The Geography of Witchcraft Accusations in 1692 Salem Village

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The alleged witches and those who accused them resided on opposite sides of the Village.¹

Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum's influential study, *Salem Possessed*, appeared a little more than one hundred years after the publication of Charles W. Upham's classic two-volume work, *Salem Witchcraft*. Like Upham's work *Salem Possessed* dealt almost exclusively with Salem Village, and like Upham, Boyer and Nissenbaum made significant use of a 1692 map of the village. Upham's map showed the locations of virtually all the households in Salem Village, and Boyer and Nissenbaum used this same map to plot the household locations of the accusers and the accused (Figure I). As a geographically based socioeconomic study keyed to this map, *Salem Possessed* succeeded so well in explaining the witchcraft episode in Salem Village that it was not significantly challenged by another scholarly account until the appearance of Mary Beth Norton's innovative and more comprehensive work, *In the Devil's Snare*.²

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² Charles W. Upham, *Salem Witchcraft, With an Account of Salem Village and a History of Opinions on Witchcraft and Kindred Subjects*, 2 vols. (Boston, 1867). Upham's valuable map, based on historic deed books and local information, was made by his brother W. P. Upham and published as the frontispiece of vol. 1. For digitization purposes I used an enlarged copy of this map printed by the Danvers Alarm List Company. Mary Beth Norton's book is the most comprehensive account.

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One can attribute the long-term success of *Salem Possessed*, now in its twentieth printing, not only to its socioeconomic approach but also to its simple yet compelling use of a map of the accusations in Salem Village. Drawing on Upham’s accurate and detailed map of village residences, Boyer and Nissenbaum created a Salem Village map that used letters to mark individual accusers’ locations (As), accused witches (Ws), and defenders (Ds) (Figure II). The map appeared near the beginning of the book and presented a surprising picture of a village geographically divided between accusers and accused. Boyer and Nissenbaum wondered, “What are we to make of this pattern?” The rest of the book furnished the answer.

Supported by their map, Boyer and Nissenbaum argued that underlying the neighborly quarrels was a deep-seated economic difference of the Salem witch trials to date, covering the twenty-two different towns and villages involved. See Norton, *In the Devil’s Snare: The Salem Witchcraft Crisis of 1692* (New York, 2002).

between the village and the neighboring commercial Salem Town (Salem Village was a separate parish). And it was an economic difference that eventually divided the village geographically into two conflicting groups. Boyer and Nissenbaum suggested that the poorer agrarian householders who lived in the western side of the village set their hearts and fears against their more prosperous and commercially minded neighbors who lived in the eastern part of the village, nearer the town, and economically benefited from it. Ultimately, according to Boyer and Nissenbaum, the conflict between the two groups was between differing visions of community: an agrarian-based, older Puritan sense of the public goodwill contrasted with a later emergent capitalist sense of private interest. This clash led the frustrated westerners to respond by charging the easterners with witchcraft. One summary of *Salem Possessed* put it this way: “The Salem trials can be seen as an indirect yet anguished protest of a group of villagers whose agrarian way of life was being threatened by the
rising commercialism of Salem Town.” Several other maps in *Salem Possessed* reinforced this argument. They depicted the geography of the conflict in Salem Village over the new minister, the Reverend Samuel Parris, and showed the locations of the landholdings of the influential Putnam and Porter families as evidence that the village was divided into eastern and western economic factions. But it was the striking witchcraft accusations map that appears to have been the most effective device in supporting Boyer and Nissenbaum’s economic interpretation of the witchcraft episode. This map reduced the whole complex event to a single graphic image: As on one side of the village, Ws on the other. Finally, it seemed, scholars had solved the mystery of the Salem Village witchcraft accusations by means of an objective historical method.

Several American history textbooks employ Boyer and Nissenbaum’s interpretation and some also reproduce the map, which is now part of the Salem story in many classrooms. At the more popular level, a current Salem visitor’s guidebook recommends *Salem Possessed* as “a seminal work that established the socioeconomic and political factors that brought about the witch hunt” in a divided village. Versions of this map have also appeared in television productions to show that the village was geographically “divided into two angry factions.” But, as Mark Monmonier points out in *How to Lie with Maps*, the general public seldom questions a mapmaker’s work and often fails to realize that “cartographic license is enormously broad.” Perhaps it is not surprising that scholars have also never thoroughly examined the Boyer and Nissenbaum map.

A review of the court records shows that the Boyer and Nissenbaum map is, in fact, highly interpretive and considerably incomplete. Contrary to Boyer and Nissenbaum’s conclusions in *Salem Possessed*, geographic analysis of the accusations in the village shows there was no sig-

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nificant village-wide east-west division between accusers and accused in 1692. Nor was there an east-west divide between households of different economic status. Equally important, eastern village leaders were not opposed to the village’s attempts to gain independence from Salem Town. Though Salem Village suffered from years of internal conflict over its ministers and replaced them at an unusually frequent rate, these conflicts did not have an east-west geographic or economic character. The village was remarkably homogeneous in its geographic distribution of wealth at almost all economic levels during this period. The same distribution holds true of the village’s religious and social demographics.

Though it may appear that the *Salem Possessed* map carries the burden of the argument about the socioeconomic and geographic foundation of the witchcraft accusations, the map does not supply all the evidence. A note to the map in *Salem Possessed* explains that for different reasons a total of thirteen accusers were omitted, thus indicating that the map is incomplete and does not represent all the accusers. The map is more properly understood as an illustration of the socioeconomic argument, not its proof. Indeed the authors introduce the map to the reader as a kind of geographic clue to the rest of the book’s findings. Nevertheless Boyer and Nissenbaum’s use of the map confuses these two purposes, clue and proof. On the one hand, the quantitative comparison of the numbers of As, Ws, and Ds that appear on the eastern and western sides of the map suggests that it presents objective evidence of a geographically divided village and that it reveals a straightforward numerical pattern. On the other hand, the explanatory note states that the map deliberately omits a number of well-known accusers, some because of their youth and others because of their support for some of the accused. These omissions indicate that the map involves an important interpretive component, in this case concerning the accusers’ ages and motivations. The note also implies that the map is complete except for the specified omissions, which is not the case. Thus the map’s relationship to the information contained in the court records is unclear: it is interpretive and incomplete yet seemingly offered as objective and exhaustive.

It is necessary to present a map as objective and complete as possible based on the court records before presenting any extrapolations about the Salem Village accusations. All maps involve some interpretation, but there is a difference between necessary selection and adaptation of a data set and interpretations built into the map that already present a perspective on the data the map represents. The selection of data and methodology should be as transparent as possible. Working with databases makes transparency easier because of the explicit database requirement
to document every data point that appears on the map. With a comprehensive map, scholars can then ask some questions about the data presented. By examining the locations of the most frequent accusers, for example, one may wonder what they have in common, geographically or otherwise, and then pose the same question about the accused. The basis for any such geographic questions, however, must be an accurate map of accusers and accused.

Explaining the errors and assumptions involved in Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum’s map of the village accusations requires understanding how the map was made. Boyer and Nissenbaum tell the reader that they used the Salem Village map from Charles W. Upham’s book, a detailed and fairly accurate rendering of the house locations and geographic boundaries of Salem Village and its immediate environs in 1692 (Figure III). Upham placed numbers and symbols on the map to designate the locations of 150 houses and structures in Salem Village and neighboring townships. Each square marker on the map stood for the location of a house and each number correlated with Upham’s 1692 list of property owners, which was based on Salem deed books and local knowledge. Number twenty-four, for example, designated the location of Thomas Putnam’s house, which was the home of two adult accusers: Putnam and his wife, Ann. Boyer and Nissenbaum placed two As at this location on their map to represent these two accusers.7

6 Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, eds., The Salem Witchcraft Papers: Verbatim Transcripts of the Legal Documents of the Salem Witchcraft Outbreak of 1692, 3 vols. (New York, 1977). As one of the editors of the new edition of the Salem court documents, I have had the benefit of examining the fifty-odd Salem court records that were overlooked or unknown when Boyer and Nissenbaum published Salem Witchcraft Papers. See Bernard Rosenthal et al., eds., The Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt (Cambridge, forthcoming).

7 A close-up of Thomas Putnam’s house (number twenty-four) on Upham’s map with Boyer and Nissenbaum’s superimposed As is available on http://oieahc.wm.edu/wmq/Jul08/ray.html. In the process of digitizing and georeferencing Upham’s map using geographic information systems (GIS) software, I gave each of Upham’s numbered house locations a black dot (see Figure III). The dots indicate geographic points with coordinates in real geographic space. Some of the extant 1692 houses represented by numbers on Upham’s map are still standing on their original foundations. I used a geographic positioning system device to determine the latitude and longitude of these houses on site. These known coordinates served as control points that linked the digital version of Upham’s map to real geographic space for purposes of georegistering the map and rectifying its errors as best as can be done using GIS software. The process resulted in a slight warping and stretching of the digital version of Upham’s map. The consequent offset between Upham’s paper map and geographic accuracy averages approximately five hundred feet, which is sufficiently accurate for these purposes. See Mike Furlough, “The Salem Witchcraft GIS: A Visual Re-Creation of Salem Village in 1692,” http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/libsites/salem.
Georegistered version of Upham’s map with geographic information systems data points.

Placing the Boyer and Nissenbaum map, with its As, Ws, and Ds, over the georegistered Upham map offered a useful means for checking the *Salem Possessed* map’s accuracy and also served to correlate its otherwise anonymous As, Ws, and Ds with Upham’s household markers and numbers, thus identifying the people represented by letters on Boyer and Nissenbaum’s map (Figure IV). The correlation between the letters, markers, and house numbers turned out to be fairly close in most areas, except near the center of the map where the correspondence was inexact. Nevertheless, by using the court documents and Boyer and Nissenbaum’s census of the Salem Village households, it is possible to identify the people in those households and their roles in the witch trials as accusers, accused, and defenders and to locate them with sufficient accuracy on the map.8

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8 Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, eds., *Salem-Village Witchcraft: A Documentary Record of Local Conflict in Colonial New England* (Boston, 1993), 383–93. I follow Boyer and Nissenbaum’s use of the term “accuser” to refer to any-
Boyer and Nissenbaum placed an all-important east-west demarcation line at the center of their map without explaining its precise location. The lack of explanation is curious because positioning the line slightly to the west would have made a significant difference in the crowded center of the map, shifting several As to the eastern side of the village. A close-up view of Boyer and Nissenbaum's dotted demarcation line neatly dividing As and Ws (overlaying the Upham map) highlights this area (Figure V).

The numerical count of As, Ws, and Ds that accompanies the *Salem Possessed* map refers to accusers, accused, and defenders located within the Salem Village boundaries, though the map itself shows a number of people in these roles outside the village in neighboring settlements. The map indicates that there were fourteen accused witches, thirty-two accusers, and twenty-nine defenders in Salem Village. Elsewhere Boyer and Nissenbaum give different tallies of accusers and accused in the village. For example their documentary source book *Salem-Village*
GEOGRAPHY OF WITCHCRAFT ACCUSATIONS IN SALEM

Witchcraft lists twenty-six accused witches as village residents. Included in this list are eight people shown on the map in Salem Possessed as living outside the village boundaries. A subsequent map, published in Boyer's cowritten Enduring Vision, shows only eleven accused witches within the village borders.9 There is a similar problem with the number of accusers in the village. The Salem Possessed map displays twenty-nine As in Salem Village, whereas the numerical count that accompanies the map says there are thirty-two accusers. This number includes three As located just across the village's northern boundary in Topsfield.

For the sake of completeness, corrections to the As and Ws on revised maps presented here include those located both inside and outside Salem Village boundaries within the same geographic area as Boyer and Nissenbaum's map. Though it is evident that the village accusers' social network reached far beyond the village's borders, making local geographic boundaries largely irrelevant to understanding all but the initial stage of the episode, the revised map retains Boyer and Nissenbaum's focus on Salem Village and its immediate environs, including adjacent areas of Rowley, Topsfield, and Salem Farms. Extending the map's geographic coverage would introduce issues that go

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**Figure V**

beyond Boyer and Nissenbaum’s interpretation of the outbreak of accusations in the village. The revised map also stays within the same time frame of accusations as the *Salem Possessed* map, from the end of February to the end of May 1692, the first three months of the nine-month accusation period.

Boyer and Nissenbaum do not identify the accused by name on their map. One can infer their identities from the position of the Ws in relation to Upham’s household markers and numbers and also from an unpublished version of Boyer and Nissenbaum’s map that assigns names to each of the accused (Figure VI). To rectify errors on the *Salem Possessed* map, eight large Ws designate corrected, deleted, or added accused (Figure VII). The large W to the east represents Bridget Bishop. Scholars have determined that she did not live in Salem Village but in the Salem Town, and hence this W is incorrectly placed and should be deleted. The large W near the center of the map is one of an accused pair identified on the unpublished map as Tituba and John Indian (see Figure VI). Both were Indian slaves who lived in the Reverend Samuel Parris’s house. Two Ws appear in the same location on the published map, positioned in the approximate location of Parris’s house, and clearly represent the same two people. John Indian, however, was never accused of witchcraft, though he was an active accuser in some of the preliminary examinations. Nor is John Indian identified as one of the accused witches in Boyer and Nissenbaum’s list in *Salem-Village Witchcraft*. The W representing him on the *Salem Possessed* map is therefore incorrect and should be deleted (see Figure VII). All the other Ws located within the village boundaries on Boyer and Nissenbaum’s map are correct according to the court records and Upham’s map.10

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10 Figure VI bears the names of Paul S. Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum in the lower left-hand corner. I found this map in a folder of miscellaneous papers relating to the Salem witch trials at the Phillips Library, Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Mass. The map includes the names of two accused witches, George Jacobs Sr. and Rebecca Jacobs, located in the Northfields section of Salem to the east of the village. Boyer and Nissenbaum omitted these names from the published map in *Salem Possessed*, perhaps because they lie somewhat outside the published map’s geographic frame. For Bridget Bishop’s full genealogical and marital history, see David L. Greene, “Salem Witches I: Bridget Bishop,” *American Genealogist* 57, no. 3 (July 1981): 129–38. According to the arrest warrant, Sarah Good and her husband,
Turning now to the accused outside the village, the cluster of five located to the southeast just below the village boundary represents five members of the Procter family (John Procter; his wife, Elizabeth; and three of their children, William, Benjamin, and Sarah). The Procters lived in the area called Salem Farms, an inland segment of Salem Town immediately to the south of the Salem Village boundary. Thus John William, lived in Salem Village, probably in rented rooms. But no records give their specific place of residence at the time and therefore I cannot represent Sarah Good or her accused five-year-old daughter, Dorothy, on a revised and corrected map.

Salem Village was originally part of Salem Town and often referred to as “Salem Farms” or simply “the Farmes.” In 1672 the Farms succeeded in petitioning the town and the General Court for permission to organize a separate parish called Salem Village for the purpose of hiring a minister and building a meetinghouse of their own. To support the new ministry via taxation, leaders geographically defined the Salem Village parish boundaries at this time as represented by Upham’s map. The remaining area of the Farms located south of the village remained part of the town and came to be known as Salem Farms. The property owners living within the
Procter was never listed on the village tax rolls. He was a prominent member of the church in Salem Town from 1667 and remained so until his excommunication and execution as a witch in 1692.

During the witchcraft episode, Procter’s great mistake was to denounce the accusing girls and scoff at their afflictions, especially those of his twenty-year-old servant, Mary Warren, whom he is said to have beaten to stop her fits. Warren lived in the Procter house and was a close friend of the young female accusers in the village. She was an active accuser in her own right but was also accused of witchcraft herself when she confessed in the court, saying that the other afflicted girls “did but dissemble.”

An additional W needs to be placed at the location of the Procter house to represent Warren’s accused status (see Figure VII).

![Figure VII](image)

Corrections to those accused of witchcraft on “The Geography of Witchcraft: Salem Village, 1692.”

Boundaries of Salem Village were first listed on the village tax rolls in 1681; the rolls were updated every two or three years and thus constitute a record of the property owners in the village. The village inhabitants met regularly in the meetinghouse to handle their affairs, which mainly concerned the village ministry and taxes and, later, petitions for independence town status, which was not granted until 1752.

12 Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 3: 793
The W located to the far northwest just beyond the Salem Village boundary in the area of Rowley Village (now Boxford) marks John Willard’s house, as indicated on Upham’s map. Property deeds show that some of Willard’s large holdings lay within the Will’s Hill area of Salem Village in the northwest corner, and hence Willard’s name regularly appears on village tax lists. Willard served as a deputy constable at the time of the witchcraft accusations and was involved in arresting several villagers, but he is said to have quit this work out of conscience and mocked the arrests. He was subsequently accused, arrested, and eventually executed. Curiously, Boyer and Nissenbaum did not include Willard in their numerical tally of accused village witches in *Salem Possessed*, though he is consistently identified as a resident of the village in the court documents and tax records.13

Also curious is their omission of four accused witches who lived just to the north of Salem Village in the neighboring town of Topsfield. In this same area, Boyer and Nissenbaum placed three As to represent Topsfield accusers Phillip and Margaret Knight and Lydia Nichols, who accused their immediate neighbors, William, Deliverance, and Abigail Hobbs (who were also accused by several residents in the village). In response to the accusations, Abigail Hobbs freely confessed to being a witch and, in turn, accused the Reverend George Burroughs, a former village minister disliked by the Putnam family, who lived in Wells, Maine. In the same week, several village residents, including members of the Putnam family, accused Topsfield resident Mary Towne Esty, Isaac Esty’s wife, whose two sisters, Rebecca Towne Nurse and Sarah Towne Cloyse, had already been accused in the village. All four Topsfield residents were well known to the accusers in Salem Village and quickly ensnared in the early phase of the village accusations. The four large Ws in Topsfield represent them (see Figure VII). The fully corrected map represents the locations of those accused of witchcraft in Salem Village and the bordering areas of Topsfield and Salem Farms within the same geographic area as Boyer and Nissenbaum’s map (Figure VIII).

Turning now to the large number of accusers, Boyer and Nissenbaum tell the reader that they decided not to represent two categories of accusers on the map. The first was a group of "five Villagers who were both accusers and defenders in 1692," whom Boyer and Nissenbaum do not otherwise identify. The second was the most active group of accusers in the village, "the eight ‘afflicted girls,’” as the authors call them, whom they list by name. Boyer and Nissenbaum explain that they omitted the afflicted girls because the girls were not "decisive shapers of the witchcraft outbreak as it evolved." Thus thirteen accusers were excluded from the map, the afflicted girls because of a perceived social insignificance due to their age and the accusers who were also defenders because of their apparent inconsistency, suggesting a lack of full support for the witch trials.

14 Boyer and Nissenbaum, Salem Possessed, 34n ("five Villagers"), 35 ("eight ‘afflicted girls’"), 35 n. 26 ("decisive shapers").
Omitting these thirteen accusers makes an important geographic difference. Ten lived on the eastern side of the village, thus significantly changing the east-west ratio of accusers. The decision not to represent these thirteen well-documented accusers clearly indicates that Boyer and Nissenbaum did not intend their map to represent information as recorded in the court documents. Instead they created a map that incorporated their interpretation of the court records based on assumptions about attitudes toward the trials or the social importance of the accusers. It turns out that many more accusers were omitted, it would seem, by oversight. A revised map shows the locations of all the accusers within this geographic area and lists their names (Figure IX). The small As represent the accusers that Boyer and Nissenbaum placed on their map; the large As represent the accusers that they omitted.

Boyer and Nissenbaum do not tell the reader who the five omitted accusers who were also defenders were, only that they did not mark them on the map as As or Ds. From the list of defenders presented in Salem-Village Witchcraft, it is clear that by defenders Boyer and Nissenbaum have in mind three categories of people who appear in the court records: “individuals testifying in defense of those accused witches who lived in Salem Village,” anyone “who signed a petition in favor of an accused witch living in [Salem] Village,” and “everyone giving skeptical testimony designed to cast doubt on the credibility of the afflicted girls.” By examining the court documents, it is possible to identify five defenders who were also accusers—Joseph Herrick Sr., James Holton, James Kettle, Nathaniel Putnam, and Samuel Sibley—who do not appear as As or Ds on the Salem Possessed map. All were accusers of village residents who were examined by the magistrates and held for trial. Herrick, Putnam, and Sibley defended Rebecca Nurse. Holton was both an accuser and a defender of John Procter, and his testimony against Procter was used as evidence at Procter’s trial. Kettle cast doubt on Elizabeth Hubbard's truthfulness. None appear on the Salem Possessed map as As or Ds, and all except Holton were accusers of other people.

The decision to omit these accusers from the map, though perhaps appealing to a modern sensibility about accusers’ attitudes, imports an

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15 Working with the nearly one thousand documents published in the three-volume edition of the Salem Witchcraft Papers is not an easy task. Boyer and Nissenbaum’s index to these volumes includes only about one-third of the names mentioned in the court records, and some documents pertaining to accused people are only found in the case records of other people. Finding all the people named in the court records is easier and more accurate when using the search tools associated with the digital text edition, http://etext.virginia.edu/salem/witchcraft/texts/transcripts.html.

16 Boyer and Nissenbaum, Salem-Village Witchcraft, 381.
Corrections to the accusers delineated on “The Geography of Witchcraft: Salem Village, 1692.”

interpretation into the otherwise objective purpose of the map. Some of the Salem Villagers appear to have genuinely believed certain accused were guilty and others were not, and they acted on their convictions. Boyer and Nissenbaum could not visually represent Salem Villagers’ state of mind or moral conscience concerning the witch trials per se. Their complaints, depositions, and courtroom testimonies appear in the court records, and many of these documents were marked jurat in Curia and used as evidence in the trials to convict the accused.

Putnam was one of the complainants against John Willard and Sarah Buckley. He also initiated a complaint against Elizabeth Fosdick and Elizabeth Paine, two women who lived in nearby Malden. Yet Putnam stood by his old neighbor Nurse; he submitted his own petition on behalf of her innocence and also signed a testimonial in her favor circulated by the Nurse family, along with thirty-eight other villagers. Sibley testified against Sarah Good and John Procter but later signed the
Nurse petition. Herrick was a constable in Salem Village and apprehended a number of suspected witches. He accused Good and Sarah Bishop yet, like Putnam and Sibley, came to Nurse’s defense. Holton contributed testimony supporting Mary Walcott’s and Hubbard’s depositions against John and Elizabeth Procter yet also signed a petition of John Procter’s innocence. Though neither of Holton’s documents is dated his testimony against Procter is marked *Jurat in Curia* and was used as evidence at Procter’s trial, indicating that the court had no doubt about Holton’s charges and used them to convict. Kettle’s testimonies present a complex situation. He initiated a deposition against his neighbor Bishop, based on spectral testimony from Hubbard, and he contributed evidence in support of the Reverend John Hale’s deposition against Bishop. But Kettle also testified that when he spoke with Hubbard she told him “severall untruthes.”17 None of Kettle’s testimonies are dated, so it is difficult to address a change of mind. The case against Bishop, which was not strong, never came to trial. Nevertheless Kettle’s testimony, like that of others, became part of the record and lent support to the momentum of the accusations occurring in the village even if he changed his mind. In all these cases, there is no indication that accusers were skeptical about the trials in general, and only Holton appears to have had doubts about the guilt of the person he accused. These five accusers appear as As on a revised map to reflect the court records (see Figure IX).

In addition to these five omitted accusers, there are six individuals who appear on the *Salem Possessed* map as Ds who were also accusers of other people but do not appear on the map as As. They are Jonathan Putnam; Joseph Hutchinson Sr. and his wife, Lydia; John Putnam Sr. and his wife, Rebecca; and Joseph Holton Sr. In light of Boyer and Nissenbaum’s comment about the omission of individuals who were accusers and defenders, it would appear that the reader should assume that any of the accusations made by these defenders should not be taken seriously (hence their omission as As), though Boyer and Nissenbaum do not discuss this omission. Each of these accusers was a defender of Nurse, who was a close neighbor. Nevertheless the documents do not give any reason to ignore the accusations that these same accusers made against others.

Jonathan Putnam accused sisters Mary Esty and Nurse but later signed the petition in Nurse’s defense, though he did not change his testimony against Esty. Joseph and Lydia Hutchinson were among the orig-

inal complainants against Tituba, Sarah Osburn, and Sarah Good, yet both stood by their neighbor Nurse. Joseph Hutchinson also submitted a deposition that cast doubt on the reliability of Abigail Williams, one of Nurse’s young accusers, pointing out that she told him she could easily converse with the devil. John Putnam Sr. and his wife, Rebecca, testified in court against former Salem Village minister George Burroughs, but both came to Nurse’s defense. John Putnam Sr. also complained against Martha Carrier and contributed testimony against John Willard and Sarah Buckley. He accused Nurse of afflicting his son Jonathan but later signed a petition in Nurse’s defense as did Jonathan. Nevertheless John Putnam Sr.’s testimony against Nurse was used in court at her trial. Finally, Joseph Holton Sr., who signed the Nurse petition, was one of the chief complainants against William Procter and several Andover people. There is no indication in any of the documents that these seven accusers “publicly showed their skepticism about the trials” in general, as Boyer and Nissenbaum suggest, or that they doubted the accusations they made against others.18 These six accusers appear on a revised map as large As (see Figure IX).

The eight afflicted girls were Sarah Churchill, Elizabeth Hubbard, Mercy Lewis, Elizabeth Parris, Ann Putnam, Mary Warren, Mary Walcott, and Abigail Williams. The residences of these eight accusers are well known. Boyer and Nissenbaum apparently omitted two more, eighteen-year-old Susanna Sheldon and ten-year-old Jemima Rea, because they did not think the young accusers decisively shaped the witchcraft outbreak. Subsequent scholarship, however, has made it clear that this assumption, based on the view that the afflicted girls were merely mouthpieces for adult male villagers, is unsupportable. Bernard Rosenthal’s careful analysis of the court documents in *Salem Story* illuminates the constant collaboration among the young accusers (quite independent of adult control) as well as their deliberate acts of lying and deception. Mary Beth Norton’s illuminating study of these same young women in *In the Devil’s Snare* deepens current understanding of their reduced social status and the traumatized background of some who were the victims of Indian attacks in the 1675–76 King Philip’s War.19 Norton’s and Rosenthal’s accounts make it abundantly clear that the afflicted girls played key roles in the progress of the accusations in the village and that they helped to maintain control of the dynamics of the legal process inside and outside the courtroom on an almost daily basis.

As Norton points out, two or three of the youngest girls were initially prompted by adults to name certain people as witches, yet nothing in the record demonstrates that these girls and their older female friends did not initiate most of the accusations on their own, relying on personal confrontations, village gossip, and frequent collaboration.

The court records show that the young female accusers played an especially critical role in the preliminary and grand jury hearings. In all preliminary hearings, the young accusers were pitted against the accused in face-to-face encounters, and their eagerness to denounce, often spontaneously during the hearings, produced hundreds of subsequent written depositions and testimonies about the afflictions they suffered during these courtroom interrogations. Most depositions and testimonies were later gathered together, marked *Jurat in Curia*, and used in the trials to condemn the accused.

The importance of the young girls does not minimize the role of the adults who were heavily involved in enabling and supporting the accusations. Norton emphasizes that without leading village men (the most active being former village clerk Thomas Putnam) who recorded and filed complaints and depositions on behalf of most of the young female accusers, the legal proceedings would never have occurred.  

The young accusers' actions also reflected the interests of some of the leading adults and families in Salem Village. It is therefore important to place them on a corrected map to give a geographic location to
the interests they represented. For example two of the most active accusers, Ann Putnam and Mercy Lewis, were members of Thomas Putnam’s household, and Putnam was one of the most active of the village complainants. Placing all ten junior female accusers on the corrected map as As makes a difference in the east-west pattern because seven of them lived on the eastern side of the demarcation line: Sarah Churchill, Elizabeth Hubbard, Elizabeth Parris, Jemima Rea, Susannah Sheldon, Mary Warren, and Abigail Williams (see Figure IX).21

Boyer and Nissenbaum also apparently overlooked thirteen mostly adult accusers, now added as larger As to the revised map (see Figure IX). Their omission is surprising because three of them, Parris, John Indian, and Tituba, were residents of the prominent Parris household, and all three figure significantly in the court documents. All three are placed at the Parris house, located just to the east of the Boyer and Nissenbaum demarcation line, and grouped with the two As representing Abigail Williams and Elizabeth Parris. In the Parris household, there was a total of five accusers, more than any other household in the village. Ten other As represent Deliverance Hobbs and her daughter, Abigail, who confessed and accused several villagers who had already been accused; Lydia Nichols’s two daughters Lydia and Elizabeth and her son Thomas, who accused Abigail Hobbs and John Willard; Sarah Holton, who accused Rebecca Nurse; Bethshua Pope, who became afflicted at several grand jury hearings and cried out on the accused; Joseph Pope, who testified against John Procter; and Joseph Herrick Sr. and his wife, Mary, who both accused Sarah Good.

In sum the corrected map of the accusations in Salem Village shows an additional thirty-four accusers, most of whom lived on the eastern side of the village (Figure X). Putting accusers and accused together on the same map shows that there is no pronounced east-west division. Twenty-eight accusers appear on the eastern side of the east-west line and forty on the western side. The east-west distribution of accused witches is less even, but there are enough in the west so that the situation is not one sided. Clearly, accusers and accused did not live on opposite sides of the village as Boyer and Nissenbaum stated. Mapping all who made accusations in the same geographic area as Boyer and

21 Sarah Churchill’s location is not indicated on Figure IX because George Jacobs Sr.’s residence, where she lived, was located in the Northfields, an area that lies outside the range of Boyer and Nissenbaum’s map. There were four additional accusers in Salem Farms who lived in the Alice Schaflin house (Alice Booth, Elizabeth Booth, and George and Elizabeth Booth). The Schaflin house also lies just outside the frame of the Boyer and Nissenbaum map.
Nissenbaum’s map does not reveal a community geographically divided against itself.

The depiction of a geographic division depends in part on the location of the east-west demarcation line, yet Boyer and Nissenbaum do not explain the placement of that line in *Salem Possessed*. If it were a strictly geographic demarcation, dividing the village into two equal parts, the authors would have located the line farther to the west to adjust for Will’s Hill, the large geographic appendage in the northwestern corner. But a strictly geographic division does not appear to be what Boyer and Nissenbaum had in mind.

They placed the dividing line nearer to the meetinghouse, which was the symbolic center of all Puritan communities. If this position was their intent, the line should be moved slightly to the east to the actual meetinghouse location. The meetinghouse site was selected in 1673 by Joseph Hutchinson Sr., who donated a plot of land from his own property. This location was suitable because it placed the meetinghouse more
or less equidistant from most of the village residents and thus at the village's approximate demographic center. Moving the line closer to the meetinghouse would not significantly change the east-west ratio of accusers to accused as Boyer and Nissenbaum represented it.22

The unpublished version of the accusations map, interestingly, shows a diagonal line instead of a vertical one and divides the village in half from northeast to southwest (see Figure VI). This line appears to have been drawn so that it placed as many Ws as possible on the eastern side of the village. This strategy, however, left eight As on the eastern side. Comparing the diagonal version to the vertical one, which shows only two As in the east, suggests that the purpose of the vertical arrangement was to keep as many As in the west and as many Ws in the east as possible. Placing the vertical line so that it almost too neatly separates the closely clustered households at the center and thus keeping several As to the west of it strengthens this interpretation. It seems, therefore, that the location of the vertical demarcation line on the map was intended to show as dramatically as possible that Salem Village was geometrically divided against itself, with nearly all As in the west, and most Ws in the east.

According to _Salem Possessed_, there was a deep-seated economic division between the more prosperous and commercially minded “Town-oriented” farmers and “entrepreneurs” on the eastern side of the village and along the Ipswich road and the poorer, conservatively minded agrarian farmers in the more isolated, less fertile land in the west. “In at least two important respects—quality of land and access to market—those farmers on the eastern (or Town) side of the Village had a significant [economic] advantage.” One can use the tax rate information from the Salem Village Record Book to show the three different tax levels in a single display for the year 1689–90, two years before the outbreak of the accusations (Figure XI). At the lowest tax level, there are twenty-six households on the western side and thirteen on the eastern; thus about twice as many of the poorest families (in terms of landholdings) lived in the western area. The middle tax range shows twelve households in the west and fifteen in the

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22 The Salem Village map in Paul S. Boyer et al.’s _Enduring Vision_ appears to locate the dividing line somewhat to the east of the meetinghouse. By contrast historian George Lincoln Burr refers to Ingersoll’s Tavern as the “recognized centre of the Village.” The meeting-house [property] adjoined it to the east, to the west the parsonage, where lived Mr. Parris.” See Burr, _ Narratives of the Witchcraft Cases_, 153 n. 1. If Ingersoll’s Tavern, marked on Upham’s map by the symbol “+” (see Figure V), were the village center, the location of the demarcation line would be farther to the east, thus shifting a number of the accusers and accused in Parris’s house to the west.
east, an almost even distribution. The top level tax range includes six households in the west and seven in the east, again, an almost even distribution. Except for the lowest economic level, the map reveals a fairly homogeneous distribution of wealth across the village. Salem Village was not therefore divided into radically different eastern and western economic groups, and, as Richard Latner has shown, a comparison of the tax records over time also does not reveal any significant change in the geographic distribution of wealth over the years.23

It is important to also look at the distribution of social, political, military, administrative, legal, and religious leadership in the village during 1680–92 (Figure XII). The map markers represent the households of men who were church deacons, village committee men, constables, Salem Town selectmen, and militia officers as well as the village physician and the minister. Though there is a slight bias toward the east by

the tax rate list for the year 1695, three years after the witch trials were over, as the basis for examining the economic situation that supposedly gave rise to the witchcraft accusations in 1692. Though the tax rates do not vary much between the 1689–90 and 1695 tax lists, I have used the rates for 1689–90, as does Richard Latner. See Latner, “Salem Witchcraft, Factionalism, and Social Change Reconsidered: Were Salem’s Witch-Hunters Modernization’s Failures?” William and Mary Quarterly, 3d ser., 65, no. 3 (July 2008): XXXX–XXXX.

two households, the map shows a homogeneous distribution of village leaders during this ten-year period. By virtue of their years of service in administrating, policing, and defending the village and serving as church deacons, these men were the most committed to the village’s welfare. Though a few held positions as selectmen in the town from time to time, the commitment to village interests as measured by participation in its governance was not largely an affair of the householders living in the west.

Nevertheless, according to Boyer and Nissenbaum, it was the eastern village leaders who deliberately hindered the western villagers’ long struggle for independence because the easterners’ connections with Salem Town were economically beneficial to them. These eastern men, according to *Salem Possessed*, tried to undermine the village’s newly established congregation by attempting to oust Parris, which would set back the village’s efforts to become an independent township. An ordained minister and covenanted congregation were the necessary features in any Puritan town, and destabilizing the new church would frustrate Salem Village’s cause. To investigate the eastern villagers’ role in the village’s struggle for independence involves examining the several petitions submitted to Salem Town and to the General Court in Boston from 1670 to 1692. These petitions requested release from the town’s ministry tax because the villagers were already paying a tax for their own minister. For most villagers traveling the five to ten miles to Salem’s meetinghouse, especially in the winter, was also a hardship, which was the initial basis for the petitions a separate ministry and for a separate meetinghouse in the village.

There was a wide geographic spectrum of villagers who supported the 1670 petition for a village minister (Figure XIII). From the beginning the General Court in Boston made it clear that the support of a separate ministry in the village and maintenance of the meetinghouse would be in the hands of all residents of the village, not just those villagers who were already covenanted members of Salem Town’s congregation. This village-wide control of the ministry created an unusual situation in the village parish, indeed a structural anomaly, since control of a town’s ministry was normally in the hands of the congregation members alone. But Salem Village was not an independent town; it was only a separate parish within the town and, prior to Samuel Parris’s arrival, the village had a meetinghouse and a minister but no separately covenanted congregation. A small number of the villagers were members of the congregation in the town, and a few belonged to churches in neighboring Topsfield and Beverly, yet almost all were not members of
any congregation. In 1679 the Salem church reiterated the policy that all the village inhabitants controlled the village ministry: “the liberty granted to them by the town of Salem, whereby the Court order (to have a minister amongst themselves within such bounds [of the village]) was not granted to any of them under the notion of church members, but to the whole number of inhabitants there—for their present ease, being so far from the meeting-house here [in Salem Town].”25 This ruling set the stage for possible conflict between future church members in the village, once an independent congregation was established there, and the rest of the village residents if they disapproved of the minister.

After repeated conflict and a succession of three ministers in the village in eighteen years, the last of whom, Deodat Lawson, left in 1687, the town permitted the village to recruit a new minister who would be

25 Ibid., 246.
ordained so that the village would be able to establish its own covenant congregation. The search for a new minister, which led to Parris’s recruitment, was the work of several small village committees appointed in succession. After initial negotiations with Parris concerning salary and benefits, which were not fully resolved, the village agreed to appoint him in November 1689. As the first ordained minister in the village, Parris could establish its first covenant congregation, conduct Holy Communion services, and baptize the congregation’s children. Establishing a village congregation was also a major step toward the village’s independence from the town.

Once Parris was selected and installed, village leaders lost no time in submitting petitions to the General Court in Boston for independent township status. The first petition was initiated in August 1689, another was submitted in December 1690, and two more in January 1692. The final petition of January 28 requested that the village be granted township status and be freed from those town taxes that did not benefit it, namely, the taxes for Salem’s minister, the town roads, and support of the town’s poor. The petition was signed by several prominent residents, all eastern village men, who were chosen to serve as advocates: Thomas Flint, Joseph Hutchinson, Francis Nurse, Joseph Porter, John Putnam, and Nathaniel Putnam. Flint and the Putnams were strong supporters of Parris; Hutchinson, Nurse, and Porter, strong opponents. Despite the deepening conflict over Parris, it is clear that the anti-Parris leaders steadfastly backed the independence movement in cooperation with their opponents.

The village’s desire for independence was strongly supported by eastern leaders, as can be seen from the locations of men supporting the four petitions (Figure XIV). It is difficult, then, to agree with Boyer and Nissenbaum that eastern village leaders had little genuine interest in separation from the town. Indeed all villagers would economically benefit because independence would free the village from paying a sizable portion of the town’s taxes for the support of its ministry, roads, and poor. Loss of tax revenue, however, made the town reluctant to accept the village’s petitions. Though there is an obvious connection between establishment of the village congregation and the village independence movement, since an independent church was a requirement for township status, there is no exclusive connection between the geographic location of the men supporting the village independence movement and the supposedly proindependence western side of the village, as Boyer and Nissenbaum believed.

26 Ibid., 349–57.
Finally, it is important to look at the geographic distribution of church membership in Salem Village during Parris’s tenure from the founding of the new covenant in November 1689 to 1695, the year in which he was forced to leave (Figure XV). It is revealing to plot the residences of the original twenty-five covenant members, the twenty-nine people who joined in January 1690–July 1691, and the five who joined from 1693 to 1695, as listed by Parris in the church record book. Several of the new members were spouses of and shared the same households as founding members. In 1695, in connection with petitions for and against his removal from the village ministry, Parris identified an additional fourteen individuals who attended the village church as “Church-Members,” though they formally belonged to other nearby churches.  

There was a nearly uniform distribution of church member households across the village landscape (see Figure XV).

27 Ibid., 262–63, 309.
Salem Village, then, was not a community geographically divided against itself in terms of church membership. Nor was it geographically divided over the issue of independence from the town, or by wealth, social leadership, church membership, or the witchcraft accusations.

The central idea of *Salem Possessed*, which made it such a landmark study, was the notion that the Salem witch trials “cannot be written off as a communal effort to purge the poor, the deviant, or the outcast,” as in most other witchcraft episodes in New England. “Whatever was troubling the girls and those who encouraged them,” Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum pointed out, “it was something deeper than the kind of chronic, petty squabbles between near neighbors which seem to have been at the root of earlier and far less severe witchcraft episodes in New England.”28 This something deeper was Salem Village’s well-known

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factionalism and the conflict that Boyer and Nissenbaum believed was economic, social, and geographic in character. Guided by this essential thesis, *Salem Possessed*—unlike accounts of the previous two hundred years—was the first to analytically examine the historical forces at work in Salem Village instead of merely offering a moral account of the episode and its many perpetrators and victims. As this article indicates, mapping the accusations needs to be as free of interpretive assumptions as possible if scholars are to have a solid geographic foundation for further historical analysis.