

Travel Scene

Iris Sanderson Jones editor



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Salem, Mass. is the home of the infamous Salem Witch Trials of 1692, when more than 200 people were accused of being witches, 23 were convicted and 19 were hanged. This modeled

witch trial is staged with mannequins. Here, the scene shows Rev. George Burrough's being hanged at Gallows Hill.

Witch trials haunt Salem for Halloween

Spooky tales bring chills to gothic town

By Phyllis Kruger Stillman
special writer

It's Halloween every day of the year in Salem, the "witch city" of Massachusetts, but the chills and thrills are at high pitch for the seven days between now and Halloween.

The whole city participates in the Halloween festivities, with costumed storytellers scaring the wits out of the kids with spooky tales, haunted houses and pirate walks.

A group of magicians will hold a seance, as they do every year, to try to make contact with the ghost of Harry Houdini, and this year they will do it at a secret location in Salem.

Salem is, after all, the home of the infamous Salem Witch Trials of 1692, when more than 200 people were accused of being witches, 23 were convicted and 19 were hanged. For years the town tried to live down its reputation; now they are living it up, especially on Halloween.

In 1689, the Reverend Samuel Parris moved to Salem with his family - his wife, a daughter, Elizabeth, a niece, Abigail Williams; and two slaves from the West Indies: John and his wife, Tituba. Few activities were acceptable for girls in the Puritan society, so Elizabeth and Abigail had very few outlets for their energies.

To alleviate some of their boredom, Tituba would tell them, and several of their friends, stories. Because of Tituba's background, many of these stories were based on voodoo.

Soon after the stories began, the girls started behaving oddly. They were subject to convulsive fits and constriction in their throats, and they often stared into space or cried out in what appeared to be hypnotic states.

A doctor who was brought in to examine the girls found nothing physically wrong with them. At this period in history, many people believed in witches and possession by the devil. Since he could find no other explanation for their affliction, the doctor concluded that the girls were under the spell of witchcraft.



The Salem Witch Museum offers a dramatic presentation of the early witch trials. Visitors are ushered into a darkened room as a narrator tells the story of the hysterical girls who lied and sent many innocent people to their death, labeled as witches.

The girls were repeatedly questioned as to who was casting spells on them. Eventually, one of the girls broke under interrogation and accused three women, one of them Tituba, of being witches.

And that's how the infamous witch trials of Salem began - with the rantings of bored, repressed, hysterical girls. Years later, one of the girls asked for forgiveness in public, and confessed that most of what she and her friends said during the period was untrue and most of their symptoms were manufactured.

For years Salem has tried to live down its reputation; now they are living it up the week of Halloween.

Two museums in Salem, The Salem Witch Museum and The Witch Dungeon Museum, graphically tell the story. A third attraction, The Witch House, is the restored home of one of the judges who served on the witch trials; he held pretrial hearings in his bed chambers.

The Salem Witch Museum offers a dramatic presentation of the story. Visitors are ushered into a darkened room. As a narrator tells the story of the hysterical girls and the inhumanity of the witch trials, 13 different raised stage settings are illuminated in sequence.

The Witch Dungeon Museum, 16 Lynde Street, has its own horrors to offer. After briefly explaining the story, a Salem Witch Trial is reenacted by actresses portraying an accuser and the accused.

As the tour continues downstairs into the pitch dark dungeon, I had no trouble getting caught up in the spirit of the times. Mannequins are used to depict prisoners in cells.

Prisoners were treated in a sub-human manner. Forced to pay for their room and board, those who could not afford better accommodations were housed in telephone booth-size cells, so small that the prisoner was unable to sit or even kneel, but had to remain standing at all times. The food was rotten and stale, and the water was salted so that prisoners would be even more thirsty and would have to buy more water.

In this damp, dark dungeon, I could feel the despair the prisoners must have felt (even though this is not the actual dungeon but a recreation.) To be treated the way they were and to live in the darkness and discomfort must have sapped the strength and sanity of all but the very strong.

The Witch House, 310½ Essex Street, is a side from its connection to the witch trials, an interesting place to visit. Built in the 1840's, Witch House is a good example of what the home of a wealthy person looked like during that period.

The Salem Witch Museum is open year round, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., with presentations every half hour. Admission is \$3.50 for adults, \$3 for senior citizens, and \$2 for children.

The Witch Dungeon Museum is open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., May through early November. Admission is \$3.50 for adults, \$3 for senior citizens, and \$2 for children.

The Witch House is open through the end of November, from 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Admission is \$3 for adults, \$2.50 for senior citizens, and \$1.50 for children.

Despite the dominance of the witch theme, Salem has many other attractions. Nathaniel Hawthorne was born and raised in Salem. The setting for his novel "The House of the Seven Gables" was based on the home of his cousin near the harbor in Salem. The home, with its hidden staircase used when it was a stop on the underground railroad, is open for tours year round.

Peabody Museum, East India Square, is the oldest continuously operating museum in the United States. It was formed by a group of mariners in 1799 who brought back curiosities from their voyages around the world. The museum now houses more than 300,000 objects, displayed in over 30 galleries.

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Water phobia

Instructors meet at party to take fear out of diving

By Iris Sanderson Jones
special writer

If scuba diving is an eerie idea that you have always wanted to explore, you should join John Burns and his fellow dive instructors at a Halloween party Oct. 30. The only thing you'll dive into is a glass of witch's brew, but it will be a good place to explore the underwater world.

John Burns, who grew up in Farmington and now lives in Novi, never expected to spend so much of his life underwater. He spent four years in the U.S. Navy but he didn't really discover scuba diving until he was back in Michigan, signed up as a student at Oakland Community College.

"I needed a few credits and decided to do a fun course," he said.

IT WAS so much fun that he soon assisted OCC dive instructor Tom Williams of Novi and started exploring the shipwrecks of the Great Lakes and the great barrier reefs that run between Belize and Cozumel. Burns says that this reef is second only to the Great Barrier Reef in Australia.

Burns is now the manager of Recreational Diving Systems Inc. of Royal Oak, which offers splash parties, scuba diving lessons and trips that range from overnight in the Bahamas to a cruise aboard the Tropical Princess to Bali.

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John Burns of Novi spends a lot of his time underwater. He is the manager of Recreational Diving Systems Inc. of Royal Oak, which offers splash parties, scuba diving lessons and trips that range from overnight in the Bahamas to a cruise aboard the Tropical Princess to Bali.

Ghosts and goblins lurk at Toledo zoo

If you are planning a day trip to the Toledo Museum of Art for the highly recommended exhibit "Impressionism: Selections From Five American Museums," take the kids along and have a little scary Halloween fun at the Toledo Zoo.

The Toledo chapter of the American Association of Zoogeographers will once again host the Haunted House at the Zoo 6-10 p.m. Oct. 27 through 29. It's for kids 13 and older and costs \$3 per person plus \$2 to park.

Children of all ages will enjoy the Pumpkin Path, which returns to the Toledo Zoo for the fifth year. More than 500 carved pumpkins light the Zoo's pathways, leading costumed visitors to different decorated sta-



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tions staffed by Zoo employees and volunteers. That's Wednesday Oct. 31 from 5 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., admission \$1. Kids must be accompanied by an adult.

For more information call (419) 385-3721.

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