

Ann “Goody” Glover

Contributed by Brian P. Hegarty Jr.

In the 1650s, Ann “Goody” Glover and her family, along with some 50,000-other native Irish people, were enslaved by Englishman Oliver Cromwell during the occupation of Ireland and shipped to the island of Barbados, where they were sold as indentured servants.

While in Barbados, Ann's husband was reportedly killed for refusing to renounce his Catholic faith. By 1680, Ann and her daughter had moved to Boston where Ann worked as a “goodwife” (a housekeeper and nanny) for the John Goodwin family.

In the 1680's the people of Boston had seen King Philip's war, the armed conflict between American Indian inhabitants of New England and English colonists and loss of their charter. All of this was seen as evidence that Satan was at work and that God had withdrawn his support for Massachusetts and for the Puritans that lived there. Minister Increase Mather speculated that with all of these bad things happening, we could expect to see agents of Satan, witches, appearing among us. He leaves for England in 1688 but the people of Boston at this time, say they do indeed see witches operating among them.

John Godwin, who was a carpenter, had two children. Elizabeth, when she was around 12 years old, and John, was a bit younger, went to collect the family laundry from Goody Glover household. Goody was an older woman. When the children got home with the laundry they discovered that some of the things were missing. So, they went back to the Glover household and accused Goody Glover of stealing things from the family washing. Ann gets angry with them and ends up saying things in Irish Gaelic and according to the children looks at them in strange ways which scares the children. When the children get home, they start crawling around the floor barking like a dog, and behaving in other strange ways. The family gets counsel and asks what do you do when children are bewitched? The neighbor suggests things like throwing a pudding in a fire and if there's a witch around it will fly after it. Or putting sagebrush on the entryway of the house, and the witch will not be able to cross that. Instead of using these folk law remedies they call upon Reverend Cotton Mather. Cotton has taken his father's place as the minister of the North Church while his father is in England.

The infamous Reverend Cotton Mather, a Harvard graduate and one of the main perpetrators of the witch trial hysteria at the time, insisted Ann Glover was a witch and brought her to what would be the last witch trial in Boston in 1688. Cotton takes the Goodwin children into his home and prays with them. The children continue to exhibit these bizarre symptoms, and then Mather, as the magistrate, looks into Ann Glover's household and find puppets and dolls in Ann's possession. This, they say, is evidence that Goody Glover might in fact be a witch. The other evidence is that Goody cannot say the Lord's Prayer in English. She can only say it in Irish Gaelic. In the courtroom, Ann refused to speak English and instead answered questions in her native Irish Gaelic. In fact, it was a mix of Latin and Irish Gaelic. Because it was kind of mixed they considered this proof that she was possessed and her mangling the Latin did not help her case. Her lack of education helped her undoing. Ann Glover was tried and convicted for witchcraft and was hanged on the Boston Common on November 16, 1688 for being a witch.

Boston merchant Robert Calef, who knew Ann when she was alive, said she “was a despised, crazy, poor old woman, an Irish Catholic who was tried for afflicting the Goodwin children. Her behavior at her trial was like that of one distracted. They did her cruel. The proof against her was wholly deficient. The jury brought her guilty. She was hung. She died a Catholic.”

At the anniversary of her death in 1988 a plaque was placed not far from where she was hanged. This memorial is erected to commemorate “Goody” Glover as the first Catholic martyr in Massachusetts.” The Boston City Council also declared November 16 as “Goody Glover Day,” to condemn the injustice brought against her.

In 1689, Mather published *Memorable Providences* detailing the supposed afflictions of several children in the Goodwin family in Boston. Ann Glover's trial set the tone for the infamous Salem Witch Trials in 1692, during which 19 men and women were hanged for witchcraft. The Reverend Cotton Mather was called as an expert witness and his anti-Catholic prejudices played a major role.