

## What's Behind the Salem Witch Trials? 破解萨冷巫术悬案

In December 1691, some girls in the strict **Puritan community** of [Salem](#), in the [Massachusetts Bay Colony](#), started showing unusual **symptoms**. They would go into **convulsions**, feel their skin **crawl**, and have **hallucinations**. Doctors were unable to provide an explanation. At some point, the possibility of **witchcraft** was mentioned. Soon afterwards, **hysteria** swept through the town. Throughout 1692, scores of people were accused of witchcraft and imprisoned. Of them, 20 were **executed**.

公元 1691 年 12 月，麻州海湾殖民地撒冷城内严谨的清教徒小区中，有几位女孩开始出现一些异状。他们全身痉挛，觉得毛骨悚然，并产生幻觉。医生也无法解释这些症状。有人提出可能是巫术所致。没多久，整座城镇陷入歇斯底里的状态。1692 年一整年，许多人被控施行巫术而被打入牢房。其中还有 20 人遭受处决。

Over the years, numerous possible explanations have been offered **as to** why this occurred. They **range** from serious psychological explanations to less **credible** ones, such as the actual presence of witchcraft. One scientific argument, however, may hold some truth.

多年来针对这种状况的各种可能解释不断被提出，有人从严肃的心理学层面来分析，其他人认为巫术的确存在——虽然较不可信。然而有种科学观点倒是蛮有道理的。

In Salem, **rye** grain was grown to make bread, and this grain can host a **fungus** called [ergot](#). In humans, this fungus acts as a poison and can cause convulsions. It can also produce hallucinations **similar to** those caused by the drug [LSD](#). It grows best when there has been a warm, **damp** spring and a hot wet summer. This appears to have been the case in 1691. The grain was **harvested** and stored, and then turned into flour before Thanksgiving in November. The symptoms, unsurprisingly started to occur in December of that year. While it cannot actually be proven, it is possible that the Salem **witch trials** took place because of **tainted** bread!

撒冷城中种植了可做成面包的裸麦，而一种称为麦角菌的真菌类则会寄生在裸麦上。麦角菌在人体中会释放毒素造成痉挛，也会导致类似服用迷幻药后的幻觉。裸麦的最佳生长季节是暖和湿润的春天和炎热潮湿的夏天，这似乎正是 1691 年当时的气候状况。这些谷物经过收割储藏，在 11 月感恩节前被做成面粉。所以同年 12 月会出现那些症状也就不足为奇了。虽然目前无法证实，但是撒冷城的女巫审判事件有可能是遭受感染的面包造成的！

—by Joe Schier

### Vocabulary

**symptom** [ˈsɪmptəm] n. 症状

**hallucination** [həˌluːʃnəlɪˈeɪʃən] n. 幻觉

**execute** [ˈɛksɪˌkjʊt] v. 处死

**credible** [ˈkrɛdəbəl] adj. 可信的；可靠的

## More Information

**Puritan** [ˈpjʊrətən] adj. 清教徒的

**community** [kəˈmjʊnəti] n. 小区

**Massachusetts** [ˌmæsəˈtʃʊts] 美国麻萨诸塞州

**convulsion** [kənˈvʌljən] n. 抽搐, 惊厥

**crawl** [krɔl] v. 爬, 爬行

**witchcraft** [ˈwɪtʃkræft] n. 巫术

**hysteria** [hɪsˈtɪriə] n. 歇斯底里; 毫无来由的情绪激动; 情绪爆发

**range** [reɪndʒ] v. (范围) 涉及

**rye** [raɪ] n. 裸麦, 黑麦

**fungus** [ˈfʌŋɡəs] n. 真菌

**ergot** [ˈɜːɡət] n. 麦角

**similar to** 和...相似

**LSD** lysergic acid diethylamide 麦角酸二乙胺 (一种迷幻药)

**damp** [dæmp] adj. 有湿气的; 潮湿的

**harvest** [ˈhɑːvɪst] v. 收割; 收获

**witch** [wɪtʃ] n. 女巫

**trial** [ˈtraɪəl] n. 审问, 审判

**tainted** [ˈteɪntɪd] adj. 污染的; 感染的; 腐败的

**as to:** 关于 with regard to