

SALEM'S 300 EVENTFUL YEARS

By STEUART M. EMERY.

IN a year notable for anniversary observances, the tercentenary of the settlement of Salem, Mass., which occurs in July, promises to recreate history of more than ordinary vividness. The old Puritan rule, with all its stern virtues and faults, the days of a mighty merchant fleet that carried the sails of the city's ships to far seas, and that gloomy chapter known the world over as the "witchcraft delusion" are sufficient to endow the Salem celebration with a richly colored background.

There has been a vigorous discussion as to the actual date of the founding of the town, a descendant of the Endicott family holding that the real founding was in 1628, when Captain John Endicott and his band of a hundred followers arrived at the old site of Naumkeag. The Mayor of Salem has announced, however, that the pioneer date established by Roger Conant in 1626 will be regarded as official, and that the celebration will go through this year as planned.

It is a long way back to the days when the quiet streets of the New England town beheld a series of scenes that cannot be forgotten. A special Court of Oyer and Terminer had been created by Sir William Phipps, Governor of the Province under the royal charter, for the trial of witchcraft cases; it was sitting in the court house on Town House Lane. Through the streets from the jail in Prison Lane unhappy men and women accused of witchcraft were hustled to a trial that was anything but judicial.

A Vivid Page of History.

All Salem seethed over what it looked upon as the attempt of the powers of darkness to destroy the Christian Church in New England. The "witchcraft delusion," cruel and senseless as it was, remains the most vivid page in all of Salem's history.

Sixty-six years before, Roger Conant and his band of English planters and fishermen had left Cape Ann and made their way to Naumkeag, to be followed in 1628 by Captain John Endicott and his colonists, who possessed a charter from the English company that claimed the rights to the land. The early history of Salem was to be the tale of a town built on a foundation of honest toil and stern devotion.

Here were the real Puritan adventurers, seeking to wrest a living from the rough soil and to build habitations they could call their own. The woods teemed with savages. Treaties were made with them while the colonists with axe and adz hewed their houses out of the timber of the new wilderness. Some of the band hunted for game; others tilled the land—it was the familiar story of the pioneer in America.

Disease Took Its Toll.

The settlement of Salem from the first was of a religious character. The tenets of Puritanism were rigidly observed under the iron rule of Endicott, the first Governor, who suppressed the merriment of the young as a misdemeanor, and even went so far as to cut the red cross from the flag of England, the mother country.

It was a hard and long Winter for the band of worshipers and colonists, many of whom died of disease and insufficient food before the warm winds of Spring brought aid in the shape of a reinforcement of 400 immigrants. The danger of starvation over for the time being, the spiritual needs of the community received the dominant share of attention. After deliberation the Congregational creed was adopted and the new settlement was named Salem, a contraction of Jerusalem. The Church whose influence was to be all-powerful in molding the thought of New England for two centuries had been established.

Wrought out of logs and topped with a thatched roof, the first "meeting house" of Salem arose, a structure 20 by 17 feet, with rules and a decorum of its own. On one side sat the men, on the other the women and children. Armed with a long pole from which dangled a fox's tail, a constable watched the worshipers, stirring with his ticklish weapon those who fell into slumber. The Puritan spirit, strong in England and the new Colonies alike, had not yet reached the fervor that was to taint it with the superstitious persecution of innocent men and women.

Scholars have explained as a wave of hysteria the panic that seized upon Salem for six wild months in 1692 and sent twenty victims to ignominious death. The belief in witchcraft was firmly rooted in the credulous minds of the time, and only a hint was required to set it to growing into a deadly plant.

Witchcraft Shows Its Head.

As early as 1652 cases of "witchcraft" had been reported, and the penalty of whipping had been resorted to in order to quell what was regarded as "familiarity with the devil." The settlements of Rowley, Andover, Lynn, Marblehead and Salem, among others, had been stirred by strange occurrences. In extenuation of the procedure of the period it must be recalled that even such legal authorities as Blackstone and Bacon in the mother country had admitted the existence of witchcraft through their rules for the conduct of such cases. But it remained for Salem to bring the fear of witchcraft to heights theretofore unknown in the new land.

The actions of a group of "afflicted children" precipitated the frenzy that rode the settlement of Salem for a full half year. The names of Elizabeth Parris, 9; Abigail Williams, 11; Ann Putnam, 12; Mary Walcott, 17; Mercy Lewis, 17; Elizabeth Hubbard, 17; Elizabeth Booth, 18; Susannah Sheldon, 18; Mary Warren, 20, and Sarah Churchill, 20, have come down to us as the roster of Salem's "afflicted" ones whose testimony fostered the crusade that filled the jails and brought the tragedies of Gallows Hill.

Town of Witchcraft and Clipper Ships Completes Its Third Busy Century



A Scene in the Early Days of Salem.

Elizabeth Parris and Abigail Williams, daughter and niece of the Rev. Samuel Parris, were the first of the children to exhibit strange antics and convulsions. They were questioned, and they wildly accused Tituba, a West Indian slave; bed-ridden Sarah Osburn, and Sarah Good, a woman of dubious reputation. The great Salem witch hunt was on from that moment.

One explanation of the phenomenon of the "afflicted children" is that they were in the habit of gathering for social parties at which fortune telling and magic were attempted, with the result that they became too expert in astonishing the community. At all events, their convulsions were spectacular enough, Ann Putnam even going so far as to experience hers in the middle of church meetings.

Innocent Folk Imprisoned.

When the three accused women were brought before the magistrates Tituba "confessed" that she had pinched and tormented the children, declaring that the devil had directed her to, and that Sarah Osburn and Sarah Good were her accomplices. Little more was needed to convince the frightened community. The three were promptly put in jail, where Sarah Osburn died. Tituba was sold.

Accusations of witchcraft were now made in all directions, and the jail in Prison Lane saw scores of innocent folk thrust into its portals to await trial. The case of Bridget Bishop, the first to be tried before the new court, was typical of the Salem delusion. Idle gossip and mere rumor were introduced as evidence and gravely listened to in case after case. It was taken for granted that any one accused of witchcraft was guilty and should pay the extreme penalty.

Cotton Mather, the eminent Boston divine, set down on paper the following remarkable circumstance connected with the halting of Bridget Bishop to trial:

"As this woman was, under a guard, passing by the great and spacious

meeting house she gave a look toward the house and immediately a demon invisibly entering the meeting house tore down a part of it, so that though there was no person to be seen there, yet the people, at the noise, running in, found a board which was strongly fastened with several nails transported into another quarter of the house."

"Goody" Bishop's Accusers.

But this was a mild bit of description of the activities of "Goody" Bishop, whose case indicated to other unfortunates what species of testimony they might expect to be confronted with. A boy named Cook testified that "about five or six years ago one morning before sun rising as I was in bed before I rose I saw good wife Bishop stand in the chamber by the window, and she looked on me and grinned on me and presently struck me on the side of the head, which did very much hurt me; and then I saw her go out under the end window at a little crevice, about so big as I could thrust my hand into."

A servant, John Louder, contributed his share by declaring that "going to bed about the dead of night I felt a great weight upon my breast, and awakening, looked, and it being bright moonlight, did clearly see Bridget Bishop, or her likeness, sitting upon my stomach, and, putting my arms off the bed to free myself from the great oppression, she presently laid hold of my throat, and almost choked me, and I had no strength or power in my hands to resist or help myself; and in this condition she held me to almost day."

Workmen who had been engaged in removing the cellar wall in the house where Bridget Bishop lived testified that they had found "several puppets made up of rags and and hogs' bristles with headless pins in them, with the points outward." There was other testimony of the same absurd character and it was enough. Bridget Bishop was sentenced to death as a witch and was executed within a week. The original death warrant, the only one preserved from the "witchcraft delu-

sion" period, has been hung in the office of the Clerk of the Courts at Salem.

Sarah Good, Sarah Wildes, Elizabeth How, Susanna Martin and Rebecca Nurse were sentenced next and duly taken to Gallows Hill. By the middle of the tragic Summer of 1692 the witch fever of Salem was at the height of its devastation. It had become a case of denounce or be denounced. From the mass of accusations made against persons even of unblemished reputation, it seems obvious that an ideal way had been discovered in which the unscrupulous could pay off old grudges against their neighbors.

Even death by torture was resorted to by the Court in one harrowing instance. Eighty-one-year-old Giles Corey had been arrested on the popular accusation. His was the strongest of Puritan persistence, a persistence that amounted in the end to real heroism. His own wife had been executed as a witch; he himself, when brought to trial, flatly refused to open his mouth throughout the proceedings.

He would not confess to a league with the devil of which he was innocent; he would not even recognize the charge against him by pleading not guilty. He sat as silent as a stone while sentence was pronounced. In a vain effort to make him speak he was taken to a field where a great weighted board was pressed down upon him. He only asked that the weight might be made heavier so that he could die beneath it sooner. No other word came from him.

Common Sense Restored.

In September the court of witchcraft adjourned, never to be convened again. It had cost no less than twenty lives. The heroism of Corey had gone far toward restoring the common sense of the community. In addition, accusations were brought against men and women so high in public esteem that it was impossible even for ignorant minds to credit them with evil doing. It was actually hinted that the wife of the Governor was about to be charged with witchcraft. The delusion died and hundreds of the accused were released from prison. Thus ended New England's blackest chapter.

The Revolution found the old Puritan zeal busy in new channels. Salem claims the honor of making the first armed resistance to the British in America. At the North Bridge, on Feb. 26, 1775, the men of Salem defied a British force under Colonel Leslie to advance further in its search for hidden cannon and the invaders retreated.

Salem lay on the seacoast and the hardihood of its seafaring men was known throughout the Colonies. Privateers were urgently needed to harry British shipping in the troubled years that followed. Of these swift and daring vessels Salem sent no less than 158 into Continental service. That was the beginning of Salem's great period of trading at sea. The little port dispatched its vessels over all the world.

Salem Ships and Sailors.

A Salem clipper ship brought the first cargo ever carried in an American bottom direct from Canton to New England. The wealth of China, of all the Orient, was borne home by Salem's sons. They were the men who manned the clippers, starting out as cabin boys and receiving captains' commissions at 20. By the age of 40 the typical weather-beaten Salem skipper had retired with a fortune to build himself a huge mansion filled with the treasure trove of his voyages. The Cleopatra's Barge of George Crowninshield, which sailed through the Mediterranean in 1816, is said to be the first American pleasure yacht to visit Europe.

Still other honors fell to the New England town when it became the birthplace of the American novelist who made the ancient days of the Puritans live again with compelling truth. Nathaniel Hawthorne was born in Salem and dwelt in half a dozen of its houses, all of them associated with the marvelous chronicles which flowed from his pen. He was Surveyor of the Port when he wrote the immortal "Scarlet Letter," delving for his material into the musty records of the quaint streets and houses around him.

In all that is of interest historically Salem has long been one of the cities of America that treasures a full and vivid past. The rush and clangor of modernity may invade its streets today; its white-sailed, venturesome clipper ships may be gone, but still the traditions remain to make the observance of its three hundredth year of pulsing life an important event to the country at large.

GREAT BUDDHA'S CALM UNSHAKEN BY QUAKES

UNTOUCHED by recent earthquakes, typhoons or tidal waves, in the midst of a hilly temple garden at Kamakura, Japan, the great bronze Buddha sits in tranquil majesty, contemplating. The calm of his face symbolizes the spirit of Buddhism.

Kamakura, near Yokohama, was in former times a residence of the Shogun or military ruler. Now it is a favorite seaside resort for American tourists and Russian emigres, and a Mecca for native pilgrims who come to worship at the shrine of Amida Butsu, Lord of Light. Twice has a temple been built to shelter the image and twice has it been destroyed by fire or tidal wave.

The colossal image of Buddha is cast of separate bronze sheets, brazed together. It is forty-seven feet high. The boss of wisdom on its forehead is of solid silver; the eyes are of pure gold. The image is hollow, and the interior contains a small shrine. A staircase leads up into the enormous head, whence a view of the hilly, tree-lined temple environs can be obtained.