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The Vagaries of Manuscripts from the Salem Witch Trials: An Edition of Four (Re-)Discovered Documents from the Case Against Margaret Scott of Rowley

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## 1. Introduction

Rich documentary evidence survives from the witch trials in Salem, MA, in 1692–1693. We have at our disposal about 1,000 documents, including witness depositions, indictments, warrants, letters of restitution, and records of pretrial hearings (see *RSWH*). At the same time, it is clear from the extant body of texts that a substantial number of additional documents must have existed that no longer survive or whose locations are yet to be determined.<sup>1</sup> There are also records that are not extant or have been assumed not to be extant but for which we have evidence in the form of later transcriptions or editions (see e.g. *RSWH*, nos. 414 and 417). This is the case of four witness depositions pertaining to the case of Margaret Scott of Rowley (for Scott's case, see Rosenthal 1993: 171; Norton 2002: 254, 276–277, 317; Rice 2005: np). These depositions were transcribed and included in Thomas Gage's *History of Rowley* published in 1840. As the

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<sup>1</sup> Most notable is the absence of a record book from the proceedings of the Court of Oyer and Terminer in 1692 (Trask 1997: xix-xx). As for individual cases, we can note the absence of pretrial hearing records for Mary Bradbury. Arrest warrants are missing in quite a few cases, although a warrant was presumably issued in conjunction with each arrest.

original documents had been presumed lost, the new edition of the Salem documents, *RSWH*, reproduced Gage's transcriptions (*RSWH*, nos. 643, 645, 646, 647).<sup>2</sup> In the course of our work on the recorders of the documents from the Salem witch trials (about which more below), we re-discovered the original manuscripts of these four depositions in the Boston Public Library (BPL): MS 445. In this article, we provide transcriptions of the depositions together with a commentary on the physical appearance of the documents, their textual characteristics, and their content. We also contextualize the transcriptions by comparing them with those found in Gage (1840). We show that having access to the original documents gives us information that is not retrievable from the edition in Gage (1840), most significantly concerning issues of transmission (including changes in the documents at various stages) and concerning the recorders of the documents.

## **2. The History of the Original Documents and Thomas Gage's *History of Rowley***

We re-discovered the four Margaret Scott documents during a visit to the BPL in March of 2012. We were undertaking preliminary research for our ongoing work on an electronic database, named 'Checkley', that will chart the recorders of the documents from the Salem trials.<sup>3</sup> We were exploring our hypothesis that many of the recorders of Salem documents would also have

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<sup>2</sup> These documents do not appear in the previous editions of the Salem documents by Boyer & Nissenbaum (1977) and Woodward (1865). The first editor to include the transcriptions from Gage appears to be Trask (1997: 161–164).

<sup>3</sup> For more information on the project, see <http://checkley.org/>. The database is named after Anthony Checkley, Attorney-General for the Province of Massachusetts and prosecutor of witchcraft cases in Salem after July 26, 1692 (see Trask 2009: 49).

been recording other legal texts at the time, or undertaking writing in other contexts. If our hypothesis proves true, we will potentially be able to use documents external to the Salem trials to identify writers of Salem documents, where identification cannot be made on the basis of the Salem manuscripts alone (for the importance of the identity of the recorders, see Hiltunen & Peikola 2007; Rosenthal 2009: 38–40). The aim of this particular visit was to conduct a broad survey of the availability and types of documents that we would have to consider in detail during the course of our project. Our survey consisted of calling up selected manuscripts based on searches of the BPL card catalogue, including searches for particular date ranges, towns, and people known to have been involved in the trials or living in affected communities at the time. When perusing index cards under the heading of 'Rowley' in the card catalogue, we came across four depositions ascribed to the case of Margaret Scott; they were listed as one item, MS 445. We later found the same manuscript listed under 'Scott, Margaret' in the card catalogue. These four depositions, labeled in pencil in the actual manuscripts as 445, 445a, 445b, and 445c, turned out to be the four missing depositions included in Gage (1840). Why these documents have eluded scholars, despite being found in two places in the card catalogue (including under Scott's name), is unclear. Unfortunately, nothing seems to be known about the provenance of the documents; the BPL has no record of the acquisition or previous owners. According to Kimberly Reynolds, the Curator of Manuscripts at the BPL, the low catalogue number suggests that it was an early acquisition, although how early remains uncertain (p.c. April 30, 2013).

To illustrate the importance of the re-discovery of the originals of the four Margaret Scott depositions, it is useful to explore the intertwined histories of documents pertaining to Margaret Scott's case (not only the ones of particular interest here) and the transcriptions of the documents presented in Gage (1840). This exploration highlights issues of provenance as well as the

differences between the originals and Gage's transcriptions (and hence the versions that have so far been available to scholars and reproduced in several modern editions).

It is not surprising to find transcriptions of the four Margaret Scott depositions in Gage (1840). At the behest of the inhabitants, Thomas Gage, a native of Rowley, undertook to compile a history of the community in conjunction with the two-hundred-year celebration of the founding of the town (Gage 1840: iv).<sup>4</sup> Provided in the book are a large number of transcriptions of primary documents of all kinds, including wills, letters, petitions, deeds, and other legal documents, that are of importance for the history of Rowley and its inhabitants. Whether Gage produced the transcriptions himself or used transcriptions provided by others is unclear. However, several formulations in the *History* perhaps point to Gage undertaking his own transcription work. In the introduction, he expresses his gratitude to the many repositories of public records, institutions, and libraries 'permitting the compiler [i.e. Gage] to have free access to the records and books in their respective care' (Gage 1840: xvii, also iv). In conjunction with various transcriptions, he frequently states that a text is a 'copy' of the original, sometimes

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<sup>4</sup> Some confusion seems to exist about who Thomas Gage was. The Library of Congress catalogue (<http://lccn.loc.gov/01011588>) suggests that he lived between 1721–1787, perhaps equating him with the British general in North America of the same name (*ODNB* s.n. *Gage, Thomas*). However, as indicated by the text of the introduction of Gage (1840), this is not a posthumous work. Rather, Thomas Gage, the writer of the *History*, is recorded in the Vital Records from Rowley to have died in 1842 (from strangury) at the age of 68 (<http://ma-vitalrecords.org/MA/Essex/Rowley/aDeathsG.shtml>). His year of birth would thus be 1774, which coincides with the birthdate of a Thomas Gage who is listed in the *History* itself as the son of William and Hanna Gage, and the husband of Mary (Dole), married in 1799 (Gage 1840: 442; see also <http://ma-vitalrecords.org/MA/Essex/Rowley/aMarriagesG.shtml>).

providing further detail, such as 'transcribed with care from the original records' and 'a literal transcript from the original' (Gage 1840: 20, 56, 137, 277, 365, 372, 417).

If Gage himself transcribed the Scott depositions from the originals now at the BPL, it is not clear where he accessed them: as the BPL was not founded until 1848, he must have accessed them elsewhere (see <http://www.bpl.org/general/history.htm>). The exact history of these documents cannot be clearly delineated, but some suggestions can be offered through an exploration of the history of all the documents known from the Scott case. The four BPL depositions are not the only documents in Scott's case reproduced in Gage (1840): the *History* also includes three additional depositions and two indictments (Gage 1840: 169–173, 175; *RSWH*, nos. 471, 641, 642, 644, and 648).<sup>5</sup> The original manuscripts of two of the depositions (*RSWH*, nos. 644 and 648) are part of the Essex County Court Archives, an expected location for witch trial documents, and one indictment is only known from Gage (1840) (*RSWH*, no. 642). The two remaining documents (*RSWH*, nos. 471 and 641), an indictment and a deposition, have a more checkered history, which is traceable to some extent. In 2001, both were put up for sale by the William Reese Company of New Haven, CT, a rare book and manuscript dealer.<sup>6</sup> Although both were sold by the Reese Company at the same time, the current location of the deposition (*RSWH*, no. 471) is unknown, while there is some information available for the indictment (*RSWH*, no. 641). The indictment was resold in March 2012 by Swann Auction Galleries in New

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<sup>5</sup> Gage (1840: 176–177) also reproduces the trial record of Mary Post, another Rowley native, which is found in *RSWH*, no. 797; the original is in the Records of the Superior Court of Judicature. He does not include an arrest warrant and a record of the pretrial hearing in Post's case (*RSWH*, nos. 445 and 699), which may have been unknown to him.

<sup>6</sup> See <http://www.williamreese.com/shop/reeseeco/index.html>. Both items were listed in catalogue 207.

York to an anonymous collector (Young 2012). The auction catalogue notes that the William Reese Company had sold it to Eric C. Caren, of the Caren Archives in Lincolndale, NY (see <http://thecarenarchives.com/>), and attributes earlier ownership to a collector who had acquired it ca. 1900 and in whose family the item had stayed for the following century.<sup>7</sup>

A curious discussion of most of the Scott documents also occurs in a newspaper article titled 'Margaret Scott, Witch' published in 1901 by a Charles O. Stickney of Bridgton, ME, as noted by Trask (1997: 161). Unfortunately, the origin of the article, which only exists in the Danvers Archival Center in the form of a cut-out, is unknown, but its author may be possible to trace.<sup>8</sup> The Charles O. Stickney of the article is probably the newspaper man 'who did much of the writing, reporting and editing' for the Bridgton News in Bridgton, ME, and was a contributor to a number of newspapers, including the Boston Post and the Boston Journal, at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries; he died in 1912 (Miller 1978: 108). With the exception of the indictment known only from Gage, Stickney provides '[v]erbatim copies of', short extracts from, or paraphrases of all the Scott documents (including the four BPL depositions and the indictment in private ownership in ca. 1900 mentioned above), and he claims that '[t]he documentary and court evidence adduced [in the article] are exact copies of the originals, in my exclusive possession'. Although this statement could be read to suggest that Stickney may have been the private owner mentioned in the Swann catalogue and that the BPL depositions were also in his possession at this time, there are several indications that 'in my exclusive possession' should be taken to refer to 'exact copies' rather than 'the originals'.

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<sup>7</sup> See

[<sup>8</sup> We are grateful to Richard B. Trask for making a copy of the article available to us.](http://catalogue.swanngalleries.com/asp/fullCatalogue.asp?salelot=2273++++214+&refno=++648197&saletype.</a></p></div><div data-bbox=)

Among the documents (partially) transcribed in Stickney's article are the depositions by Frances Wycomb and by Philip and Sarah Nelson, which are currently in the Essex County Court Archives (*RSWH*, nos. 648 and 644). There is no indication that these two documents have ever been privately owned: both Woodward, for his 1865 edition, and the WPA, for their 1930s transcriptions, appear to have accessed the documents as part of the Essex County court collections (Woodward 1865: 181–182; Boyer & Nissenbaum 1977: 727–728). Furthermore, at one point, Stickney refers to one document '[i]mmediately following' another. This formulation appears to reference a sequence of the texts that is not evidenced in the original documents, which are found in separate manuscripts (*RSWH*, nos. 641, i.e., the recently-sold indictment, and 647, i.e., one of the rediscovered depositions, BPL MS 445). Although Gage (1840) would be a possible source for the transcription, that does not appear to be the case. The sequence in Stickney's article does not follow the presentation in Gage (1840), and there are significant differences between the transcriptions given by Stickney and Gage; these differences mostly represent errors in Stickney's transcriptions, many of which suggest misreadings or misinterpretations of original documents.<sup>9</sup> Where exactly Stickney would have obtained these 'exact copies' is unknown, and the implications of Stickney's article for the reconstruction of the history of the documents (including the BPL depositions) are not wholly clear. Stickney or someone else may have made or obtained copies of the Scott documents from the various institutions and the private owner(s) in possession of the originals, which may have included the BPL, if the MS 445 documents were already in the BPL collections. At the same time, as there is

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<sup>9</sup> It is also clear from transcription differences that Stickney did not copy the depositions found in the Essex County Court Archives from Woodward (1865).

no indication when these copies may have been produced, the set may have been made a considerable time before Stickney's publication in 1901.

In the end, then, the history of the documents pertaining to Scott's case is not traceable in detail. More specifically, we cannot say for certain when the four depositions edited here entered the BPL collections or where Gage may have accessed them for his transcriptions published in 1840, when they were not part of the BPL collections. In fact, the set of documents in Scott's case as a whole appears to have one of the most complex histories of all groups of Salem documents that we know have survived; why this would be the case remains uncertain. Indeed, these documents highlight the extreme of the vagaries of documents from the Salem trials.

### **3. The Transcriptions of the BPL Depositions**

The text of the four Scott manuscripts presented in Gage (1840) differs in a number of respects from the originals. These differences are probably partly a result of how Gage makes use of the texts within the context of his book. Although Gage presents the depositions and indictments in Scott's case in one sequence, they are also embedded in a larger chronological retelling of the course of the witch trials. The Scott documents appear at the point of the narrative when Margaret Scott has already received the death penalty, and the transcriptions are given in order to illustrate 'the evidence upon which she was convicted' (Gage 1840: 169). Apart from some typographical conventions and some layout features, the transcriptions provide little indication of the documents' appearance in the original manuscripts. Indeed, it is sometimes unclear where one text (or document) ends and another begins. For example, in Gage (1840), Mary Daniel's deposition is followed by a short affirmation by Edward Payson, a minister of Rowley. Both of



these occur in one manuscript (Gage 1840: 172–173; *RSWH*, no. 471, now in unknown ownership, as noted above). However, three other short affirming testimonies, which Gage records in the text without a break, are in fact from a different manuscript, BPL 445a, one of the re-discovered documents. Thus, while these texts come across as closely related in Gage (1840), they were originally separated physically.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, Gage's transcriptions often leave out the writing on the back or reverse (dorse) of the document, the docket portion which states the case and deponent in question (*RSWH*, no. 471, and in three of the rediscovered depositions). This text would have given a clearer indication of the constitution of the original documents and how they were used. However, as Gage's main concern is to provide access to the evidence against Scott and not to the original appearance of the documents, this omission is perhaps not wholly unexpected, and it facilitates the construction of a seamless unfolding of the narratives in the depositions without extraneous material.

Although the transcriber clearly followed certain editorial conventions in presenting the texts in Gage (1840), there is some variation across the depositions. This variation may indicate that the same person did not transcribe all of the documents, that they were not transcribed all at the same time, that the transcriber was inconsistent, or that the compositor at the press of Ferdinand Andrews did not follow his copy text faithfully in typesetting. Furthermore, the degree of adherence to the originals differs for different features of the text (punctuation, spelling, lexis, etc.). We note some of the editorial practices and aspects of transcription here to highlight the differences between our transcriptions and the appearance of the previously available texts.

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<sup>10</sup> There is no indication that the two documents were ever physically joined, and while Payson's affirmation was written by Stephen Sewall, those by Warren, Hubbard, and Putnam were recorded by Simon Willard (for these recorders, see further below).

At the level of spelling and capitalization, the transcriptions in Gage (1840) are mostly faithful to the original manuscripts. Frequent changes occur in using 'and' for the manuscripts' '&' (MSS 445, 445a), and 'e' is supplied in a number of words, such as 'owned' for 'ownd' (MS 445, MS 445a), 'kneeled' for 'kneeld' (MS 445b), and 'Affirmed' for 'Affirmd' (MS 445a). The letter 'u', which is often used for the consonant [v] in the original documents (a common practice in the period in general), is sometimes replaced by 'v' in Gage as in 'believe' for 'beliue' (MSS 445b and 445c), and 'Evidence' and 'above' for 'Euidence' and 'aboue' (MS 445c). However, some of the originals' 'u' spellings are retained, as in 'fiue' and 'fiuetenth' (i.e. *fifteenth*) (MSS 445, 445c), and 'uerily' (MS 445c). Beyond these categories, spellings are rarely changed, although the spelling is frequently highly idiosyncratic in the documents. The small number of exceptions may simply be slips, sometimes perhaps influenced by the transcriber's nineteenth-century usage, as in 'feeld' for 'feelld' (i.e. *field*) and 'tould' for 'toulld' (MS 445), 'Rowley' for 'Rowly' (MS 445a), and 'barn' for 'barne' (MS 445b). Abbreviations, which are relatively rare in these documents, are replaced by written-out forms in some cases (as in 'September' for 'sept<sup>e</sup>' in MSS 445b and 445c), but consistently retained in others (especially the use of superscript letters in MS 445a).

A similar picture is evident for capitalization: the transcriptions in Gage (1840) mostly adhere to the use of the manuscripts and only rarely introduce changes (few of which are systematic). The transcriptions consistently use 'F' for 'ff', as in 'Frances' for 'ffrances' (MS 445a). The first person pronoun 'i' is changed to 'I' in MS 445b, but 'i' is retained throughout MS 445, where it occurs multiple times. Other discrepancies are sporadic, such as 'Inquest' for 'inquest' (MS 445c) and 'Grand' for 'grand' (MS 445b).

The largest differences are probably found in punctuation, although these differences are not consistent across the documents. The transcription in Gage (1840) of the main text of MS 445 is left mostly unpunctuated, which is how it appears in the manuscript. In the transcription of MS 445a, the manifold uses of colons by Simon Willard (see below) are retained fairly faithfully (for Willard's usage of colons, see Grund et al. 2009: 77). By contrast, the texts of MSS 445b and 445c, the majority of which is written by the same, unknown recorder, have been liberally punctuated, perhaps in accordance with punctuation standards in the nineteenth century. While the originals contain very few punctuation marks, mostly in the form of periods or colons, Gage (1840) supplies numerous commas and some semicolons. The stark difference between the texts is obvious from only a brief comparison between (1) and (2).

- (1) The Deposition of Thomas Nellson, who saith, that, about six yeares ago the last winter, Margaret Scot, of Rowley, widow, desired me to bring her some wood, [...] (Gage 1840: 174)
- (2) The Depositi<sup><o> n<sup>11</sup></sup> of Thomas Nellson who saith. that about six yeares ago the last winter. Margeret Scot of Rowley widow desired me to bring her some wood [...] (our transcription of MS 445b)

While the original manuscript makes an attempt at marking the beginning of what Nelson said ('...saith.') and perhaps marking off the time period ('...last winter'), Gage (1840) provides a

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<sup>11</sup> Angle brackets are used to indicate unclear letters in the manuscript. See further the editorial principles below.

text that neatly separates different units of information, perhaps to facilitate the text for contemporary readers.

Providing transcriptions that more faithfully reproduce features of spelling, capitalization, and punctuation perhaps adds little to our knowledge of the historical setting or our understanding of the case against Margaret Scott. However, such editing is in line with many recommendations for how to handle and present historical documents of a utilitarian nature that were not intended for publication (Tanselle 1978; Harvey 2001: 40; Cusack 1998: xv–xvii; *RSWH*: 91–94). Furthermore, avoiding editorial punctuation removes the possibility for potential misinterpretations that may accompany an attempt to impose a modern system on historical texts that may have operated according to different standards. Faithful transcriptions also open up the texts to wider usage in a number of different fields where a close adherence to the manuscripts is essential, such as investigations of the original language (see Kytö, Grund & Walker 2011). However, our transcriptions are not only important in that they provide faithfully reproduced texts; we also supply text that is missing in Gage (1840), and we make accessible information that is not recorded in the book.

One of the main omissions in the transcriptions from Gage (1840) is the information on the reverse of MSS 445a, 445b, and 445c, as indicated before; the reverse of MS 445 occurs at the very beginning of the transcription from Gage (1840: 171) without an indication that the information comes from the back of the document. In MSS 445b and 445c, the reverse notes the deponent's name and identifies the case, while the reverse of 445a simply states the deponents' names without an indication of the case against Scott. The dorsal annotations were made so that relevant documents could quickly be retrieved once they had been folded up and docketed (the marks of folding are still prominent in the documents). These annotations thus help us see the

transmission and use of the documents and hence connect these to other documents in the Salem corpus that were similarly utilized. As suggested earlier, the omission of these reverses may have been strategic, as they could have been seen as breaking up the narrative retelling and as containing irrelevant information for Gage's purposes.

Interestingly, the reverse of MS 445b and most likely also MS 445, give Scott's name as 'Mary' instead of 'Margaret'. This may of course indicate that she was also known as Mary in the community. However, more probably, it shows that the official, Anthony Checkley (see below), was unclear on what her first name was. Instances of confusion or lack of knowledge about women's first names are found throughout the Salem documents. For example, in arrest warrants, women's surnames are sometimes found preceded by a blank space since the official who drew up the original document presumably did not know their first names; in many cases the names have been filled in by a secondary recorder (e.g., *RSWH*, nos. 98, 674).

Including the reverses is also important because of the information they give us about the involvement of different recorders in the processing of the documents. Until very recently little attention had been paid to the identities of the recorders of the Salem documents. The new edition, *RSWH*, however, gives some indication of the diversity of the recorders: it signals changes of scribal hands in all documents and identifies a limited set of the recorders, approximately 20 out of an estimated 200+ recorders (Rosenthal 2009: 38–41; Grund et al. 2009: 69–71). This is the work that we are currently expanding on. Following the conventions in *RSWH*, we have indicated switches of recorders in our transcriptions below, and identified several of the writers on the basis of our research into the recorders. The Margaret Scott depositions confirm what *RSWH* has already started to show about the involvement of certain recorders during the trials, but they also add to the complex picture of the scribal situation in

Salem that is emerging from *RSWH* and our current research. Some of the Scott documents reveal a cast of recorders similar to that found in other Salem documents. Simon Willard, a clothier and brother of the Reverend Samuel Willard (Roach 2009: 963), is the main recorder of MS 445a, and he is responsible for shorter passages in both MSS 445 and 445b. Willard is known to have worked as a semi-official recorder for the Jury of Inquest or Grand Inquest, which determined whether there was sufficient evidence to send an accused person to trial. He frequently records the deponent's affirmation of the truth of the testimony after it had been read to the Jury, which we see in MSS 445 and 445b. As is evident in MS 445a, testimony could also surface during the Jury of Inquest proceedings that does not appear to have been previously written down and hence had to be recorded during the sitting of the Jury. Such examples occur throughout the Salem documents (e.g. *RSWH*, nos. 622, 625, 628, 662). Andrew Elliott, who was appointed town clerk in 1690 in Beverly (a community adjacent to Salem) and elected to several other offices during his lifetime (Roach 2009: 938; Eliot 1887: 15–21), performs the same duties as Willard in MS 445c; his involvement with the Jury of Inquest is also known from other documents (e.g., *RSWH*, nos. 385, 386, 391).

Other familiar recorders' handling of the documents is revealed by additional annotations. 'Jurat in Curia', which occurs in three of the depositions, was added by the clerk of the court Stephen Sewall, indicating that the witness swore to the testimony during the trial proceedings. The absence of the note in MS 445c suggests that the deposition was not used during the trial against Scott. Sewall also adds the text on the reverse in MS 445a, while, in the rest, the annotation is made by Anthony Checkley, the attorney general and prosecutor of the cases heard before the Court of Oyer and Terminer after July 26, 1692. Both men's handwriting

occurs in numerous Salem documents, frequently in the locations where they appear here, signaling their official involvement in the cases and in the transmission of the documents.

More interestingly, there are also two recorders who cannot be identified at this point: one is responsible for writing the main text of two of the depositions (marked by the annotation 'Hand 1' in MSS 445b and 445c), and the other is the main recorder of MS 445 (marked by 'Hand 1').<sup>12</sup> During the time of the Salem trials, it was common (even the norm) for depositions to be recorded outside the court system and then submitted to the court for possible inclusion among the evidence in a particular case. This was in accordance with legislation at the time, which also appears to have allowed people not officially connected with the court to undertake the writing, including the deponents themselves or writers sought out by the deponents (for the legislation, see Shurtleff 1854: 211; see also Grund 2007). In our preliminary work on the Salem recorders, we have found that being able to identify the same handwriting in two or more documents can provide crucial information about connections among documents, and correlations between documents, recorders, and communities. For example, Thomas Chandler, selectman of Andover, writes depositions for people residing in Andover, including his own testimony (*RSWH*, nos. 465, 631, and 657). An unknown recorder, who writes at least five depositions, takes down testimony primarily for inhabitants of Beverly (*RSWH*, nos. 190, 336, 353, 498, and 556).<sup>13</sup> We may have a similar connection in the case of MSS 445b and 445c. The deponents of these documents, Thomas Nelson and Sarah Coleman, both hailed from Rowley,

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<sup>12</sup> At this early point in our charting of scribal hands in the Salem documents, we cannot make a positive match between the handwriting of either of these two recorders and the handwriting found in other Salem documents.

<sup>13</sup> The same recorder is also responsible for the deposition of 'Hazadiah Smith of Beverly' from 1691/1692 in BPL MS Am. 2307.

although Coleman had moved from Rowley to Newbury when she was very young (Rice 2005: np). They may have approached the same person to write their depositions because he (or possibly even she) had known writing ability in the community. However, as we will suggest below, Thomas Nelson himself may be the writer of the two depositions.<sup>14</sup> There are other examples of deponents writing their own depositions as well as those of others in the Salem corpus, such as Samuel Parris (*RSWH*, no. 8), Simon Willard (*RSWH*, no. 130), and Thomas Chandler mentioned above.

In the newly-discovered manuscripts, we also find interesting scribal emendations and ink changes, which Gage (1840) does not record. Overall, scribal changes in the form of cancellations, additions, and letters changed from or written on top of earlier letters are not very frequent in the four depositions. MSS 445b and 445c contain no emendation by the recorders. MS 445a contains one addition (marked by ‘{s<sup>d</sup> Warin.}’ in our transcription), while MS 445 includes four additions above the line, two cancellations, and several items written on top of previous text (as can be seen in our transcription). None of these scribal edits are noted in the transcriptions in Gage (1840), although the additions have silently been incorporated in the text and the canceled words have been removed. On their own, these changes do not provide a great deal of information; however, seen in the context of scribal changes in the Salem corpus as a

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<sup>14</sup> Thomas’s brother, Philip Nelson, and his wife, Sarah Nelson, also submitted a deposition against Margaret Scott (*RSWH*, no 644), but this deposition was written by Thomas Putnam of Salem Village, a militia sergeant and father of Ann Putnam Jr. (one of the fiercest accusers of alleged witches). Thomas Putnam is one of the most frequent recorders of witness depositions, mostly by people from Salem. The deposition by Philip and Sarah does show, however, that depositions were not only recorded in the location of people’s residence. For the Nelson family, see Rice (2005: np).



whole, they add to our knowledge of the recorders' concern for accuracy and clarity on all levels of writing, and provide further evidence of the strategies that the recorders used for making changes (see Grund 2007).

A different scribal emendation technique that is impossible to detect without consulting the original manuscripts consists in changes made in a different ink, which can indicate later additions. This is the case in MS 445b. The final line of the deposition, 'and i do uerily beliuie that she is a witch', is added in a slightly lighter brown ink, and the nib of the pen was clearly finer than the one used for writing the majority of the deposition, although the recorder was the same as in the preceding text. The ink color and the quality of the nib appear to be closely matched with those of the text written below it by Simon Willard, added after the testimony had been sworn to before the Jury of Inquest. This addition then may be a result of a request for further clarification from the interrogator and/or Jury. This addition is particularly significant in two respects. If the reconstruction proposed above is accurate, it may mean that Thomas Nelson is the recorder of the document, as he would have been present to affirm the testimony and would hence have been able to add the phrase as requested; however, it is of course not impossible that the recorder, if a different person, was also present to supply the phrase. Secondly, the phrase added is common in Salem depositions (cf. MS 445c below), and it has been argued that it was seen as a crucial feature required in testimony in which the deponent stated her/his conviction of the guilt of the accused (Grund 2012: 25–26). Without the phrasing, some depositions (including MS 445b) are left opaque or do not completely spell out clear accusations made by the deponents. The addition in MS 445b would respond to a call for a clear statement of the perceived actionable offence in support of the indictment.

We offer here transcriptions of the original documents that follow the principles set forth in *RSWH* (see below). These transcriptions will further *RSWH*'s aim of providing easy and comprehensive access to faithful representations of the original documents from the Salem trials that provide scholars with information on the physical and scribal context of the original documents.

#### 4. Editorial Principles

Our editorial principles follow those that were used in *RSWH* (91–94), and as they were fully described in *RSWH*, we only summarize the most important here.<sup>15</sup> The text of the original documents has been reproduced as faithfully as possible, without editorial emendation, regularization, or modernization (although see the treatment of capital and minuscule forms below). Original spelling, punctuation, capitalization, abbreviations, and scribal corrections have been retained (for exceptions, see *RSWH*: 91–92). When there is no clear distinction between the majuscule (capital) and minuscule forms of a letter used by a recorder, the treatment of such letters has been made consistent by transcribing them as minuscules, with the exception of proper names and letters opening a new paragraph, which have been rendered as majuscules (see *RSWH*: 91). Canceled text has been reproduced as ~~strikethrough~~. In general, the layout of the edited text seeks to approximate that of the original documents, within the technical limits allowed by typography (for exceptions, see *RSWH*: 92).

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<sup>15</sup> The only departure from the editorial principles described there is our decision to reproduce a period or colon that follows a superscript abbreviation (cf. *RSWH*: 91, under Punctuation).

In addition to footnotes, three types of bracket are used for editorial annotation. 1. *Angled brackets* < > indicate our interpretations of letters and punctuation marks that cannot be unambiguously recognized in the document, either because they are physically obscured (for example by a blot of ink) or because the letterforms themselves are ambiguous. In the shared Hand 1 of MS 445b and MS 445c, for example, several instances of the letter 'o' closely resemble an 'a'. A question mark within angled brackets indicates that one or more consecutive letters are completely illegible. 2. *Curly brackets* { } enclose letters or words written above or below the line or in the margin, as a correction or for some other purpose; we have also retained the caret (^) used for indicating the location to which a supralinear addition belongs. 3. *Square brackets* [ ] surround features of text, handwriting, or layout that cannot be shown in the transcription. In the documents edited here, these comprise [Reverse], to indicate where the writing on the dorse of the document begins; [Hand #], to mark a change in the handwriting that we have interpreted to signal a change of recorder;<sup>16</sup> and ['X' written over 'Y'], to indicate a correction where a letter in a word has been written over another letter (the annotation is placed after the word in which the correction occurs).

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<sup>16</sup> In each document, the annotation begins from [Hand 1]; if the same hand reappears later in the same document, only one number is used for it (cf. [Hand 2] in MSS 445 and 445a).

## 5. The Documents

### MS 445. Deposition of Daniel Wycomb & John Burbank v. Margaret Scott (RSWH, no. 647)

[Hand 1] the testimony of daniell wicom ayged aboue fifty ['i' written over 'e'] years who sayth that aboutt fiue ore sixs years ago margret Scot of Rowlah came to my hous and asked me if she might gleane corne in my felld i towld hir she if might if she would stay whilst my corne was ought of the feelld s<sup>d</sup> Scot {s<sup>d</sup>} you will not get youer corne ought to night ^{^it may be} i tould hir i would s<sup>d</sup> Scot s<sup>d</sup> may be not: at that time my wife gaue s<sup>d</sup> Scot sum corne and th<e?> then {Scot} went away and presently after ['t' written over 'e'] s<sup>d</sup> Scot was gon i went with my cart and oxsen into the feeld for corne and when i had lodid my cart i went to go home with my corne but the oxsen would not draw the {cart} any ways bout from home thof i wear not twenty Rod from my door and i could not get any corne ought of my felld that day. the nexst day i ['i' written over 't'] touck the same oxsen and put them to the cart and the s<sup>d</sup> cart and the same lode of corne they did draw away with ease

[Hand 2] Jurat in Curia.

[Hand 3] Capt Dan<sup>ll</sup> Wycom ownd: y<sup>e</sup> above written evidence to: be y<sup>e</sup> truth:: before grand: Inquest. upon his oath Jn<sup>o</sup>: Burbank & ffrances Wycom: attested: to: substance of this above written: evidence:: as: that: s<sup>d</sup> Scott s<sup>d</sup>: it may be you will not gett: yo<sup>r</sup> corn in to night therefor. let me glean to night: & that y<sup>e</sup> oxen would not goe forward: but backward with. y<sup>e</sup> load of Corn: nor: y<sup>e</sup> corn: could: none of it be gott ~~into~~ in that night: before: s<sup>d</sup> Inquest: Sept<sup>e</sup>: 15: 1692

[Hand 2] Sworne in Court also by John Burbanke.

[Reverse] [Hand 4]

Jn<sup>o</sup> Burbanke

Daniel Wycomb

agst Mary<sup>17</sup> Scott } dep<sup>o</sup>

Recorders: Hand 1 = unknown; Hand 2 = Stephen Sewall; Hand 3 = Simon Willard; Hand 4 = Anthony Checkley.

**MS 445a. Statements of Mary Warren, Elizabeth Hubbard, & Ann Putnam Jr. v. Margaret Scott (RSWH, no. 646)**

[Hand 1] Mary Waren: & Eliz. Hubbert both: Affirmd upon their oathes: that: they saw: Margret Scott: afflict Mary Daniell: of Rowly: before: y<sup>e</sup> grand Inquest this <t>hey<sup>18</sup> ownd to: y<sup>e</sup> grand Inquest. Sept<sup>e</sup>: 15: 1692

Mary Warin s<sup>d</sup>: s<sup>d</sup> Scott hurt: her <sup>^</sup>{sd Warin.} also: before: y<sup>e</sup> grand Inquest.

Eliz Hubbert sayd that Margret Scott: afflicted her: before y<sup>e</sup> grand Inquest:: Sept<sup>e</sup>: y<sup>e</sup>: 15: 1692

[Hand 2] Jurat in Curia

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<sup>17</sup> The letters ‘y’ and ‘g’ appear in virtually the same form in this brief extract written by Anthony Checkley (Hand 4). ‘Marg’ is a possible transcription here as a short form or abbreviation of *Margaret*. However, we have opted for ‘Mary’ in light of Checkley’s use of ‘Mary’ in MS 445b, where the ‘y’ appears in a different and unambiguous shape. See also the earlier discussion of the confusion of first names among the Salem recorders.

<sup>18</sup> The word ‘they’ seems to have been modified from an original ‘she’ by shaping the ‘s’ into a ‘t’ and adding the ‘y’ in a very cramped space before the next word.

[Hand 1] An: Putnam: & Mary Warin affirmed to y<sup>c</sup> grand Inquest: that: they saw Margret:  
Scott: afflict: ffrances Wycom: in presence of y<sup>c</sup> grand Inquest: Sept<sup>e</sup>: 15: 1692 vpon their oathes  
also y<sup>t</sup> s<sup>d</sup> Scott: afflicted: s<sup>d</sup> ffrances Wycom: before in Salem

[Hand 2] Jurat in Curia by Ma. Warrin

[Reverse] Warren Hubbard An Putman

Recorders: Hand 1 = Simon Willard; Hand 2 = Stephen Sewall.

### **MS 445b. Deposition of Thomas Nelson v. Margaret Scott (RSWH, no. 645)**

[Hand 1] The Depositi<o>n of Thomas Nellson who saith. that about six yeares ago the last winter. Margeret Scot of Rowley widow desired me to bring her some wood and spake to me seuerall times for wood and I told her that I owed her ten shillings and I would bring her wood for it. and she was nat willing to set of<sup>19</sup> that. Earnest she was f<o>r me to bring her wood.: denied her. soon after this one of my cattell was dead in the stant<i>all<sup>20</sup> and stood up on his his hind fee<t> and kneeld on his knees af<o>re and litle after this an<o>ther of my cattell was dead in the yard his neck under a plank at the barne side as if he were chokd and after this. and euer since: had hard thoughts of this woman. and my neighbo{<r>} t<o>ld me <t> something was <m?> more then ardinery that my cattell died so. and i do uerily beliuie that she is a witch

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<sup>19</sup> 'set of': 'to take into account by way of compensation or equivalent' (*OED* s.v. *set*).

<sup>20</sup> 'stant<i>all': 'stanchel, stanchion, a device that fits loosely around the neck of an animal (as a cow) and limits forward and backward motion (as in a stall)' (*Merriam Webster's* s.vv. *stanchel*, *stanchion*; cf. *OED* s.vv. *stanchel*, *stanchion*; this particular meaning is not recorded).

[Hand 2] Tho: Nelson: one of y<sup>e</sup> grand Inquest gave: in this evidence to y<sup>e</sup> grand Inquest: Sept<sup>e</sup>:  
15: 1692

[Hand 3] Jurat in Curia

[Reverse] [Hand 4] Tho Nelson depo agst. Mary scott

Recorders: Hand 1 = unknown (same as Hand 1 in MS 445c); Hand 2 = Simon Willard; Hand 3 = Stephen Sewall;  
Hand 4 = Anthony Checkley.

**MS 445c. Deposition of Sarah Coleman v. Margaret Scott (RSWH, no. 643)**

[Hand 1] The Deposition <o>f Sarah Coalman who saith about the fiuetenth of Agust<sup>21</sup> last past  
that she was tormented three or four times by Marg<e>t Scot of Rowly. or her apearance by  
p<r>icking pinching and choaking of m<e> <a>nd I do uerily beliuē that she is a witch.

[Hand 2] Sarah Coleman affirmed before y<sup>e</sup> Grand inquest that the aboue written Euidence is  
truth vppon her Oath 15 sep<sup>t</sup> 1<6>9<2>

[Reverse] [Hand 3] Sarah Colem<sup>n</sup> <:> agst Margrett Scott

Recorders: Hand 1 = unknown (same as Hand 1 in MS 445b); Hand 2 = Andrew Elliot; Hand 3 = Anthony  
Checkley.

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<sup>21</sup> The word 'Agust' is possibly followed by a faint period.

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