* ancestor may not have been affected, but they were likely aware of the shifting national views of the seventeenth century Puritan community as a whole. Amidst this backdrop of the social decline of the Puritan image it became necessary for their nineteenth-century descendants to come together to reconcile with their family's witch-hunting pasts and with the descendants of an innocent victim of their ancestors Protestant excess. After all, how could descendants defend their Puritan ancestry against non-New Englanders who viewed their forebears as "increasingly problematic,"

[83] Adams, *The Specter of Salem*, 3-6.
[84] Adams, *The Specter of Salem*, 120. Chapters four and five discuss the alteration of the metaphor more broadly during the Sectional Crisis and Civil War eras.
[85] Adams, *The Specter of Salem*, 135.
[86] Gagnon, "Skeletons in the Closet," 47.

if, as descendants, they had not forgiven the Puritans themselves?[87] The first steps toward this community reconciliation would begin with a single family.

***

The descendants of Rebecca Nurse formed the Nourse Monument Association [NMA] in late 1875, deciding to use the nineteenth-century spelling of their family name for the organization.[88] Nurse's descendants may have drawn inspiration for this sudden commemorative impulse from the impending colonial revival, a period that began the next year with the centennial of the founding of the United States, a moment when many Americans actively considered their national past.[89] The association was made up mostly of direct descendants, eleven of whom were chosen as officers at the inception to begin the process of "soliciting funds for the erection of a monument" to the memory of their persecuted ancestor.[90]

William P. Upham, the husband of a Nurse descendant and son of Charles Wentworth Upham, a well-known historian of the witch trials, took it upon himself to document the actions of the NMA. His efforts culminated in a 41-page document entitled *Account of the Rebecca Nurse Monument*.[91] Upham's account of the memorial dedication process is the most complete record available, and this source provides insight into the values of the committee and the community. Upham wrote this for posterity's sake, allowing historians to use his account to view the construction of an image of the association that was meant to be projected into the future. He

[87] Adams, *The Specter of Salem*, 137.
[88] Gibson, *Witchcraft Myths in American Culture*, 58.
[89] Conforti, *Imagining New England*, 205; Gagnon, *A Salem Witch*, 260.
[90] W. P. Upham, *Account of the Rebecca Nurse Monument*, 3.
[91] Gibson, *Witchcraft Myths in American Culture*, 58.

likely understood the value of crafting such a document considering his father's training as an historian.

Upham neglected to document the activities of the organization in the years between their inception in late 1875 and July 1883. When Upham began to account for the actions of the organization's members again in 1883, it was for the first of a series of annual "Basket Picnic" meetings held at the former Nurse homestead to raise money for the monument.[92] These lunchtime events featured speeches from high ranking members of the association and local ministers detailing the life of their "illustrious ancestor" and explaining the goal of their fundraising.[93] At the second annual picnic event, one of the fundraising tactics came from a Mr. Charles W. Steele, who sold "fancy articles, such as penholders, racks, and napkin rings" that were "made of the wood of the old Paris [sic] house."[94] This building – the parsonage of Reverend Samuel Parris – was the location where the first young women to accuse others of witchcraft experienced the fits that initiated the Salem Witch Trials. Whether Steele was honest with his sales pitch or not is debatable, considering the Parris house had been razed exactly one hundred years earlier, in 1784.[95] However, the irony of funding a memorial to one of the accused with goods connected to the accusers themselves was probably not lost on the community in attendance. At this same event, plans for the monument were solidified by determining the total cost associated with its erection and setting the date for the third annual meeting in 1885, which would serve as the monument's dedication day.[96]

---

[92] W. P. Upham, *Account of the Rebecca Nurse Monument*, 3.
[93] "Rebecca Nurse: Reunion of the Descendants of a Victim of the Witchcraft Delusion," *New York Times*, July 21, 1883.
[94] "Rebecca Nourse," *New York Times*, July 23, 1884.
[95] Danvers Historical Commission, "1681 Salem Village Parsonage," (historic marker), 1974, photographed by the author June 12, 2021.
[96] W. P. Upham, *Account of the Rebecca Nurse Monument*, 4.

On the morning of July 30th, 1885, the *Danvers Mirror* reported, "there came by horse-cars and steam trains a large number of people who took street cars for the meeting house of the First Church."[97] Before the dedication spectators could enjoy the "favorable" weather at the graveyard of the Nurse Homestead, they assembled at the First Church of Danvers to commence with the "ceremonies and exercises."[98] The newspaper also reported that there were enough people to fill the floor of the church and a significant number in the galleries.[99] Upham estimated the number of observers to be six hundred or more.[100] The ceremony began with organ music and choral selections, a prayer, and a reading of a trio of Psalms.[101]

These opening exercises established a religious tone for the event, which the NMA considered to be a significant aspect of the commemoration process. These introductory selections also provided the crowd with several themes that ran through the entirety of the dedication. The first of these themes would become apparent with the reading of Psalm 64. This text unearthed a dark tone that several of the speakers that day would expand upon in addresses to follow. In the Psalm, King David asks the Lord to hide him from the "secret counsel of the wicked," and from those who would "whet their tongue like a sword," that they may attack "the perfect."[102] The assembled community understood this as a prayer Rebecca Nurse may have recited while her neighbors were "laying snares privily," to entrap her in a community-wide conspiracy.[103] The second recited Psalm also could have been understood as a prayer the elderly

[97] Newspaper selection re-printed in W. P. Upham, *Account of the Rebecca Nurse Monument*, 37.
[98] Newspaper selection re-printed in W. P. Upham, *Account of the Rebecca Nurse Monument*, 37.
[99] Newspaper selection re-printed in W. P. Upham, *Account of the Rebecca Nurse Monument*, 37.
[100] W. P. Upham, *Account of the Rebecca Nurse Monument*, 4.
[101] W. P. Upham, *Account of the Rebecca Nurse Monument*, 5; Nourse Monument Association, "Memorial services at the dedication of the Rebecca Nourse [sic] Monument, Danvers, Mass., July 30, 1885," 1 Broadside, Phillips Library at the Peabody Essex Museum, Rowley, Massachusetts.
[102] Psalm 64:2-4, in *The Holy Bible, King James Version*, Biblegateway.com, accessed February 17, 2022, https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm%2064&version=KJV.
[103] Psalm 64:5, KJV.

woman may have uttered as she walked "through the valley of the shadow of death," to the gallows.[104] Psalm 23, "The Lord is my shepherd," would remind the audience that Rebecca Nurse's suffering was not in vain because God had prepared "a table before" her and anointed her with oil "in the presence of [her] enemies," to reward her unwavering faith and honesty.[105] The 85th Psalm was the final selection. Its verses ask of the Lord "wilt thou be angry with us forever?"[106] The congregation pleads with God, "shew us thy mercy, O Lord, and grant us thy salvation," and begs him to "revive us again."[107] Likely a plea for redemption with which the descendants of the persecutors from 1692 would have empathized. These readings established the central themes of the memorial dedication: regret, reconciliation, and recovery. These themes would emerge in greater detail from the speeches of the speakers that day.

Reverend Fielder Israel of the First Church of Salem was the first to present an elaborate speech before the crowd. This Reverend from Salem stood as a representative of the very same church that had excommunicated Rebecca Nurse for being a witch 193 years earlier.[108] His address began with a passage from *Salem Witchcraft*, published in 1867 by Upham's late father. The text describes the elder Upham's belief that there would be a time in which society will have advanced enough to recognize that there should be a "suitable monument to the memory of those who in 1692 preferred death to falsehood."[109] Reverend Israel saw these words as "a prophecy of the time and manner of the canonization of these martyrs," and believed that the actions of the

[104] Psalm 23:4, KJV.
[105] Psalm 23:5, KJV.
[106] Psalm 85:5, KJV.
[107] Psalms 85:5-6, KJV.
[108] Charles W. Upham, *Salem Witchcraft: With an Account of Salem Village and A History of Opinions on Witchcraft and Kindred Subjects* (1867; repr., Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 2000), 511-513.
[109] W. P. Upham, *Account of the Rebecca Nurse Monument*, 5. For the original passage see C. W. Upham, *Salem Witchcraft*, 572-573.

NMA helped to fulfill this prophecy.[110] Such an outcome becomes less surprising when one considers William P. Upham's involvement in the association. It is possible that his father's words continued to guide his contributions to the cause.

The Reverend took a few moments to emphasize that this was to be the first monument honoring any of the "martyrs" who died as a result of the witchcraft panic that swept over their communities in 1692.[111] "After two centuries of neglect," he told listeners, it was their generation's job to "unite with the descendants of one of the most worthy of those who suffered" and erect a lasting commemoration.[112] As only one of eighteen others hanged during the trials, how did Nurse become the primary martyr of 1692? Marion Gibson argues in *Witchcraft Myths in American Culture,* that the early historians of the witch trials, including Upham's late father, regarded Rebecca Nurse as the "shining example of a transparently guiltless person unjustly condemned," making her the logical choice for the first "uncontroversial commemoration" of the trials.[113]

To further demonstrate this it is necessary to understand that several historians have developed profiles on the kind of person who would typically be accused of using witchcraft to harm their neighbors in colonial America.[114] What Bernard Rosenthal called the "archetypal outsider," those suspected were usually older, often unmarried women, who were of low social status and disliked by their neighbors for any number of reasons including a callous temperament or a propensity towards committing petty crimes.[115] Rebecca Nurse fits these profiles solely

[110] W. P. Upham, *Account of the Rebecca Nurse Monument*, 6.
[111] W. P. Upham, *Account of the Rebecca Nurse Monument*, 6.
[112] W. P. Upham, *Account of the Rebecca Nurse Monument*, 6.
[113] Gibson, *Witchcraft Myths in American Culture*, ("shining example") 59, ("uncontroversial commemoration") 60.
[114] Demos, *Entertaining Satan*, see chapter three specifically; Carol F. Karlsen, *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman*, see chapters two and three specifically; Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 474-475, 519-534.
[115] Rosenthal, *Salem Story*, 87.

based upon the fact that she was an elderly woman, not by what is known of her character. She was a prolific and pious woman as well as a covenant church member during a period in which the number of "visible saints" was declining in congregationalist churches. [116] As historian Emerson W. Baker has observed, Nurse's "religious, economic, and political standing normally would have protected her from charges, or at least kept them from being taken seriously." Some historians, including Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, have found reasons for Goody Nurse to be targeted. In their examination of the Salem panic, the pair theorizes that Nurse was targeted because she was an economically mobile outsider to the Village.[117] However, despite any ways that Rebecca Nurse may fit the profile of a typically accused witch, most historians agree that she was far from the usual suspect.[118]

Audience members who entered the First Church of Danvers on the day of the memorial's dedication in 1885 likely also believed Nurse to be a "transparently guiltless person unjustly condemned," and probably brought some knowledge of the plight the elderly woman faced during the trials with them to the ceremonies.[119] During his sermon, Reverend Israel demonstrated this knowledge as well as his understanding of witchcraft in the seventeenth century more broadly. Israel's comments were markedly different from those made during the

---

[116] Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: From Colony to Province* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953), ("visible saints") 68; Gagnon, "Skeletons in the Closet," 36.
[117] Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, 199-200.
[118] Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, 147-149. As mentioned above, Boyer and Nissenbaum do make arguments on the reasons Rebecca Nurse was accused, many psychologically based especially in relation to Ann Putnam Sr., but they do concede several times that she was a well-respected community member and held high social status, unlike many other suspects. Some historians also allude to an incident in which Rebecca Nurse fought with her neighbors over pigs crossing into her property, however the wife of the neighbor involved in the dispute signed the petition attesting to Nurse's good character. This leads me to believe that there is reason to dismiss this as a theory of a reason she may have been accused, see Rosenthal, *Salem Story*, 92. For historians who find Rebecca Nurse an unusual suspect see: Adams, *The Specter of Salem*, 14; Baker, *A Storm of Witchcraft*, 21, 272; Gibson, *Witchcraft Myths in American Culture*, 59-60; Karlsen, *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman*, 38, 245, 270; Norton, *In the Devil's Snare*, 44, 225-226.
[119] Gibson, *Witchcraft Myths in American Culture*, 59.

centennial era of the trials when citizens of the United States were seeking to form a national identity separate from their English ancestors. Unlike writers in the eighteenth century, the Reverend refused to accuse his religious forebears of being overly provincial or superstitious and did not describe their understandings of witchcraft as ideas imported from England. He argued that in the past "the whole world, heathen and christian [sic]," believed witchcraft to be more than a possibility, but indeed a "*tremendous* fact, [and] a *terrible* reality."[120]

Israel then took several minutes to describe how belief in witchcraft spread throughout the European continent and made its way to America.[121] During his speech, the minister walked a narrow line between defending his Puritan ancestors and conceding that their religious belief in the "awful power" of witchcraft was the cause of great suffering in the colony.[122] This was a moral dilemma many New Englanders faced as the nineteenth century came to a close. In her analysis of Salem's use as a cultural metaphor, Gretchen Adams found that political rhetoric during the sectional crisis and the Civil War altered the meaning of the events of the trials.[123] Salem became a "symbol of backwardness, superstition, and fanaticism," she argues. As such, it denigrated the cultural understanding of Puritans as the ideal colonial settlers, a conception that had developed as the United States cultivated its own national identity.[124] The post-war era, as

[120] W. P. Upham, *Account of the Rebecca Nurse Monument*, ("the whole world") 7, ("*tremendous* fact") 8 emphases in original.
[121] W. P. Upham, *Account of the Rebecca Nurse Monument*, 7-11.
[122] W. P. Upham, *Account of the Rebecca Nurse Monument*, 11.
[123] Adams, *The Specter of Salem*, 120. There are too many iterations of the Salem metaphor that Adams describes in the Antebellum era to reiterate here, but she emphasizes throughout her study the flexibility of the metaphor (to be used both positively and negatively) and its linkage to cultural anxieties, see especially 157. Chapters four and five discuss the alteration of the metaphor more broadly during the Sectional Crisis and Civil War eras.
[124] Adams, *The Specter of Salem*, 135. In chapter two of *Specter of Salem* Adams, by tracing the proliferation of children's textbooks in the late eighteenth century and early-to-mid nineteenth century, was able to gauge how a national myth surrounding Salem witchcraft was created. She also argues in this chapter that textbooks in this era proclaimed Puritans as the model for citizenship and the ideal settler, not Pilgrims as is often taught today. Salem was used as a moral lesson to demonstrate the progress of the U.S against the backwardness and superstitiousness of Britain. See chapter two, specifically 44-47.

Adams argues, was to be the period in which the Pilgrims became the "originator[s] of national virtues."[125]

Reverend Israel seems to have been aware of this shifting national understanding and may have felt the social threat of his once illustrious lineage becoming the exemplar of regional shame. As both a regional and religious descendant of New England's Puritans, Israel carefully crafted his address to reflect the prerogative necessary at the time: to uphold a delicate balance between condemning the unfortunate results of the trials while still praising the Puritans for their "great reverence for God, great fear of the Devil, great love for Christ, and great respect for man."[126] Reverend Israel's speech suggests he took special care to ensure that the assembled spectators would not come away with an understanding of the Salem events that placed all the blame on the seventeenth-century settlers. He felt compelled to defend the church that he represented, an organization with direct ties to the trials themselves, by acknowledging that mistakes had been made but that the institution as a whole was not defective.

Israel concluded his address by recounting some of the key details of Rebecca Nurse's persecution. Notably, in this moment rather than expressly demonstrating regret on behalf of the church, Israel seems to believe that his graphic description of her excommunication is enough. He ended this section of his sermon using passive constructions, and refused to conflate the authorities of the church with those who would have taken her "manacled and maimed to her

[125] Adams, *The Specter of Salem*, 135. See also chapter five which discusses this process in great detail. Joseph Conforti, *Imagining New England*, argues for a different periodization of this shift in national and regional identification with the Pilgrim. He discusses this change in the context of Antebellum New England, see page 171-172. Adams recognizes that scholars have debated over the period in which the change occurred but argues that her post-war hypothesis is supported by "the visibility of a distinct use in print or oratory of the Plymouth Pilgrim," in contrast to a use that conflated the Pilgrim and the Puritan that frequently occurred before 1880, see *Specter of Salem*, 207-208 n56.

[126] W. P. Upham, *Account of the Rebecca Nurse Monument*, 10.

cell, foul and filthy, to await the day of her execution."[127] Instead, Israel quickly shifted to placing special emphasis on the traits in Nurse's character that made her worthy of commemoration in their present moment.[128] Though he was willing to describe her trial as a "mockery of justice and a most shameful perversion of law," his unwillingness to fully express regret must have left some spectators with an unsavory feeling.[129] This is one of the rare moments during the dedication day that a strict adherence to the theme of regret was not observed. Nurse's descendants may have been assuaged as Israel moved on to praise her "martyrdom" with a glowing admiration. [130] One can only imagine that the descendants of the elderly woman must have felt a swell of pride to be related to such a pious and unselfish woman.[131] He closed his remarks by harkening back to the central theme that was most crucial for the congregations understanding of his church and to advise the listeners of the true purpose of the monument and the gathering. With a focus on reconciliation, Reverend Israel declared to the crowd that they had gathered "to commemorate" Nurse's "virtues," and to "emulate her piety," but "not to censure or condemn her persecutors."[132] That doing so would "*mar*" her place in the annals of history.[133] The minister used his final moments in the pulpit to highlight the importance of the recovery of the memory of Rebecca Nurse, expressing his hope that their efforts would elevate her in "the gaze of men, that they may ever hereafter admire and imitate her simple goodness and sublime heroism."[134]

---

[127] W. P. Upham, *Account of the Rebecca Nurse Monument*, 14.
[128] W. P. Upham, *Account of the Rebecca Nurse Monument*, 12-15.
[129] W. P. Upham, *Account of the Rebecca Nurse Monument*, 13.
[130] W. P. Upham, *Account of the Rebecca Nurse Monument*, 12.
[131] W. P. Upham, *Account of the Rebecca Nurse Monument*, 12.
[132] W. P. Upham, *Account of the Rebecca Nurse Monument*, 14.
[133] W. P. Upham, *Account of the Rebecca Nurse Monument*, 14. Emphasis in original.
[134] W. P. Upham, *Account of the Rebecca Nurse Monument*, 14-15.

After Israel concluded his speech, the choir sang the hymn "I heard a voice from Heaven," and then Reverend Charles B. Rice of the First Church of Danvers took to the pulpit. Unlike the speaker before him, Rice was forthcoming in expressing regret on behalf of his church, a location Nurse also worshiped at before 1692. Though he did argue that he is the successor of the institution where Nurse "gained the graces that appeared upon her in those days of darkness," he refused to allow Israel to be judged alone.[135] He explained that the ministers of both the Salem and Danvers churches had "sinned in the former evil days," so he considered it prudent to "stand promptly beside [Israel] on the ground of penitence," "to confess and explain" to his community "with alacrity and brevity."[136]After expressing regret for the past actions of his church, Rice suggested to the crowd that the main reason for their presence that summer day was so that the family descended from Rebecca Nurse could "take redress" with the community whose ancestors once put her to death.[137] In commemoration Rice saw an opportunity for a communal reconciliation.

The rest of Reverend Rice's address was much like Israel's, except in that the former was noticeably more critical and harsher in tone. Rice found it easier than Reverend Israel to critique the seventeenth-century Puritans for their moral shortcomings. He was unafraid to admonish the "biblical teachers of those days" who may have prevented the tragedy had they "used their bibles better."[138] However, like Israel, Rice must have realized that he needed to keep his audience from discrediting "the biblical and reasonable faith" of which they had "so deep an interest."[139] As the "children of the Puritans," they had inherited their forebears' religious "purpose itself,"

[135] W. P. Upham, *Account of the Rebecca Nurse Monument*, 15.
[136] W. P. Upham, *Account of the Rebecca Nurse Monument*, 15.
[137] W. P. Upham, *Account of the Rebecca Nurse Monument*, 15.
[138] W. P. Upham, *Account of the Rebecca Nurse Monument*, 17.
[139] W. P. Upham, *Account of the Rebecca Nurse Monument*, 17.

and believed themselves capable of maintaining, according to Rice, the sect's renowned adherence to biblical doctrine and logical reasoning.[140] Although the events of 1692 stood as one of the few examples of the Puritans failings to heed the latter of the principles, the Reverend needed to reassure the assembled group that their modern efforts were not in vain. After all, if he had totally debased the ancestry of their common religion the result may well have been that more than a few spectators would have left with a wavering faith and loyalty to the church.

Rice also seems to be keenly aware of the role that the Salem events had played in the shifting national opinion of the colonial Puritan. Although he found fault in the actions of his ancestors, the Puritans were not to be totally discredited for reasons more significant than the appeasement of modern Congregationalists. Slander against New Englanders of a previous age contributed to a negative imagining of the region that modern residents would have to grapple with.[141] This is likely why, at times, though he could speak more plainly about the failures of the church, Rice went further than Israel to defend their religious predecessors. He commented on the collective memory of the nation and speculated that the reason the sins of the Puritans were remembered so well was because of the "far-reaching and illustrious results of their lives," in other matters of historical concern.[142] He blamed an American historical provincialism that made the witch trials seem both more significant than they were and somehow out of step with norms of the day.[143] If their regional history were to be analyzed alongside those of other places, their instances of failure would shrink in comparison.[144]

[140] W. P. Upham, *Account of the Rebecca Nurse Monument*, 17.
[141] Adams, *The Specter of Salem*, 134-145.
[142] W. P. Upham, *Account of the Rebecca Nurse Monument*, 21.
[143] W. P. Upham, *Account of the Rebecca Nurse Monument*, 21.
[144] W. P. Upham, *Account of the Rebecca Nurse Monument*, 21.

To conclude his speech, Reverend Rice reminded his audience that they were not assembled together to judge the people of the past. Rather, the goal of all successive generations should be to "draw from the common past" and find "lessons of a better faith and a better present life."[145] Rice hoped that Nurse's descendants would continue to exhibit those qualities that made Nurse worthy of commemoration. He predicted that the gatherings of the NMA would continue to benefit the family of the late Puritan woman. More significantly, he hoped the association would continue to initiate a "friendly intercourse" with other descendants of one-time rival families now that "all feuds have ceased."[146] For Rice, the work the family organization was doing to recover the memory of their lost ancestor also aided the community in their own reconciliation of past rifts. The influence of the group, he speculated, would extend beyond their community to any area that would receive news of their commemorative efforts and that they would "contribute to the spread of justice and charity and love among men."[147]

With that, the opening of the day's events at the church concluded. The assembled group heard one more hymn, entitled "God is the Refuge of the Saints," once more alluding to the presence of the saintly Rebecca Nurse at the foot of the Lord in Heaven.[148] The NMA then requested donations from the crowd for the "fencing and endowment of the monument lot."[149] An ample collection was gathered, adding $56.32 to the total monument fund, nearly equal to the cost of the solid granite base of the monument.[150] Reverend Israel offered a benediction to the

[145] W. P. Upham, *Account of the Rebecca Nurse Monument*, 22.
[146] W. P. Upham, *Account of the Rebecca Nurse Monument*, 22.
[147] W. P. Upham, *Account of the Rebecca Nurse Monument*, 22.
[148] W. P. Upham, *Account of the Rebecca Nurse Monument*, 22.
[149] W. P. Upham, *Account of the Rebecca Nurse Monument*, 22.
[150] W. P. Upham, *Account of the Rebecca Nurse Monument*, 24.

congregation and they were released to the vestry to enjoy a "bountiful repast," before making their way to the old Nurse Homestead.[151]

The pre-dedication church ceremony showed the key role Congregationalist religious ritual played in the commemoration of Rebecca Nurse during the early bicentennial period of the witch trials. As the first memorial to any victim of the Salem trials, the NMA was writing the script for future commemorations. Their emphasis on Congregationalism, the religious descendant of Puritanism, throughout the morning's events was not inevitable. In fact, historian Michael Kammen argues that as the nineteenth century progressed the "pervasiveness of religion declined," making the organization's decision to ground the ceremony in Congregationalism significant.[152]

The organization's inclination towards religion impacts the overall characterization of the bicentennial of the witch trials. The dedication day's events could have taken place in their entirety at the Nurse Homestead. Instead, planners chose the First Church of Danvers as the location for the day's opening event. Nurse's descendants could have included only their own family members in their lists of speakers. But they included religious leaders from the wider community. They could have found it prudent to avoid any people or places that would have given attention to the descendants of those who prosecuted Nurse, yet they allowed a Reverend from the church that once excommunicated their relative to open the day's events.

These choices can be read as a manifestation of the values of the descendant community and the emphasis they placed on religious ritual as a vital component of commemoration. They also demonstrate their desire to foster reconciliation at multiple levels. After the trials, many

[151] W. P. Upham, *Account of the Rebecca Nurse Monument*, 23.
[152] Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory*, 194.

participants expressed regret about their roles in the panic and later generations confessed the guilt they inherited from the actions of their ancestors.[153] As the first group to physically commemorate someone lost as a result of the trials, the monument association was likely aware of the pivotal role they could play in communal reconciliation and decided to rise to the occasion. Beginning the dedicatory events at the Danvers church allowed the community to perform the ritual of confession, mirroring the practice of their seventeenth-century Puritan ancestors. They could then emerge from the parish free to celebrate the recovery of the memory of the martyred woman without shame. It also allowed the New Englanders of the group to reconcile with an ugly and embarrassing past which still colored their present.

On the surface, Israel's and Rice's addresses testified to the local and religious nature of the commemoration that took place around the two-hundredth anniversary of the witch trials. A closer reading of these texts, however, reveals the deeper cultural anxiety taking root in the late nineteenth century that Adams described in her study.[154] These speeches indicate the desire of the Reverends to recover more than just the memory of the fallen Rebecca Nurse. Through their carefully chosen words they also sought to recover the once coveted social standing of the New England Puritan. As the nation began to turn toward a recognition of the Pilgrim as America's ideal first settlers, the descendants of the Puritans must have felt the pressure to protect their ancestors' modern image.[155] The ministers of Salem and Danvers may have recognized a unique opportunity to promote both reconciliation among the descendants of the accused and accusers of the witch trials, *and* to allow a congregation of New Englanders to reconcile with a past that

[153] Adams, *The Specter of Salem*, 20-36; See also Baker, *A Storm of Witchcraft*, chapter eight (229-255) for a thorough accounting of the lives of those touched by the events at Salem after 1692.
[154] Adams, *The Specter of Salem*, 134-148.
[155] See the previously listed works in n88 as well as Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory*, 206-215.

continued to scar their regional identity. Through Rebecca Nurse, commemoration of Puritan excesses' victims also became a way to rehabilitate Puritans in the national imagination. Reverend Israel's and Reverend Rice's sermons gave those in attendance the rhetorical tools they would need to defend their Puritan forebears, while still acknowledging that the trials had been one of their darkest moments.

These church leaders, however, were not the *only* ones interested in mitigating the legacy of the Puritans; the NMA and William P. Upham seemed equally concerned with perceptions of the past affecting their modern-day efforts at commemoration. This is likely why they felt it prudent to include a letter of regret from Elizabeth T. Larkin of the Society of Friends in an oral report given during the dedication. In her letter to Upham, the Quaker woman expressed regret that she could not attend the dedication ceremony and offered her "hearty sympathy with the gathering and its object."[156] Upham's inclusion of this letter demonstrates an awareness from the Nourse's and Upham of the contentious legacy between the Puritans and the Quakers.[157] It also suggests that the organization recognized the value of reprinting a letter of support from a modern Quaker who did not discount their efforts based upon the judgment of the two groups' contentious religious pasts.

[156] W. P. Upham, *Account of the Rebecca Nurse Monument*, 30.
[157] Adams, *The Specter of Salem*, 78-81; Baker, *A Storm of Witchcraft*, 133-134, 269; Gibson, *Witchcraft Myths in American Culture*, 25, 62. Marion Gibson also addresses the associations' inclusion of the letter in her text but uses this evidence to support her argument that the Nurse memorial dedication was a way of demonstrating the progress of mankind and religious tolerance on behalf of the nineteenth-century organization. While I do not disagree wholly with her argument, I believe that contextualizing the letter within the understanding that at the same time as the dedication, New England's Puritans were being displaced in national memory by the Pilgrims, alters the meaning slightly. Indeed, the overtly religious Nourse Monument Association was trying to demonstrate "denominational tolerance" on their part, but by providing Larkin's response they also demonstrate that modern Quakers were not continuing to judge Puritan descendants for the mistakes of their ancestors, so why should others? Quote ("denominational tolerance") from Gibson, *Witchcraft Myths in American Culture*, 62.

An even grander gesture at reconciliation between these religious sects was made as the organization designed the monument itself. The design for the monument, selected for its advantages in "appearance and durability," was drafted by a Nurse descendant who was a partner at an architectural firm.[158] Made of Rockport and Quincy granite, the column's basic design was already in place when the association solicited for an inscription from Quaker poet John Greenleaf Whittier. Included in Upham's account of the monument's dedication are three letters from the poet expressing his approval of the project and offering drafts of the verses for the inscription. Whittier's second letter was a reply to an updated draft of the inscriptions for the monument, presumably one that included his name on the memorial as the author of the poetic inscription.[159] Whittier's response to this draft elucidates Upham's reasoning for including his correspondence with the poet in the account of the dedication at all. John Greenleaf Whittier specifically instructed William P. Upham that he must "oblige" him to exclude his name from the obelisk because he "seriously object[ed] to it as a matter of taste," arguing that "no other name than that of Rebecca Nurse should be there."[160] Although Upham heeded the poet's request, he also needed to ensure that Whittier's involvement in the memorialization process would be documented and recognized even without the writer's name on the monument. To lose the proof of the illustrious Quaker poet's involvement, he understood, would diminish the great strides the descendants of the Puritans were making to reconcile the mistakes of their ancestors.

Whittier's pivotal role in the creation of the monument's inscription was significant and was likely planned by the NMA to specifically demonstrate a religious reconciliation between the two historically opposed Protestant sects. Whittier had been engaging with the history of the

[158] W. P. Upham, *Account of the Rebecca Nurse Monument*, 24.
[159] W. P. Upham, *Account of the Rebecca Nurse Monument*, 26.
[160] W. P. Upham, *Account of the Rebecca Nurse Monument*, 26.

witch trials long before the NMA approached him for their project. Gretchen Adams has documented Whittier's involvement in the discourse surrounding the use of Salem as a metaphor.[161] During the sectional crisis, she argues, Southern politicians used the Salem metaphor as a way to characterize all New Englanders and abolitionists as dangerous fanatics.[162] An ardent abolitionist himself, Whittier used newspaper publications to "refute or reverse the implications of the metaphor," in order to "emphasize the theme of progress and redemption."[163] At other times and in reference to other issues, Whittier had been known to connect "lessons learned from the Salem witchcraft trials directly to the idea of modern progress."[164] The NMA likely knew that he would be sympathetic to the purpose of their commemorative efforts because of his defense of the Salem events in the past.

Furthermore, Whittier had also authored an article in which he simultaneously condemned colonial-era Puritan intolerance of Quakers and defended and even praised them in the same article.[165] His editorial, published in the *National Era* in 1848, reads similarly to Israel's and Rice's 1885 speeches, forty years later. Given these similarities, the organization likely understood that Whittier would be sympathetic to more than just their explicitly stated purpose for commemoration. Aside from obtaining unique verses for the monument to their cherished ancestor from a "highly regarded" poet of their age, the NMA must have also identified value in Whittier's identity as a Quaker and a defender of the Puritan image.[166] So,

---

[161] Adams, *The Specter of Salem*, 61, 81, 103-105.
[162] Adams, *The Specter of Salem*, 106.
[163] Adams, *The Specter of Salem*, ("refute or reverse") 103, ("emphasize") 104.
[164] Adams, *The Specter of Salem*, 102.
[165] J. G. W., "Evangeline– The Puritans," *National Era*, January 27, 1848, https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/evangeline-puritans/docview/137479125/se-2?accountid=14745. Gretchen Adams, *The Specter of Salem*, has identified the initials above to belong to John Greenleaf Whittier, see pp. 190n 62.
[166] "John Greenleaf Whittier," *The Poetry Foundation*, accessed January 31, 2022, https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/john-greenleaf-whittier.

Upham had to ensure that although the poet requested his name remain off the monument, Whittier and the Quaker connection he provided would forever be attached to the commemoration. Even though the stone would not carry Whitter's name, Upham still could include him in both the written report of the dedication and an oral report presented to the committee at the unveiling.[167] A successful effort on behalf of the organization to demonstrate that descendants of both persecuted groups, accused witches and Quakers, could come together three hundred years later to promote reconciliation and recover memories lost; whether they be of the now-saintly Rebecca Nurse or the seventeenth century Puritans as ideal colonial settlers.

After a few drafts, Whittier settled on the final inscription. Padded with an appropriate amount of Protestant inflection, the versus speak to the poet's belief that progress had been made since the trials of 1692. Whittier's inscription reads as follows:

O Christian Martyr!
who for Truth could die,
When all about thee
owned the hideous Lie!
The world, redeemed
from Superstition's sway,
Is breathing freer
for thy sake to-day.

The rest of the space on that face of the obelisk contains the years and locations of Rebecca Nurse's birth and death. The opposite face of the monument reads:

Accused of Witchcraft
She declared
"I am innocent and God will
clear my innocency."
Once acquitted yet falsely
condemned She suffered
death July 19, 1692.
In loving memory of her
Christian character

[167] W. P. Upham, *Account of the Rebecca Nurse Monument*, 24-26.

even then fully attested by
forty of her neighbors
This monument is erected
July, 1885.

The 11-foot polished granite monument cost the NMA $527.52. This was a significant amount at the time, considering the average rents in the state ranged from $2.75 to $50.00 monthly.[168] A certificate of contribution signed by the association's treasurer was provided to T. F. Hunt, who donated two dollars toward the cause of commemorating the "martyr to the delusion of 1692."[169] That the organization provided this donor with a certificate demonstrates that they wanted to give the community tangible evidence of their charitable contributions to recover the memory of the fallen elder.

At the time of the monument's dedication, the Nurse Homestead was owned by a descendant of the Putnam family, a clan whose actions in 1692 directly resulted in the death of the elderly woman. During the crisis though the Putnam's large family was split, with some who defended Nurse's character to the court.[170] By 1885, all Putnam's present at the dedication had come to see Nurse as a victim and not a villain. They allowed the Nourse's to use the land for their fundraising events and monument planning, and in June 1885, Matthew Putnam deeded the old home and land to Aaron Nourse, treasurer of the monument association.[171] This inclusion of their agreement and the official transfer of the cemetery back into the hands of Rebecca Nurse's

[168] Bureau of Statistics of Labor for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, "Fifteenth Annual Report of the Bureau of Statistics of Labor July, 1884," (MA: Wright & Potter Printing Co., 1884), 447- 449, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=coo.31924054162171&view=1up&seq=7&skin=2021.
[169] Nourse Monument Association, "[Certificate of contribution from T.F. Hunt to the Rebecca Nurse monument fund]," 1 Broadside, Phillips Library at the Peabody Essex Museum, Rowley, Massachusetts.
[170] Baker, *A Storm of Witchcraft*, 272-273; Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, see chapters five and six for a thorough analysis of the Putnam family and pages 146-152 on Rebecca Nurse case involvement specifically; Gagnon, "Skeletons in the Closet," 46-47.
[171] Baker, *A Storm of Witchcraft*, 272-273; W. P. Upham, *Account of the Rebecca Nurse Monument*, 3-4, 29.

descendants in the association's literature represented a symbolic reconciliation between the two families that had come into conflict in 1692.

That the chosen location for the monument was representative of the nineteenth century harmony found by the previously feuding families was not the site's only significance. The cemetery was also selected because, according to oral tradition, it was the site where Rebecca Nurse's body was buried. Family tradition held that in 1692 the elderly woman's "manly sons, full of filial affection, braved the excitement of the time," and "tenderly bore her dead body" from the site of her death after nightfall to bury her in the "grove of pines west of the house, where the cemetery is located today."[172] The members of the NMA were aware of this story and it is likely the primary reason they chose that location for the commemoration. The monument can be understood as a kind of headstone, an opportunity for "due honor [to] be paid to the remains of this venerated and beloved woman so cruelly denied a Christian burial."[173]

The cemetery is located at the back of the Rebecca Nurse Homestead on a rectangular patch of land surrounded by pine trees, which in 1885, were "carefully trimmed so as to make a beautiful evergreen canopy."[174] When I visited the homestead in the summer of 2021, I could see the still-standing monument from a distance as I walked toward the cemetery, its light-gray granite top seemingly floating above the pasture of tall grass. The column sits nearly in the center of the whole cemetery, atop a grassy mound slightly raised from the rest of the earth, its view unobstructed by any other graves or trees upon entry into the space.

[172] Baker, *A Storm of Witchcraft*, 272; Gagnon, *A Salem Witch*, ("grove of pines") 221, 222; W. P. Upham, *Account of the Rebecca Nurse Monument*, ("manly sons" & "tenderly bore") 33.
[173] W. P. Upham, *Account of the Rebecca Nurse Monument*, 29.
[174] W. P. Upham, *Account of the Rebecca Nurse Monument*, 22.

Viewing the Rebecca Nurse Monument as a funerary object conceptualized and constructed by her descended kin explains why the column is not dedicated to the eighteen other victims hanged in 1692 as accused witches. The NMA felt the need to address this during the dedication ceremony, asserting that the reason for the absence of the names of other victims was due to the fact that the "monumental inscriptions must necessarily be brief."[175] They also expressed their fervent desire to commemorate the neighbors of Rebecca Nurse who in 1692 "risked their own lives to save hers," by signing the petition attesting to her good character.[176] During the oral report given by the Monument Committee to the organization's leaders at the 1885 dedication, they mentioned that the planned inscriptions for a commemoration of the petition signers would be attached to the report and that they hoped to one day have the opportunity to "carry this idea into effect."[177]

After the committee's report, Vice President of the NMA Benjamin B. Nourse, standing in for the President who was too ill to attend the dedication, gave the event's closing remarks. Echoing the men who had spoken before him, Benjamin Nourse highlighted the key reasons for the dedication and maintained the balance between condemning the events of 1692 without disparaging their Puritan ancestors. Speaking as a direct descendant of the woman who was being commemorated, Nourse's his remarks were often focused on Rebecca Nurse or her kin. Significantly, however, he also warned the crowd not to forget those others who, accused of witchcraft in 1692, "suffered with" the old woman.[178] Echoing the sentiment of Upham's late

[175] W. P. Upham, *Account of the Rebecca Nurse Monument*, 28.
[176] W. P. Upham, *Account of the Rebecca Nurse Monument*, 28.
[177] W. P. Upham, *Account of the Rebecca Nurse Monument*, ("carry this idea") 28, 31.
[178] W. P. Upham, *Account of the Rebecca Nurse Monument*, 33.

father, Nourse called for a monument to all the victims of the trials to be erected at the site of their execution, known at the time as "Witch Hill."[179] He asserted to the crowd:

> The tragic act cannot be wiped out from the book of record : then let the record be extended, and show that the people of Massachusetts, tardy as it may seem, condemn this act of her rulers of that day, by honoring all in a like manner, as we honor her to whom this monument has been erected.[180]

Nourse closed his remarks and the events of the day by congratulating the organization and praising them for providing the community and all of Nurse's descendants with a reverential place to recover the memory of their martyred ancestor.[181] The broader monument he called for that day, however, would be a project for the future.

Several newspapers who reported on the dedication praised the commemoration, celebrating it as an overwhelming success.[182] With such positive recognition of their achievement and such lofty pronouncements from the NMA at the dedication, one might expect that their next project would reflect their expressed desire to see equality in memorialization for all the victims of 1692. The organization, however, would not make good on the statements of their Vice President. Instead, looking ahead to the proper bicentennial anniversary of 1692, they now focused their sights on the creation of a "tablet" commemorating Rebecca Nurse's neighbors who signed the petition to defend her. On July 30th, 1891, the association's members voted to send a circular to all known Nurse descendants asking for donations to the "Tablet

[179] W. P. Upham, *Account of the Rebecca Nurse Monument*, 33-34.
[180] W. P. Upham, *Account of the Rebecca Nurse Monument*, 34.
[181] W. P. Upham, *Account of the Rebecca Nurse Monument*, 34.
[182] "A Martyr's Monument," *Boston Daily Globe*, July 26, 1885, https://newscomwc.newspapers.com/image/430999595; "Rebecca Nourse - Hanged as a Witch 200 Years Ago - Honored Today by Hundreds of Her Descendants," *Boston Daily Globe*, July 30, 1885, https://newscomwc.newspapers.com/image/431001344; "The Monument to Rebecca Nourse," *New York Times*, July 30, 1885, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times; Gagnon, *A Salem Witch*, 262; W. P. Upham, *Account of the Rebecca Nurse Monument*, provides copied reports of four articles from local reporters, 37-41.

Fund," so that "special exercises," could be planned for the two hundredth anniversary.[183] Their preparations and fundraising efforts proved successful, and the tablet was ready to be dedicated nearly a year to the day after the meeting.

Just as they had for the monument's dedication day in 1885, the events for the July 29th, 1892 tablet dedication began at the First Church of Danvers. Reverend Alfred Porter Putnam delivered the principal address for the event. Like the ministers who had been selected by the association seven years earlier, Reverend Putnam used Protestant metaphors and parables to extrapolate the key lessons to be taken from the events of 1692.[184] He recounted the life story of Rebecca Nurse and the persecution that led to her execution, this time making special reference to the "brave and conscientious spirit of her friends" who, at great personal risk, stood "witness to her Christian character and life."[185] In this address, Putnam emphasized the fervor of the times in order to make the congregation understand the nobility of Nurse's neighbors. However, he still made sure to abstain from passing blanket judgements over their Puritan ancestors, lest he undo the work of the ministers at the Nurse Memorial dedication to amend the image of their forebears.

Standing at about half the height of the Rebecca Nurse Monument, the "tablet" was erected only a few feet away in the cemetery at the Nurse Homestead. Made of Rockport granite, the tablet resembles a large rectangular headstone with a substantial base. Inscribed on the side that faces the monument are the names of sixteen individuals who supported Nurse and the

[183] Aaron Nourse and Elizabeth P. Nourse, "Nourse Monument Asso'n," [undated] Danvers, Mass., Societies. Rebecca Nurse Memorial Assoc., Notice of annual meetings., Phillips Library at the Peabody Essex Museum, Rowley, Massachusetts.
[184] Rev. Alfred Porter Putnam, *Address at the Dedication of a Tablet in Honor of Forty Friends of Rebecca Nurse, of Salem Village* (Boston: Thomas Todd Printer, 1894), available at the Phillips Library at the Peabody Essex Museum, Rowley, Massachusetts.
[185] Putnam, *Address at the Dedication of a Tablet*, 16.

words: “This tablet contains the names of those who at the risk of their lives gave written testimony in favor of Rebecca Nurse in 1692.” The opposite side contains another twenty-four names. The erection of this memorial was, like the larger monument before it, also reported on favorably in the press.[186]

After the success of the 1885 monument at promoting community reconciliation and recovery of the memory of the fallen Rebecca Nurse, there was little reason for the dedication of the 1892 tablet to be as extensive as the first. Reverend Putnam promoted themes that were similar to those Israel and Rice had espoused seven years earlier. He also called for the erection of a monument to the other victims of 1692. This time though, Putnam injected Salem into the discussion, declaring that the city should work together with Danvers on that commemorative project. Interestingly, Putnam ended the account of his address given on the 1892 dedication day with the words of William P. Upham’s late father, who argued for the erection of a “suitable monument to the memory of those who in 1692 preferred death to falsehood,” at the site where the accused were hanged.[187]

***

Remarkably, despite the many calls for a memorial to be dedicated to the accused witches at the site of their execution during the bicentennial era, it would take another one hundred and thirty-two years for a lasting commemoration to be dedicated there. The twenty victims of the Salem Witch Trials would have to wait another century to be recognized by both Danvers and

[186] “Honored by Descendants- Tablet Dedicated to the Friends and Neighbors of Rebecca Nurse,” *Boston Daily Globe*, July 30, 1892, https://newscomwc.newspapers.com/image/430673474; “Reminder of Witchcraft Days,” *New York Times*, July 30, 1892, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times; “Worthy Witch Memorial- The Tablet to the Defenders of Goody Nurse,” *New York Times*, July 31, 1892, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times.
[187] Putnam, *Address at the Dedication of a Tablet*, 38. For the original passage see C. W. Upham, *Salem Witchcraft*, 572-573.

Salem. However, the tercentenary of the trials would not bring with it the spirit of community and reconciliation that accompanied the bicentennial. To the contrary, underlying discord would be unearthed as the City of Salem broke new ground for the memorial.

As the final decade of the twentieth century approached, so too did the tercentenary of the Salem Witch Trials. City leaders recognized the significance of the anniversary and estimated that such an event would inspire an influx of one million tourists to Salem in 1992.[188] This was an opportunity the city could literally not afford to miss, considering they relied on the tourist market in Salem since their industrially reliant economy had collapsed in the 60s.[189] Therefore, in 1986 the municipal government created the Salem Witch Trials Tercentenary Committee to begin planning events that could take place during the tricentennial year. The committee was comprised of local historians, affiliates of local businesses, and government officials.[190] As Salem residents themselves, the committee understood that there were no sites that commemorated or demonstrated the seriousness of the trials to visitors.[191] By developing educational and commemorative events in remembrance of the anniversary, the committee hoped to "unravel some of the gnarled history" of the Salem Witch Trials while simultaneously providing tourists opportunities to spend their money in the city all year.[192]

---

[188] Correspondence from Linda C. McConchie to Robert M. Shea Manager, Corporate Purchasing Anderson Nichols Company, July 18, 1991, Acc 2020.005, Box 1, Folder 2, Salem Witch Trials Tercentenary Committee records 1991-1992, Philips Library at the Peabody Essex Museum, Rowley, Massachusetts.
[189] Baker, *A Storm of* Witchcraft, 277-279; Frances Hill, "Salem as Witch City," in *Salem: Place, Myth, and Memory*, eds. Dane Anthony Morrison and Nancy Lusignan Schultz (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2004), 285-289.
[190] Linda C. McConchie, "The Salem Witch Trials Tercentenary Committee, A proposal submitted to: The Amelia Peabody Charitable Fund," Sept. 3, 1991, Acc 2020.005, Box 1, Folder 1, Salem Witch Trials Tercentenary Committee records, 1991-1992, Philips Library at the Peabody Essex Museum, Rowley, Massachusetts.
[191] Judith Wasserman, "Retail or Re-tell?: The Case of the Salem Tercentenary Memorial," *Landscape Journal* 22, no. 1 (2003), 6.
[192] John W. P. McHale and Linda C. McConchie, "Final Report of the Co-chairpersons of the Salem Witch Trials Tercentenary Committee," May 26, 1993, Acc 2020.005, Box 4, Binder 2, Salem Witch Trials Tercentenary Committee records, 1991-1992, Philips Library at the Peabody Essex Museum, Rowley, Massachusetts; Mary B. W. Tabor, "'The Witch City' Dusts Off Its Past," *New York Times*, Sept. 9, 1991; Marialisa Calta, "Salem Remembers,

After some deliberation, the Salem Tercentenary Committee decided the "centerpiece" of these events should be the dedication of a memorial to the twenty victims killed during the panic.[193] The Tercentenary Committee felt it their responsibility to create a lasting memorial to "reflect the strength, courage and dignity of those who died."[194] As they sought donors for the memorial and other planned events, the organization continued to place special emphasis on the moral lessons the witch trials can impart by beginning many of their letters with the words "Human Rights. Tolerance. Civil Liberties. Due Process."[195] However, the economic importance of the event was never left unstated as the committee always reminded potential doners how many tourists were expected to visit and how the "commemoration promise[d] to enrich Salem and the North Shore both culturally aand [sic] economically."[196]

In order to ensure the commemoration dedication would be a newsworthy event, the committee initiated a design competition for the memorial in 1991 which "elicited entries from as far away as China and Czechoslovakia."[197] The monument selection jury narrowed a list of 246 entries down to three finalists before picking Maggie Smith and James Cutler's design.[198] The popular playwright Arthur Miller announced the winning design to the public on November

300 Years Later: Exhibits and Memorials in the Massachusetts City Mark the Tragedy of the Witch Trials," *New York Times*, May 10, 1992.

[193] "Salem Witch Trials Memorial," *Salem Witch Museum*, accessed Nov. 22, 2021, https://salemwitchmuseum.com/locations/witch-trials-memorial/. This website has scanned photos of dedication materials.

[194] Correspondence from Linda C. McConchie to the Newman Family Society, May 10, 1991, Acc 2020.005, Box 1, Folder 2, Salem Witch Trials Tercentenary Committee records 1991-1992, Philips Library at the Peabody Essex Museum, Rowley, Massachusetts.

[195] Correspondence from Linda C. McConchie to the Newman Family Society.

[196] ("commemoration promises") Correspondence from Linda C. McConchie to Mark L. Paris, Vice President BayBank, January 30, 1992, Acc 2020.005, Box 1, Folder 2, Salem Witch Trials Tercentenary Committee records 1991-1992, Philips Library at the Peabody Essex Museum, Rowley, Massachusetts; Correspondence from Linda C. McConchie to Mr. Randolph P. Barton, President Corn Bay Associates, July 18, 1991, Acc 2020.005, Box 1, Folder 2, Salem Witch Trials Tercentenary Committee records 1991-1992, Philips Library at the Peabody Essex Museum, Rowley, Massachusetts.

[197] Tabor, "'The Witch City' Dusts Off Its Past"; "Salem Witch Trials Memorial," *Salem Witch Museum*.

[198] "Salem Witch Trials Memorial," *Salem Witch Museum*.

14th, 1991. Miller's presence was significant for the city because *The Crucible*, one of his most widely read works that uses the witch trials as an allegory for McCarthyism, had a positive impact on Salem's tourist industry.[199] The dedication of the Salem Witch Trials Memorial took place on August 5th, 1992 and featured remarks from Holocaust survivor and Nobel Laureate Elie Wiesel.

The memorial looks like a small park that neighbors the oldest cemetery in the city. A rectangular patch of green grass with several black locust trees is surrounded by a dirt pathway and a stone wall with twenty bench-like stones jutting out. The designers chose those trees specifically because they are the species from which the victims are believed to have hanged.[200] The stones that extend from the wall carry the names, dates of death, and causes of death of each person condemned by the trials. The wall ceases on both ends of the rectangle, at one end to allow visitors to enter and at the other directly opposite the entrance where the wall is replaced with a fence to allow for a clear view of the cemetery. The design team wanted visitors to be able to see the backs of the headstones in the cemetery as representative of those who turned their backs on the victims, stating that "silence in the presence of injustice is complicity."[201] At the threshold of the entrance to the memorial the last words of some of the victims are engraved into a stone which extends until it meets the beginning of the wall, where the words disappear underneath, cut off mid-plea.[202]

[199] Stephen Marino, "A Visit to Salem Village," *The Arthur Miller Journal* 7, no. 1 (Fall 2012):103; Tabor, "'The Witch City' Dusts Off Its Past."
[200] "Lest Terror Be Forgotten," *New York Times* Jan. 9, 1992.
[201] "Salem Witch Trials Memorial," *Salem Witch Museum*; Wasserman, "Retail or Re-tell?," 9.
[202] Wasserman, "Retail or Re-tell?," 6-8.

The Tercentenary Committee had set out to prove that "Salem is a city that takes its history seriously."[203] They also kept in mind that the anniversary provided the city with "a unique opportunity" for tourist attraction and that their approach to the year could "strengthen the economic recovery of the region." These dual goals can be seen throughout the commemorative process relating to the memorial. One way city officials sought to mediate these approaches was by deciding who would be involved in the commemoration process. The educational value of the memorial was heightened by the inclusion of significant public figures like Arthur Miller and Elie Wiesel at the commemorative events. The presence of these men was meant to remind the crowd that the paranoia fueling witchcraft accusations in the seventeenth century has twentieth-century parallels and was still an extant problem of the modern world.

The committee also used their power and desire for a conflict-free tourist experience to deny participation to groups they found to be more problematic, like the Wiccan community in Salem. Since the mid-nineteenth century many New Age religious groups have made their home in Salem because of its historic association with witchcraft.[204] Members of the Wiccan community not only felt that they were not being included in the tercentenary events but that the events themselves misrepresented their religion. A local Pagan woman commented to *The New York Times* that the city's relationship to the Wiccan community is "like a sultry love affair. They don't mind making the money and promoting us during Halloween. But when it comes to us standing up during the tercentenary and saying what is witchcraft and what was going on during the trials, they don't want to have anything to do with it."[205] City officials denied ignoring

[203] John W. P. McHale and Linda C. McConchie, "Final Report of the Co-chairpersons of the Salem Witch Trials Tercentenary Committee."
[204] Christopher White, "Salem as Religious Proving Ground," in *Salem: Place, Myth, and Memory*, eds. Dane Anthony Morrison and Nancy Lusignan Schultz (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2004), 43-61.
[205] Tabor, "'The Witch City' Dusts Off Its Past."

the Wiccans, but asserted that they refused to "use the commemorative events as a platform to discuss witchcraft as a religion."[206] The Salem Witch Trials Tercentenary Committee sought to maintain control of the official narrative the memorial would represent by refusing the New Age religious groups an active role in its creation and dedication.

Even with the opposition from the Wiccan community, the memorial has been considered a massive success for the city of Salem. It attracts an estimated 800,000 visitors a year to "learn, discover, experience, and consider" the history of the witch trials and the lessons that can be gleaned in the present.[207] In 2012, the grounds and stone work of the twenty year-old memorial were repaired and restored for a rededication ceremony in September.[208] The rededication prompted community members to reconsider the memorial and its impact on their city. A former member of the Salem Tercentenary Committee stated that the Salem Witch Trials Memorial is more than a tribute to the victims, it is "an opportunity for people to become aware of the trials in a *real way*, to learn the lessons of the trials."[209] Her comment, along with dozens of others on *Tripadvisor,* demonstrates that the memorial's impact comes from its use as a space for education and contemplation.[210] It provides "a welcome relief from the more sensationalized and schlocky" businesses that line the streets downtown.[211] While this may be true, the site also continues to accomplish the more private goal of the Salem Tercentenary Committee, one of

---

[206] Tabor, "'The Witch City' Dusts Off Its Past."
[207] "About the Memorial," *Voices Against Injustice*, Accessed Nov. 23, 2021, https://voicesagainstinjustice.org/memorial/.
[208] Bethany Bray, "Witch Trials Memorial to be Rededicated," *Salem News*, Aug. 13, 2012, https://www.salemnews.com/news/local_news/witch-trials-memorial-to-be-rededicated/article_21418e71-da20-50b1-af0d-17839e22c9ec.html.
[209] Bray, "Witch Trials Memorial to be Rededicated."
[210] "Salem Witch Trials Memorial," *Tripadvisor*, Accessed Nov. 23, 2021, https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g60954-d107576-Reviews-Salem_Witch_Trials_Memorial-Salem_Massachusetts.html.
[211] SherryBikesDC, "Don't miss this site when visiting Salem," Aug. 27, 2021, *Tripadvisor* review, https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g60954-d107576-Reviews-or10-Salem_Witch_Trials_Memorial-Salem_Massachusetts.html.

economic benefit. As a site attractive to tourists, it ensures that those who come for the monument will stick around to spend their money at the variety of witchcraft related destinations Salem has to offer.

Those looking for a more historically informed witch trials experience can drive a short distance from the Salem city center to the Rebecca Nurse Homestead in Danvers. The location where in 1885 Nurse's descendants gathered to dedicate the monument to her memory is still standing today and is open to the public as a historic house museum. Though the site is arguably not as popular as some attractions in Salem, it is the only home of a witch trials victim open to the public, which has interested enough visitors to keep the site open since 1909.[212] Visitors have praised the homestead and cemetery as a "beautifully maintained window to the past," and a place "pretty much devoid of commercialism," where "quiet tranquility reigns."[213] These comments illustrate the key differences between the Nurse monument and many memorials that have since been dedicated to the victims of the witch trials. The placement of the Nurse monument in her family's cemetery and the descriptive inscription on the column speaks to the familial and Christian nature of the bicentennial commemoration, unlike later memorials which are more ambiguous and have been dedicated with a latent hope for increased tourism and commercial gain.

During the bicentennial era, Nurse's descendants were concerned with the ramifications of 1692 on their contemporary lives. In 1885 they used the dedication of a monument as a

[212] The Danvers Alarm List Company, "Rebecca Nurse Homestead Site Guide." This pamphlet was provided to the author when she toured the sight on June 12, 2021.
[213] Corey A, "A beautifully maintained window to the past," Oct. 28, 2019, *Tripadvisor review*, https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g41519-d1591153-Reviews-or10-Rebecca_Nurse_Homestead-Danvers_Massachusetts.html; Route128North, "Real history, no sensationalism," Sep. 9, 2010, *Tripadvisor review*, https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g41519-d1591153-Reviews-or10-Rebecca_Nurse_Homestead-Danvers_Massachusetts.html.

vehicle to community reconciliation and as a tool to recover the memory of their murdered ancestor. The mortuary style and poetic inscription on the monument continue to remind visitors of the elderly woman's Christian piety and of her martyrdom for the cause of tolerance. The NMA's efforts and the resulting monuments to Nurse and those who defended her innocence are considered to be a "really touching" remembrance, providing guests with "a good place to reflect on the injustices experienced by Rebecca and her fellow accused and on intolerance in our times."[214] Away from the hustle and kitsch of Salem, the Nurse family cemetery can remind tourists of the real effects of the witchcraft panic of 1692.

Before Nurse's descendants left the memorial in 1885 they laid a bouquet of flowers and Ivy leaves on what they understood to be the gravesite of their late ancestor. Attached to the floral arrangement was a note which read:

> In remembrance of the Christian virtues of Rebecca Nurse, we would lay this wreath of ivy on the altar of her memory.
>
> No grand and stately monument have we erected within this grove, O Christian martyr! but thy memorial which has been graced by the poet's lines is pure and simple.
>
> With reverence we have gathered, that with hymn and prayer we may dedicate it to thy memory as a fitting emblem of thy pure and upright life.[215]

Rebecca Nurse has since been honored with "grand" monuments dedicated to the victims of 1692, however the "pure and simple" column dedicated to her by her kin remains the most intimate commemoration of the elderly woman to date.[216]

[214] Sita N, "Amazing Place to Visit – A Must See," Nov. 13, 2013, *Tripadvisor review*, https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g41519-d1591153-Reviews-or10-Rebecca_Nurse_Homestead-Danvers_Massachusetts.html; Route128North, "Real history, no sensationalism."
[215] W. P. Upham, *Account of the Rebecca Nurse Monument*, 35.
[216] W. P. Upham, *Account of the Rebecca Nurse Monument*, 35.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

A, Corey. "A beautifully maintained window to the past." Oct. 28, 2019, Tripadvisor review. https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g41519-d1591153-Reviews-or10-Rebecca_Nurse_Homestead-Danvers_Massachusetts.html.

"A Martyr's Monument." *Boston Daily Globe*, July 26, 1885. https://newscomwc.newspapers.com/image/430999595

"Article 80: Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Societu [sic] for the year." *The Monthly Anthology, and Boston Review Containing Sketches and Reports of Philosophy, Religion, History, Arts, and Manners* Vol. 2, Iss. 12, December, 1805. American Periodicals.

Bray, Bethany. "Witch Trials Memorial to be Rededicated." *Salem News*, Aug. 13, 2012. https://www.salemnews.com/news/local_news/witch-trials-memorial-to-be-rededicated/article_21418e71-da20-50b1-af0d-17839e22c9ec.html.

Bureau of Statistics of Labor for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. "Fifteenth Annual Report of the Bureau of Statistics of Labor July, 1884." MA: Wright & Potter Printing Co., 1884. https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=coo.31924054162171&view=1up&seq=7&skin=2021.

Calta, Marialisa. "Salem Remembers, 300 Years Later: Exhibits and Memorials in the Massachusetts City Mark the Tragedy of the Witch Trials." *New York Times*, May 10, 1992. ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times.

Danvers Historical Commission. "1681 Salem Village Parsonage." Historic marker. 1974. Photographed by the author June 12, 2021.

H. "Spirits, Ghosts, and Witches." *Rural Magazine, or, Vermont Repository: Devoted to Literary, Moral, Historical & Political Improvement* Vol. 1, June 1, 1795. American Periodicals.

"Honored by Descendants- Tablet Dedicated to the Friends and Neighbors of Rebecca Nurse." *Boston Daily Globe*, July 30, 1892. https://newscomwc.newspapers.com/image/430673474.

J. G. W. “Evangeline– The Puritans.” *National Era*, January 27, 1848. https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/evangeline-puritans/docview/137479125/se-2?accountid=14745.

“John Winthrop Dreams of a City on a Hill, 1630.” In *The American Yawp Reader: A Documentary Companion to The American Yawp*, edited by Joseph L. Locke and Ben Wright. Accessed Feb 14, 2022, https://www.americanyawp.com/reader/colliding-cultures/john-winthrop-dreams-of-a-city-on-a-hill-1630/.

“Lest Terror Be Forgotten.” *New York Times,* Jan. 9, 1992. ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times.

McConchie, Linda C. to Mark L. Paris, Vice President BayBank. January 30, 1992. Box 1, Folder 2, Salem Witch Trials Tercentenary Committee records 1991-1992. Philips Library at the Peabody Essex Museum, Rowley, MA.

McConchie, Linda C. to Mr. Randolph P. Barton, President Corn Bay Associates. July 18, 1991. Box 1, Folder 2, Salem Witch Trials Tercentenary Committee records 1991-1992. Philips Library at the Peabody Essex Museum, Rowley, MA.

McConchie, Linda C. to Robert M. Shea Manager, Corporate Purchasing Anderson Nichols Company. July 18, 1991. Box 1, Folder 2, Salem Witch Trials Tercentenary Committee records 1991-1992. Philips Library at the Peabody Essex Museum, Rowley, MA.

McConchie, Linda C. to the Newman Family Society. May 10, 1991. Box 1, Folder 2, Salem Witch Trials Tercentenary Committee records 1991-1992, Philips Library at the Peabody Essex Museum, Rowley, MA.

McConchie, Linda C. “The Salem Witch Trials Tercentenary Committee, A proposal submitted to: The Amelia Peabody Charitable Fund.” Sept. 3, 1991. Box 1, Folder 1, Salem Witch Trials Tercentenary Committee records, 1991-1992. Philips Library at the Peabody Essex Museum, Rowley, MA.

McHale, John W. P. and Linda C. McConchie. “Final Report of the Co-chairpersons of the Salem Witch Trials Tercentenary Committee.” May 26, 1993. Box 4, Binder 2, Salem Witch Trials Tercentenary Committee records, 1991-1992. Philips Library at the Peabody Essex Museum, Rowley, MA.

N, Sita. “Amazing Place to Visit – A Must See.” Nov. 13, 2013, Tripadvisor review. https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g41519-d1591153-Reviews-or10-Rebecca_Nurse_Homestead-Danvers_Massachusetts.html.

Nourse, Aaron and Elizabeth P. Nourse. “Nourse Monument Asso’n.” Undated. Danvers, Mass., Societies. Rebecca Nurse Memorial Assoc. Notice of annual meetings. Phillips Library at the Peabody Essex Museum, Rowley, MA.

Nourse Monument Association. “[Certificate of contribution from T.F. Hunt to the Rebecca Nurse monument fund].” 1 Broadside, Phillips Library at the Peabody Essex Museum, Rowley, MA.

Nourse Monument Association. “Memorial services at the dedication of the Rebecca Nourse [sic] Monument, Danvers, Mass., July 30, 1885.” 1 Broadside, Phillips Library at the Peabody Essex Museum, Rowley, MA.

Putnam, Rev. Alfred Porter. *Address at the Dedication of a Tablet in Honor of Forty Friends of Rebecca Nurse, of Salem Village*. Boston: Thomas Todd Printer, 1894. Available at the Phillips Library at the Peabody Essex Museum, Rowley, MA.

“Rebecca Nourse.” *New York Times*, July 23, 1884. ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times.

“Rebecca Nourse - Hanged as a Witch 200 Years Ago - Honored Today by Hundreds of Her Descendants.” *Boston Daily Globe*, July 30, 1885. https://newscomwc.newspapers.com/image/431001344.

“Rebecca Nurse: Reunion of the Descendants of a Victim of the Witchcraft Delusion.” *New York Times*, July 21, 1883. ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times.

“Reminder of Witchcraft Days.” *New York Times*, July 30, 1892. ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times.

Route128North, “Real history, no sensationalism.” Sep. 9, 2010, Tripadvisor review. https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g41519-d1591153-Reviews-or10-Rebecca_Nurse_Homestead-Danvers_Massachusetts.html.

Salem Witch Museum. “Salem Witch Trials Memorial.” Accessed Nov. 22, 2021. https://salemwitchmuseum.com/locations/witch-trials-memorial/.

SherryBikesDC. “Don’t miss this site when visiting Salem.” Aug. 27, 2021, Tripadvisor review. https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g60954-d107576-Reviews-or10-Salem_Witch_Trials_Memorial-Salem_Massachusetts.html.

SWP No. 94.9. “Petition for Rebecca Nurse, ? [sic] May 1, 1692.” Salem Witch Trials Documentary Archive and Transcription Project, University of Virginia. Accessed January 8, 2022. https://salem.lib.virginia.edu/n94.html#n94.9.

SWP No. 94.11. “Statement of of [sic] Israel Porter, Elizabeth Porter, Daniel Andrew and Peter Cloyce for Rebecca Nurse, March 24, 1692.” Salem Witch Trials Documentary Archive and Transcription Project, University of Virginia. Accessed January 1, 2022. http://salem.lib.virginia.edu/n94.html#n94.11.

SWP No. 94.32. “Declaration of Thomas Fisk, Juryman, + [sic] July 4, 1692.” Salem Witch Trials Documentary Archive and Transcription Project, University of Virginia. Accessed January 14, 2022. https://salem.lib.virginia.edu/n94.html#n94.32.

SWP No. 94.33. “Appeal of Rebecca Nurse, + [sic] July 4, 1692.” Salem Witch Trials Documentary Archive and Transcription Project, University of Virginia. Accessed January 14, 2022. https://salem.lib.virginia.edu/n94.html#n94.33.

Tabor, Mary B. W. “‘The Witch City’ Dusts Off Its Past.” *New York Times*, Sept. 9, 1991. ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times.

The Danvers Alarm List Company, “Rebecca Nurse Homestead Site Guide.” Pamphlet. June 12, 2021.

“The Following Specimens are Offered as Curiosities.” *The American Magazine, Containing a Miscellaneous Collection of Original and Other Valuable Essays in Prose and Verse, and Calculated Both for Instruction and Amusement* Vol. 1, Iss. 1, December, 1787. American Periodicals.

“The Monument to Rebecca Nourse.” *New York Times*, July 30, 1885. ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times.

“The Psalms.” In *The Holy Bible, King James Version*. Biblegateway.com. Accessed February 17, 2022, https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm%2064&version=KJV.

Tripadvisor. “Salem Witch Trials Memorial.” Accessed Nov. 23, 2021. https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g60954-d107576-Reviews-Salem_Witch_Trials_Memorial-Salem_Massachusetts.html.

Upham, William P. *Account of the Rebecca Nurse Monument*. Salem, MA: Salem Press, 1886. Folder 1, Essex County Collection, Phillips Library at the Peabody Essex Museum, Rowley, MA.

Voices Against Injustice. “About the Memorial.” Accessed Nov. 23, 2021. https://voicesagainstinjustice.org/memorial/.

“Witchcraft.” *Time Piece; and Literary Companion* Vol. 2 Iss. 104, May 14, 1798. American Periodicals.

"Worthy Witch Memorial- The Tablet to the Defenders of Goody Nurse." *New York Times*, July 31, 1892. ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times.

Secondary Sources:

Adams, Gretchen A. *The Specter of Salem: Remembering the Witch Trials in Nineteenth-Century America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008.

Baker, Emerson W. *A Storm of Witchcraft: The Salem Trials and the American Experience*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015.

Bodnar, John. *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992.

Boyer, Paul and Stephen Nissenbaum. *Salem Possessed: The Social Origins of Witchcraft*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974.

Caporael, Linnda R. "Ergotism: The Satan Loosed in Salem?" *Science* 192, no. 4234 (1976): 21–26. http://www.jstor.org/stable/1741715.

Conforti, Joseph A. *Imagining New England: Explorations of Regional Identity from the Pilgrims to the Mid-Twentieth Century*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001.

Demos, John Putnam. *Entertaining Satan: Witchcraft and the Culture of Early New England*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1982.

DeRosa, Robin. *The Making of Salem: The Witch Trials in History, Fiction and Tourism*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2009.

Fels, Tony. *Switching Sides: How a Generation of Historians Lost Sympathy for the Victims of the Salem Witch Hunt*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2018.

Foote, Kenneth E. *Shadowed Ground: America's Landscapes of Violence and Tragedy*, Revised and Updated. 1997. Reprint, Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003.

Gagnon, Daniel A. "Skeletons in the Closet: How the Actions of the Salem Witch Trials Victims' Families in 1692 Affected Later Memorialization." *The New England Journal of History* 75, no. 2 (2019): 32-73

_____. *A Salem Witch: The Trial, Execution, and Exoneration of Rebecca Nurse*. Yardley, PA: Westholme Publishing, LLC, 2021.

Gibson, Marion. *Witchcraft Myths in American Culture*. New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2007.

Glassberg, David. “Public History and the Study of Memory,” *The Public Historian* 18, no. 2 (1996): 7-23.

_____. *Sense of History: The Place of the Past in American Life*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001.

Godbeer, Richard. *The Devil's Dominion: Magic and Religion in Early New England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

Gordon, Tammy S. *The Spirit of 1976: Commerce, Community, and the Politics of Commemoration*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2013.

Hill, Frances. *The Salem Witch Trials Reader*. Boston: Da Capo Press, 2000.

_____. “Salem as Witch City.” In *Salem: Place, Myth, and Memory*, edited by Dane Anthony Morrison and Nancy Lusignan Schultz, 283-296. 2004. Reprint, Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2015.

Kammen, Michael. *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture*. 1991. Reprint, New York: Vintage Books, a Division of Random House, Inc., 1993.

Karlsen, Carol F. *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman: Witchcraft in Colonial New England*. 1987. Reprint, New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1998.

Linenthal, Edward T. “Struggling with History and Memory.” *The Journal of American History* 82, no. 3 (1995): 1094–1101.

Lowenthal, David. *The Past is a Foreign Country*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985.

Marino, Stephen. “A Visit to Salem Village.” *The Arthur Miller Journal* 7, no. 1 (Fall 2012): 93-106.

Miller, Perry. *The New England Mind: From Colony to Province*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953.

Norton, Mary Beth. *In the Devil’s Snare: The Salem Witchcraft Crisis of 1692*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002.

Pitcaithley, Dwight T. and Rolf Diamant, “Final Centennial Thoughts,” *The George Wright Forum* 33, no. 3 (2016): 257–70.

Reis, Elizabeth. *Damned Women: Sinners and Witches in Puritan New England*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997.

Roach, Marilynne K. *The Salem Witch Trials: A Day-By-Day Chronicle of a Community Under Siege*. New York: Cooper Square Press, 2002.

Rosenthal, Bernard. *Salem Story: Reading the Witch Trials of 1692*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

Rymsza-Pawlowska, M. J. *History Comes Alive: Public History and Popular Culture in the 1970s*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2017.

Savage, Kirk. *Monument Wars: Washington, D.C., the National Mall, and the Transformation of Memorial Landscape*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009.

The Poetry Foundation. "John Greenleaf Whittier." Accessed January 31, 2022. https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/john-greenleaf-whittier.

Thomas, Keith. *Religion and the Decline of Magic*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971.

Upham, Charles W. *Salem Witchcraft: With an Account of Salem Village and A History of Opinions on Witchcraft and Kindred Subjects*. 1867. Reprint, Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 2000.

Upton, Dell. "Why Do Contemporary Monuments Talk So Much?" In *Commemoration in America: Essays on Monuments, Memorialization, and Memory*, edited by David Walter Gobel and Daves Rossell, 11-35. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2013.

_____. *What Can and Can't Be Said: Race, Uplift, and Monument Building in the Contemporary South*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015.

Wasserman, Judith. "Retail or Re-tell?: The Case of the Salem Tercentenary Memorial." *Landscape Journal* 22, no. 1 (2003): 1-11.

White, Christopher. "Salem as Religious Proving Ground." In *Salem: Place, Myth, and Memory*, edited by Dane Anthony Morrison and Nancy Lusignan Schultz, 43-61. 2004. Reprint, Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2015.

Young, James E. *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993.

_____. *The Stages of Memory: Reflections on Memorial Art, Loss, and the Spaces Between*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2016.