

OBITER DICTA

President's Letter

Jordan Jefferson – Yale Law Library

Happy New Year SNELLA! A new year offers us new opportunities to recharge, revamp, and reassess. I don't know about you but at the start of a new year I like reflect on the previous year's successes and challenges. 2017 saw some great things for SNELLA, new members joining our organization (and our board), two very successful educational events in the Spring and Fall, and continued opportunities for membership to meet up and network. We also experienced a few challenges, such as issues with our listserv and valuable members moving up and on. I am excited to see what challenges and opportunities await us in 2018.

A note on upcoming events:

- Our Winter Dinner will be Wednesday, January 31st at 6:30 at Bar in New Haven. The cost will be \$20/person. Please let [Anne Rajotte](#) know if you will be attending. I look forward to seeing you all there!
- We are working on a Spring educational event. Please be on lookout for more information in the coming weeks. If you have any thoughts on topics or locations for future educational events please contact [Adam Mackie](#).
- Elections will take place in April. I urge anyone who would like to become more involved with SNELLA to run for a position or volunteer for a committee. You can learn more about the [board positions](#) and [committees](#) on the SNELLA website or feel free to contact the member who [currently holds](#) that position.

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SNELLA is small but strong and I look forward to continuing our mission and growing our organization in the coming year.

SNELLA Winter Dinner

Date: January 31, 2018

Time: 6:30 PM

Place: Bar New Haven,
254 Crown Street,
New Haven, CT 06511

Cost: \$20 per person **RSVP:** [Anne Rajotte](#)

See the menu at:

<https://www.barnightclub.com/eat/>



Witch Trials in Connecticut

By Anne Rajotte

UConn Law Library

Witch trials were a fairly common occurrence in Connecticut during the 17th century, ending at around the same time that the Salem Witch Trials occurred. Overall, at least 50 people in Connecticut were accused of witchcraft during the 17th century, 43 were charged and 11 executed.

Connecticut witch trials have never received the same attention as the Salem witch trials, in part because information about them was scattered, and the incidents were spread over many years, without a single incident reaching the scale of the accusations in Salem.

Nevertheless, there are a good deal of primary sources such as diaries, writings, court records, and colonial records, from which a researcher can piece together how witchcraft accusations and prosecutions came about. As result, there are also a number of excellent books that draw upon these sources to tell the story of witch trials during the seventeenth century and provide some historical, cultural, and religious context for the events.

Primary Sources

Code of 1650 - Capital Laws, published in the Colonial Records of Connecticut: included law about witchcraft. Available through Internet Archive.

John Winthrop's Journal - notes the first known execution for witchcraft in Connecticut. Available on Internet Archive and HathiTrust.

Matthew Grant's Diary - includes the name of the first person executed for witchcraft in Connecticut. Available in the Connecticut State Library's digital collections.

Wyllys Papers - digitized and available from the Connecticut State Library and Brown University Library. Includes a list of grounds for suspicion of being a witch, indictments and depositions from witchcraft cases.

Cotton Mather, Memorable Providences Relating to Witchcraft and Possessions - known for his documentation of the Salem Witch Trials, Cotton Mather published an earlier work documenting witch trials throughout New England, including one of Connecticut's earlier trials in 1648. Available through HathiTrust.

Records of the Particular Court of Connecticut - Established in 1638 and the principal court for criminal and civil matters until 1665. Includes records of witchcraft trials among other kinds of criminal and civil cases. Available through HathiTrust.

Records of the Courts of Assistants – After the Particular Court was abolished, this was the court of general jurisdiction and is the forerunner of the Superior Court. Includes records of witchcraft trials among other kinds of criminal and civil cases. Available at the Connecticut State Library Archives.

Secondary Sources

Cynthia Wolfe Boynton, *Connecticut Witch Trials: The First Panic in the New World* (2014).

Richard Godbeer, *Escaping Salem: The Other Witch Hunt of 1692* (2005).

David D. Hall, *Witch-Hunting in Seventeenth Century New England* (1991).

Richard S. Ross, III, *Before Salem: Witch Hunting in the Connecticut River Valley, 1647-1663* (2017)

John M. Taylor, *The Witchcraft Delusion in Connecticut* (1908).

R.G. Tomlinson, *Witchcraft Trials in Connecticut* (1978)



10 Things I Learned at the LLNE/SNELLA Meeting in Salem

By Tanya Johnson
UConn Law Library

LLNE and SNELLA's joint meeting, *Hysteria, Hyperbole, and Witch Hunts: 1697 & 2017*, took place in Salem, Massachusetts, on November 17, 2017. The event was a smashing success, with around 90 people in attendance. I had the privilege of serving on the planning committee, and I was pleased to see that all of our hard work paid off. Here are 10 interesting things that I took away from the event.

1. If you need a clue, always ask a local.

Despite the cold and rain, those of us who took the walking tour of Salem on the night before the meeting were treated to many interesting stories of the town and its history, and not all of them about witchcraft. For example, the inspiration for the American version of the classic board game, *Clue*, was a suspicious death – and possible murder – that took place at the Gardner-Pingree House in Salem. The victim was Judge Parker, the Parker Brothers' great uncle.

2. The witchcraft trials are not quite over, yet.

Mark Podvia's fascinating keynote presentation, *Witchcraft Trials, Both Ancient and Modern*, delved into not only the history of the witchcraft trials in Salem and elsewhere, but also the violence still inflicted on people accused of witchcraft today.

3. The devil can send your spirit out to do evil, but only if you are a witch and give him permission.

As Theresa McDougal explained in her informative talk, *Salem Witch Trials, Spectral Evidence, and Eyewitness Accounts*, testimony regarding these specters, and the convoluted reasoning for allowing such evidence, was much debated during the witch trials.

4. Art can teach us about legal history.

Gary Smith's presentation, *The Trial of George Jacobs for Witchcraft: Art and Legal History*, focused on the famous painting and the ways in which it portrays how the witch trials may have taken place. Visual examples like this painting provide excellent context for understanding historical events.

5. Witch trials in New England were not exclusive to Salem.

As SNELLA member and previous President, Anne Rajotte explained in her talk, *Connecticut Witch Trials*, the first execution of a person as a witch in colonial America actually occurred in Hartford, Connecticut. While perhaps we should not be proud of this, it is important to recognize that the mass hysteria behind the infamous witch trials in Salem was not exclusive to that location.

6. Working with professionals from other disciplines can lead to very beneficial results.

While I may not understand all of the technical details behind the Data Rescue project described by SNELLA member Scott Matheson in his talk, *Using Technology to Retain the Past: Data Scraping of Government Websites*, I am encouraged by the collaboration of librarians and other professionals to preserve government data and provide ongoing access for researchers and the public.

7. Errors in past publications can cause headaches in the present.

In his presentation, *The "Original" Thirteenth Amendment; or, Is Your Esquire Any Good?*, John Barden provided an interesting example of what might be considered "fake news," from almost 200 years ago: a proposed and unratified constitutional amendment, mistakenly published in a pamphlet in 1825, that some people still try to use in legal arguments.

8. Editing can make even black letter law biased.

Kathy Fletcher and Susan Zago's interactive presentation, *Bias in Legal Publishing*, asked what law librarians can do to combat biases that appear due to the editing of judicial decisions for publication in casebooks. Attendees came up with many helpful suggestions, including the promotion of awareness through research instruction.

9. Social media can be a useful tool for librarians.

As SNELLA member Mike Hughes explained in his engaging presentation, *Twitter Me Timbers*, the explosion of social media sites, such as Twitter, has created vast opportunities for librarians to not only connect with patrons and each other, but also to advocate on important issues while respecting all perspectives.

10. We need more empathy in the world.

Although Ron Wheeler's heartfelt talk, *Schizophrenia or Voodoo? Crazy Women and Their Plights*, was chronologically the last of the day, he perhaps made the most important point of all – that misunderstanding and lack of empathy can lead to horrific consequences. In Salem, women with mental illness were persecuted as witches, but even today, people with mental illness experience persecution in the form of, for example, more frequent arrests and police violence.

I hope that the presentations and discussions at the November LLNE/SNELLA meeting have helped us all to better empathize with those who may be different from us. By learning from the events of the past and the present, we can help inform others and create a better future.

SNELLA Joins Other Chapters in Listserv Migration

By Christopher Roy

Connecticut Judicial Branch Law Library at New Britain



SNELLA's listserv has been moved to a new platform. All current members are automatically subscribed to the new listserv. If you have questions about this, feel free to email me Christopher.Roy@jud.ct.gov.

There is a new email address to send out a message to the SNELLA listserv: snella@listserv.aallnet.org

Below is more information from Christopher Siwa, Director of IT at AALL, with some SNELLA information added.

Posting New Messages:

1. Similar to the Lyris platform, new messages can be sent via email. Every listserv now has a new email address. Please note, L-Soft may hold messages sent via email in a queue for up to 10 minutes for new subscribers. The purpose of this security feature is so that, if the message were part of a larger spam attack on the server, there would be time for evidence to accumulate and they can stop it before it negatively affects the listserv.
2. Alternatively, the user may opt to log into the [website](#) and send a message using the web form. Messages sent using the web form are not subject to the 10 minute queue because the user has already authenticated by logging in.

Replying to Messages: Users may reply to a message directly from their email client. **Please note, replies will be sent to the entire group.** If the user wishes to just reply to the sender, they will need to manually update the TO: line in their email client.

Web Archives: Similar to the Lyris platform, all messages sent through you chapter's listserv are archived. Each chapter listserv has their own URL for their archives. [Here is the SNELLA URL: <http://listserv.aallnet.org/archives/SNELLA.html>.] Alternatively, users may also access their chapter's archive from the [listserv's homepage](#). Please note, previous messages sent using the Lyris platform were not migrated and will continue to reside on Lyris. Additionally, all of the chapter listservs on the Lyris platform will be disabled by Friday November 17 in order to prevent messages from being sent on two different listservs. However, users will still be able to log in and access their chapter's old archive on Lyris at <http://share.aallnet.org/read/>.

Logging In and Registering a Password: When the user visits the website (<http://listserv.aallnet.org>) and logs in for the first time they will need to set up their password first by going to <http://listserv.aallnet.org/scripts/wa-AALLNET.exe?GETPW1>. After they set up their password, they may go to <http://listserv.aallnet.org> and click on 'Log In' in the upper right-hand corner.

Changing the Frequency of Messages: Every user can update how often they receive messages (i.e. real-time, daily digest) by logging into <http://listserv.aallnet.org> and clicking on "Subscriber's Corner" in the upper left-hand corner.



Submissions for the next Obiter Dicta Due: 5/10/18

Articles, comments or questions about this publication should be submitted to Editor: Jeffrey Dowd/CT Judicial Branch Law Libraries
90 Washington Street/Hartford, CT 06106

Phone: 860 706-5144/Fax 860 706-5086, Jeffrey.Dowd@jud.ct.gov

All material submitted for publication is subject to editorial revision. Electronic submission is encouraged.

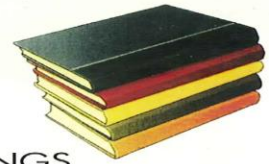
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