



Kansas Council of Genealogical Societies

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Newsletter

Volume 14 No 9

October 31, 2015

Happy Halloween,

This is a fine fall day, the temperature is just right. We had some rain last night and have not gotten the freeze that usually makes it by this date. Ray! It should be a pleasant night for the little ghosts and goblins to go out knocking on your door for candy. Some years it has been too cold for the costumes.

Remember to set those clocks back tonight when you go to bed. or you may be really early to church in the morning.

This next month will be a busy time for us all. That Thanksgiving Dinner does not make it self.

I have noticed some very interesting websites lately. Some are offering free week-ends for research and others discounts on memberships. I think Find My Past is one of the freebies this week-end.

Here is a timely article about the Salem Witch trials:

Witches in Your Family Tree from Eastman

This is the time of year for ghosts, goblins, and other such superstitions. However, perhaps it is also a time to pause and reflect on the horrors of those who suffered in Salem, Massachusetts, in 1692. The witches of Salem and nearby towns probably have hundreds of thousands of present-day descendants. If you have ancestry from early Essex County, Massachusetts, you have an excellent chance of finding a connection to the Salem Witch Trials of 1692

Salem, Massachusetts, and the surrounding

The reasons for the witchcraft hysteria have been debated for centuries. One modern theory involves ergot of rye, a plant disease that is caused by a fungus, *Claviceps purpurea*. Anyone who eats bread made with ergot-infected rye can exhibit symptoms of muscle spasms, tremors, and writhing. This may be accompanied by hallucinations. Such afflictions can indicate poisoning by ergot, or "ergotism." Modern science has documented likely cases of ergotism in the Dark Ages, but the cause was only proposed in 1670 by a French physician, and outbreaks in the 20th century have shed much more light on both symptoms and their cause.



CIRCA 1692, THE TRIAL OF GEORGE JACOBS FOR WITCHCRAFT AT THE ESSEX INSTITUTE IN SALEM, MASSACHUSETTS. (PHOTO BY MPI/GETTY IMAGES)

We know much about the lives of the Puritan inhabitants of Essex County in 1692. We know that they were mostly illiterate, and almost all citizens were intensely religious. In their simple lives, they were afraid of the darkness and of many things in this world that they did not understand. They were convinced that the Devil walked amongst them every night and that he had many disciples. This fear was reinforced by the sermons delivered by Reverend Samuel Parris almost every Sunday. If the citizens of Salem and nearby towns did exhibit muscle spasms, tremors, writhing and hallucinations, one cannot be surprised that their neighbors felt the victims were indeed possessed by the Devil himself. You can read a detailed explanation of ergotism and the possibilities of its occurrence in Salem in an article by Linnda R. Caporael at <http://www.physics.smu.edu/scalise/P3333fa07/Ulcers/ergotism.html>. The whole series of episodes began in December 1691 and into January, a time when the people of Salem would be eating bread made from the summer's rye harvest, rye that had time to become infected with ergot. Two girls – Betty Parris, daughter of minister Samuel Parris, and his niece Abigail Williams – began exhibiting strange behavior. Soon a number of other young girls were also exhibiting the same symp-

toms. Several historians have suggested that perhaps the girls were simply playing childish games.

Physicians called in to examine the girls could find no explanation for their illness. In February one doctor suggested the girls might be bewitched. A neighbor had Parris's Barbados slave, Tituba, concoct a "witch cake" in order to determine if witchcraft was present. Shortly thereafter, the girls made an accusation of witchcraft against Tituba and two elderly women of general ill repute in Salem Village, Sarah Good and Sarah Osborn. The three women were taken into custody on 29 February 1692. The afflictions of the girls did not cease, and in March they accused Martha Corey and Rebecca Nurse. Both of these women were well respected in the village and were covenanting members of the church. Further accusations by the children followed. By June the hunt for "witches" expanded beyond Salem to Andover, Ipswich, Gloucester, and other nearby towns. The accused witches were tried and most of them found guilty, using logic that sounds silly today. However, to the ill-educated citizens of Salem, these were "facts." Contrary to some stories, none of the witches of Salem were ever burned at the stake. With one exception, all were hanged at a public gallows. The one exception is poor Giles Cory, a church-going member of the community, who was pressed to death with large stones.

The last hangings occurred in September of 1692, and by May of 1693 all accused witches still imprisoned were released. It is interesting to note that the reported drought of 1692 would have meant the elimination of ergot of rye by September, the time of the last execution.

The final count of witchcraft victims was twenty executed and more than a hundred imprisoned. (One died in prison.) In addition, many others fled into exile or hiding places, their homes were broken up, their estates were ruined, and their families were left in desolation. All of this was caused by the leaders in the communities: the magistrates and ministers.

Finding your ancestors' roles during the Salem Witch Trials may not be terribly difficult. Many of the original trial documents are now both in print and online. You might start at some of these:

The University of Virginia's Electronic Text Center's Salem Witch Trials Documentary Archive and Transcription Project at: <http://etext.virginia.edu/salem/witchcraft/> and Witchcraft Archives at: <http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/salem/witchcraft/archives/>

The University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Law's Salem Witchcraft Trials – 1692 at: <http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/salem/salem.htm> and An Account of Events in Salem by Douglas Linder at: http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/salem/SAL_ACCT.HTM and transcriptions of petitions for compensation at: http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/salem/SAL_PET.HTM

National Geographic's Salem Witchcraft Hysteria provides historical insight at <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/features/97/salem/>

An Internet WITCH-HUNT: Digitizing Salem Village from Humanities: The Magazine of the National Endowment for the Humanities at <http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/salem/witchcraft/neh/Neh-Sale.html>

The Salem Witch Trials of 1692, A Brief Introduction: <http://www.salemweb.com/guide/witches.shtml>

The Salem Witchcraft Trials at: http://www.publicbookshelf.com/public_html/The_Great_Republic_By_the_Master_Historians_Vol_I/salemwitic_dh.html

Salem Witchcraft: the Events and Causes of the Salem Witch Trials by Tim Sutter: <http://www.salemwitchcraft.com/salemwitchcraft.html>

Salem, Massachusetts, was not the only scene of witchcraft trials in North America. However, it is the one whose history is permanently etched in our memories. You may have ancestors who were eyewitnesses to one of the saddest times in American history.

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There are some good and some not so good newspaper sites online:

Google News Archive offers a wealth of digitized historic newspapers online - many of them for free. A simple search of the archive, however, will generally fail when searching by name for everything ranging from obituaries to marriage announcements due to imprecise OCR and poor digital scanning.

Search Free Birth Records

genealogy.com/Birth+Records

1) Simply enter their name. 2) View their birth record online!

Newspaper Archives Online

www.myheritage.com/NewspaperRecords

Search for your ancestors in historical newspapers. Free trial

Genealogy

Newspaper

SharePoint Search

Family

Newspaper Printing Press

In many cases only MAJOR headlines are searchable. In addition, Google News has continued to deprecate this service, and has made it almost impossible to search for content prior to 1970, although they have hundreds of digitized newspaper titles prior to this date.

You can improve your chances of finding great info on your family in Google News Archive with a few simple search strategies...

Use Google Web Search, Not Google News

Searching within Google News (even the advanced search) no longer shows results older than 30 days, so be sure to use web search when searching for older articles.

Check Out What's Available Before You Waste Your Time Searching

A full list of the digitized historical newspaper content available on Google can be accessed at <http://news.google.com/newspapers>

Locate Deceased Relatives With The Largest Obituary Archive Online!

It generally pays to start here to see if your area and time period has coverage, although if you're looking for something interesting or potentially newsworthy (a railroad accident, for example) you may find it also reported in papers from outside the area.

Source Restrict

We usually begin any search for ancestors in a specific location, but Google no longer offers the option to restrict your search to a particular newspaper title. However, you can try using a newspaper title in quote, or use just a single word from the title of the paper to restrict your search - thus a source restriction for "Pittsburgh" or "Pittsburg" will turn up results from both the Pittsburgh Press and the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette.

Date Restrict

Google News only returns content from the past 30 days. However, you can get around this by using Google's site search feature and including the year or date of interest as a search term.

Use Generic or Period Search Terms Instead of Names

Browse through several issues of your newspaper of interest to become familiar with the general layout of the paper and the terms used most often in your sections of interest. For example, if you're looking for an obituary, did they commonly use the term "obituaries," or "deaths" or "death notices," etc. to head that section? Sometimes section headers were too fancy to be recognized by the OCR (optical character recognition) process, however, so also look for words frequently found in the general text. Then use that search term to look for content.

Browse This Paper

For best results when searching digitized historical newspaper content in Google, there really is no way around using the browse feature rather than search

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Historic Newspapers Online

By Kimberly Powell

Research online in these historic newspaper collections from around the world. Most include digital images of the actual newspapers as well as a searchable index. For search tips and strategies (putting in a name doesn't always work!), see 7 Tips for Searching Historic Newspapers Online.

See Also: Historical Newspapers Online - U.S. State Index

Tim Robberts/Taxi/Getty Images

KCGS Newsletter

1. Chronicling America

Free

The Library of Congress and NEH first launched this digitized historic newspaper collection in early 2007, with plans to add new content as time and budget permits. The newspapers are fully searchable, and cover the years 1880 to 1910 in several states, including California, District of Columbia, Florida, Kentucky, Minnesota, Nebraska, New York, Texas, Utah and Virginia. Ultimate plans are to include historically significant newspapers from all states and U.S. territories published between 1836 and 1922.

Newspapers.com

Subscription

I find myself using this newer historical newspaper site from Ancestry.com more and more as they continue to add additional newspapers at a fairly fast rate. The navigation and user interface is much easier to use and more social media friendly than most other newspaper sites, and you can subscribe at a 50% discount if you are also an Ancestry.com subscriber.

3. Newspaper Archive

Subscription

Tens of millions of fully-searchable, digitized copies of historic newspapers are available online through NewspaperARCHIVE. Over 2.5 million new pages are added each month from newspapers primarily in the United States and Canada. NewspaperARCHIVE (or a portion thereof) can sometimes be found bundled with subscriptions to other genealogy Web sites such as WorldVitalRecords and Godfrey Memorial Library. Subscription, but with a free membership option allowing up to three newspaper page views each day.

4. GenealogyBank

Subscription

Search for names and keywords in over 92 million articles, obituaries, marriage notices, birth announcements and other items published in more than 500,000 issues of over 1,300 historical U.S. newspapers. New content added monthly. Subscription required.

5. The British Newspaper Archive

Subscription

This partnership between the British Library and brightsolid online publishing have digitized and scanned millions of newspaper pages from the British Library's vast collection and made them available online, with plans to increase the collection to 40 million newspaper pages over the next 10 years. Available stand-alone, or bundled with membership to findmypast.

6. **Google Historical Newspaper Search**

Free

Google News Archive Search was all but abandoned by Google several years ago but, thankfully for genealogists, they left the previously digitized newspapers online. Poor digitization and OCR makes all but the major headlines virtually unsearchable in many cases, but all can be browsed and the collection is entirely free.

7. **Australian Newspapers Online - Trove**

Free

Search (full-text) or browse over 7 million pages digitized from Australian newspapers and some magazine titles in each state and territory, with dates ranging from the first Australian newspaper published in Sydney in 1803, to the 1950s when copyright applies. Newly digitized newspapers are added regularly through the Australian Newspapers Digitisation Program. »

8. **ProQuest Historical Newspapers**

Free through participating libraries/institutions

This large historical newspaper collection can be accessed online for free through many public libraries and educational institutions. Over 20 million digitized pages in PDF format can be searched or browsed for major newspapers, including The New York Times, Atlanta Constitution, The Baltimore Sun, the Hartford Courant, the Los Angeles Times and the Washington Post. There is also a collection of black newspapers from the Civil War era. Check with your local library to see if they offer access to this collection for library members.

9. **Footnote Historical Newspapers**

Subscription

Millions of historical newspapers from small towns and big cities across the United States

are available as part of a paid subscription to Footnote.com. More »

10. **Ancestry.com Historical Newspaper Collection**

Subscription

Full text search plus digitized images make this collection of more than 16 million pages from over 1000 different newspapers across the US, U.K. and Canada dating back to the 1700's a treasure for online genealogy research

This is overly long, but I thought you might be able to utilize something from these articles.

Til next time

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