

# POOR OLD "GOODY" COLE CLEANSED OF WITCHCRAFT AFTER 300 YEARS



Tituba, Servant of the Rev. Samuel Parris, Teaching the Children the Elements of Witchcraft - One of the Incidents Which Began the Salem Witchcraft Persecution



Print From Ridpath's "Cyclopedia of Universal History," Showing a "Bewitched" Child, While the Woman She Accuses Stands Before the Judges.

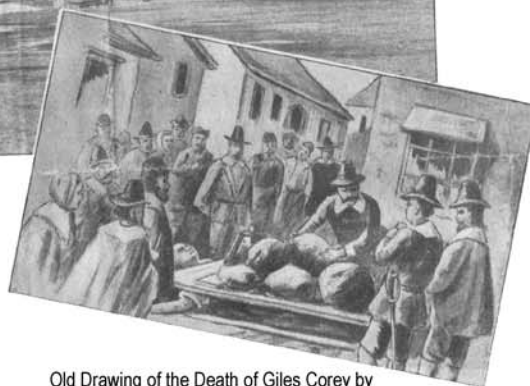


The Accusation of Giles Corey. From Another Drawing of the Salem Witchcraft Trials.

**Convicted of "Familyarryty" With the Deuill" in 1656 and Later Buried With a Stake Through Her Heart and a Horseshoe on Its End, She Is Now Officially Declared Guiltless and Restored to the Voters' Rolls by the Town of Hampton, New Hampshire**



The Rock in the Foreground Marks the Spot Where Poor Old "Goody" Was Reputed to Be Buried, Impaled With a Stake. The Shack She Lived and Died in Stood About Where the Log Cabin Is. The Historic Town Hall Is Shown In Center Background.



Old Drawing of the Death of Giles Corey by Being Pressed With Heavy Stones After Conviction as a Witch During the Salem Witchcraft Delusion.



The Urn in Which Soil From "Goody's" Crossroad Grave Was Placed and Which Will Occupy a Place of Honor in Hampton

A band of frightened but determined men dropped the body of a frail, old woman into a shallow grave beside a lonely road, drove a stake through its heart and hung a horseshoe on the upper end of the stake. This was done by citizens of Hampton, New Hampshire, about the year 1680, because Eunice Cole had been convicted of witchcraft in 1656, and these precautions were to prevent the Devil from releasing her spirit to bewitch the community.

Now, in the spring of 1938, comes the sequel. After thinking it over for some thirteen generations, the present people of Hampton decided that a mistake had been made. By unanimous vote of a mass meeting, they reversed the witchcraft decision, making old Goody Cole an honest woman again and restoring her to the voters' rolls.

Looking down from heaven, the spirit of the vindicated "witch" should be gratified to see smoke arising from the public burning of a pile of papers. These are certified copies of the documents in her ancient trial now

declared erroneous.

It was a bit late perhaps, but, after all, it was the best they could do for the memory of "Goodwife" Cole, whose husband swore that she was a good wife, as good as a man ever had.

Sailors, too, had put in many a good word for the woman, but that was when she was young and pretty, with an eye so bright that it shone like one of the King's newly-minted shillings. The sailors all said that when they filled any of the ship's water butts from Eunice's well and she blessed it, the water would never turn foul.

But they said her magic was later used to send good ships to the bottom.

In righting the wrong to the memory of old Eunice and to many a person who traces his blood back to her family, the modern reviewers of the case were careful not to "slop over" and do injustice to the memories of the stalwart old Colonists who had erred only in



accepting a mass decision of their times. At the meeting, Judge John W. Perkins read this letter from a thirteenth-generation, direct descendant of Thomas Philbrick, one of scendant of Thomas Philbrick, one of the most prominent witnesses whose testimony convicted Goody Cole:

"To this vindication I fully subscribe, but I hope that in carrying out this idea meticulous care will be taken that no reflection, however slight, is cast either directly or by inference upon the character of those sturdy men and women who, carried away by a world-wide mania, brought the charges of witchcraft."

Judge Perkins pointed out a legal difficulty. At the time of Eunice's conviction, Hampton was a part of the Massachusetts Bay Colony of England. As an American Court of Review their jurisdiction certainly could not go back beyond the Revolution and he doubted if they could do much more than to restore her good name.

It should be remembered that in 1656 the colonies were hardly more than a ribbon of coast, rather sparsely inhabited by transplanted Europeans, with a howling wilderness behind them.

At that time every ship from England brought news of an epidemic of witchcraft. Hopkins, the famous "witch smeller" was rounding up witches everywhere, getting confessions (by torture) on which many were hanged. There was no more reason for the Colonists to ridicule this epidemic in the mother country than a visitation of the black plague.

The first symptoms of the infection in the Colonies seems to have been the behavior of children in church. Considering that small boys and girls were forced to sit in uncomfortable pews through a three-hour morning service their actions were not so strange.

One or two finally started it by breaking out with catcalls and irreverent remarks. It was merely hysteria, but such startling behavior seemed to those devout Puritans the work of the Devil and at once they wondered if he was doing it through those witches they had heard about. They questioned the children, who, finding themselves important personages, played up to the role and obligingly pointed out the old woman who had bewitched them, and other youngsters were quick to follow their example.

It was full-grown persons who testified against Goody Cole, 36 years before the superstitious craze came to its peak in the Salem witch trials in which they actually convicted and executed a minister and Harvard graduate, the Reverend George Burroughs. Eunice Cole was no longer young, had a sharp tongue for which she might well have deserved the ducking stool, and in her clashes with men, women and teasing children, often took advantage of their superstitious credulity by making terrifying prophecies.

Unfortunately she seems to have been such a good prophet of evil as to be accounted for only on the theory of diabolic assistance, so she was brought to trial as "a witch and familiar of the Deuill," before the Court of Oyer and Terminer of Norfoll, County. Thomas Philbrick,

whose present-day descendant didn't want his sturdy ancestor criticized, testified that Goody Cole had warned him that if his calves should eat any more of her grass, "she wished it might payson them or choak them." After this unkind wish, he never saw one of his calves again.

Abraham Drake deposed that "aboute this time twelvemonth, my neighbor Giles lost a cowe and wen we had found it, I and others brought the cowe to his house and shee desired mee to flee this cowe and presently she charged me with killing her cowe, and said they should know that hee (Drake) had killed her cowe and forthwith I lost two cattell and the latter end of the somer I lost one cowe." In the face of this and similar testimony from other respected citizens it was useless for poor Goody Cole to deny even a speaking acquaintance with Beelzebub and if more tolerant persons expressed doubts, they were at once looked upon with suspicion.

The mass of the people were certain that she was a witch and clamored for protection. A jury found her guilty and the judge sentenced her to a flogging and life imprisonment.

The flogging on her bare back was administered forthwith but the life imprisonment was a more complicated matter. There being no accommodations in Hampton for imprisoning anyone for life, Eunice was sent to Boston.

But even this important community was not rolling in wealth and could not afford to feed and lodge convicts for the rest of the Colony free. Therefore it was understood that Hampton was to pay Boston the sum of eight pounds a year (\$40) for her board. Hampton, all except Eunice's aged husband, who vainly begged to have her released so she could take care of him, seems to have forgotten about her. Alas, the town also forgot to pay anything on that jail board bill until, after eight years, the arrears had amounted to the staggering sum of \$320. In the good old days public officials could be imprisoned for non-payment of a civic debt.

Therefore William Salter, Keeper of the Prison at Boston, wishing to balance his budget for the fiscal year of 1664, arrested Thomas Marston, one of the selectmen of Hampton and threatened to board him under the same roof as Goody Cole. This brought results, his brother officials promptly voted to pay.

In 1671 Hampton wearied of that annual \$40 overhead and Goody was released, after nearly 15 years behind the bars. She was assigned to a little shack and placed on the relief, but not out of the public treasury. Instead, 52 families were appointed to supply her needs, one week at a time. But in 1672 she was again charged with witchcraft, appearing to little Ann Smith as an eagle, a dog and a cat. She was tried and barely escaped with the following verdict:

"In ye case of Unis Cole now prisoner at ye Bar not guilty according to inditement butt just ground for vehement susspissyon of her hauing had familyarryty with the

(Signed) Jonas Clarke in the name of the rest."

In 1680 there was another witch drive in Hampton and Goody Cole, though too feeble to leave her bed, was indicted with several other "Goodies," but all were discharged the following year. People in those days must have had characters and constitutions of iron, because this hated, tormented, friendless old pariah managed to hold body and soul together until well into her eighties and then die peacefully.

When word sped through the town that "the Deuill had taken Goody Cole at last," a "welfare committee," trembling for fear of what Satan might do to them, gave the aged body a witch's burial.

The Salem witch trials went so far that they broke the spell, making people realize that children and other irresponsible persons could cause anyone to be hanged.

A notable case was that of Tituba, slave woman, and self-confessed witch. Tituba was a servant in the home of Rev. Samuel Parris, in Salem Village. She was accused of teaching children witchcraft and also of bewitching others.

She testified at her trial that she had been forced by the Devil, who appeared to her in various forms, to pinch the children and thereby cause them to become afflicted.

She was thrown into jail, where she languished for thirteen months and was finally sold to pay her prison charges.

Two other women, whom she had accused of acting with her, did not escape so easily. One, Sarah Good, was hanged, and the other, Sarah Osburn, died in jail the day before her trial.

The last straw was the death of Giles Corey, over 80 years old and somewhat in his dotage. Under the spell of the general delusion, his testimony had been used to convict his wife but suddenly awakening to the wickedness of the whole thing he recanted. This brought down upon him the fury of Rev. Samuel Parris and other leaders of the witch persecution. He was charged with complicity but refused to plead either guilty or not guilty. A person who refused to plead could not be tried but under the old English laws, such a person was to be crushed to death.

Accordingly they stripped the old man, laid him on the public street and piled rocks on him until the life was crushed out of him. But with him died the entire delusion. Parris was kicked out of his church to die penniless and despised as was poor old Goody Cole.

No community is thinking of vindicating his memory.