**www.delta.edu/pahutchi/puritans.html**

**Getting to Know the Puritans:**

"The Puritans are so named as they sought to "purify" the Church of England.

I. Basic Puritan Beliefs and Values

Ethnocentrism predominated during the Early Colonial period; the Puritans believed that only their religion was the "correct" one and all others would be damned. See Salem Witchcraft Trials below as an example of the Puritans' intolerance. Roger Williams was also expelled for new and dangerous opinions as he preached a complete separation of church and state. The Puritans also persecuted and killed Quakers for preaching "inner light" doctrines. Anne Hutchinson was persecuted and expelled as well as she believed in individual grace and criticized the dual nature of religion and the government. Simplicity was the norm and anything excessive (clothes, decorations, even behavior, etc.) was seriously frowned upon.

Predestination: the Puritans believed in predestination--all events are fore known and foreordained by God. God would save who is chose to and damn those he chose as well. The question foremost in all Puritan's mind was "Am I saved?" They were born sinners and remained sinners unless redeemed by God; he was their absolute sovereign. Only He, through his Divine Grace, could save them, and no amount of good deeds could result in being saved.

Education was supported to thwart Satan and his temptations as well as to allow people to become literate enough to read the Bible. God's will, they believed, was revealed in the Bible.

Divine Mission: The Puritans believed that they would settle the New World for God.

II. Puritan Government

Church and state were intertwined causing a blurring of political and religious authority. Williams was expelled because he believed the state should have no say over a person's conscience. Roger Williams also held that Native Americans should be paid for their lands. Voting was restricted to active church members only. Supported Puritan religion by taxation on all, regardless of faith.

II. Puritan Contributions

 • Hard work ethic

• Stalwart moral values

• Self-governance and community responsibility (all community members were responsible for the conduct of citizens)

• Education creating literate citizens

• Literary contributions in prose and poetry

The Salem Witchcraft Trials: Intolerance at Its Worst

From January to September 1692, witchcraft hysteria reigned. The original event, occurred on Jan. 20, and the hysteria began when in Danvers, then a parish of Salem Town, known as Salem Village, the daughter, Betty, and niece, Abigail Williams, of the village minister, Rev. Samuel Parris began exhibited bizarre, inexplicable behavior. In mid February, finding no physical cause for the erratic behavior of screaming, swearing, seizures and trance like states, physicians concluded that the girls were under the influence of Satan. After numerous prayer services, fasting, and ingesting a witch cake (made of rye meal and the girls' urine), the girls named three women as the source of their affliction: Tituba, Rev. Parris' Caribbean Indian slave, Sarah Good, and Sarah Osborne.

Thus was set in motion the action of trials and imprisonment that would kill 24 people: 19 were hanged on Gallows Hill in Salem, and 5 died in prison. Eager to please government and religious officials, those accused confessed and named others to show their good faith. Some would not confess and continued to plead not guilty. Since they could not be convicted legally, they were often tortured to confess by such methods as stone weights being applied to the body or being thrown, weighted with heavy stones, into a body of water; if the person floated, they were a witch. Never mind that they sank; they were "saved" by their deaths. Ultimately, by late September, 50 had confessed, 100 were in prison, and accusations had been made against an additional 200 people. Criticism of the evidence by Cotton Mather and other clergy convinced the governor to intervene and release all those jailed and to halt the executions. Read A Chronology of Events: The Salem Witchcraft Trials of 1692 for a complete lists of events and additional information."