



50 YEARS AT THE SALEM WITCH MUSEUM

May 6, 2022

Salem, Mass—The Salem Witch Museum has told the story of the innocent victims of the Salem witch trials since its founding in 1972. The museum opened on May 6th and became the first in the city to bring the full story of the Salem witch trials to visitors from around the block and around the world. Visitors experience the drama of that dark time through thirteen life-size stage sets, figures, lighting, and narration as they are witness to the web of lies and intrigue of the Salem witch-hunt. Added in 1999, a second exhibit, *Witches: Evolving Perceptions*, explores the meaning behind the word witch and the evolution of witch image over time.

The history of this museum begins in 1692, when the site was home to the elder minister of Salem, Reverend John Higginson. Though he largely stayed out of the witchcraft turmoil, Reverend Higginson was involved in several examinations. Also living here was his daughter, Ann Dolliver, and her three children. In June of 1692, Dolliver was accused of witchcraft, arrested, and examined. Although she confessed, she never came to trial and returned to live here with her family on Salem Common.

The beautiful brick-and-brownstone Gothic Revival building was constructed by New York architect Minard Lafever between 1844-1846 for Salem's East Church, later known as the Second Unitarian Church. The original tall bell towers were shortened after a fire in the early 1920s, leaving the museum with its current iconic facade. After the First and Second Churches reunited in 1956, the building was sold. For a decade, it housed the Salem Antique Auto Museum and Americana shops. After the historic building was severely damaged by a second fire, the Salem Witch Museum took over in 1972.

The museum's involvement in our local community goes beyond its presentations and exhibits. On the 300th anniversary of the Salem witch trials, the Salem Witch Museum was instrumental in the creation of the Witch Trials Memorial. And, if you love visiting Salem in October, you have the Salem Witch Museum to thank for some of the city's most memorable festivities. In 1982, the Salem Witch Museum, in cooperation with the Salem Chamber of Commerce, launched Haunted Happenings. What began as a local, one-weekend event has grown into the month-long Halloween celebration it is today.

The Salem Witch Museum only continues to grow as an educational organization. Since 2018, the museum has expanded its educational offerings, including virtual events, virtual classroom sessions, a Witch Trials Online Sites Tour, a range of Descendent resource packets, and more!

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