

SALEM VILLAGE



For use with the Kingdom role-playing game
www.lamamage.com

Copyright © 2014 by Ben Robbins.

All rights reserved. No part of this document may be copied in any form without the express written permission of the author.

"...we must uphold a familiar Commerce together in all meekness, gentleness, patience and liberality, we must delight in each other, make others Conditions our own, rejoice together, mourn together, labor, and suffer together..."

"For we must consider that we shall be as a City upon a Hill. The eyes of all people are upon us. So that if we shall deal falsely with our God in this work we have undertaken ... we shall shame the faces of many of God's worthy servants and cause their prayers to be turned into curses upon us ..."

–John Winthrop's sermon to the Puritan colonists, sixty years before the witch trials

Winthrop's sermon was both a challenge and a warning to his fellow colonists. The Puritans came to the New World to escape what they saw as the shackles of a corrupt and degraded religion. Their vision was to build a righteous society that would stand as an example to the watching eyes of the world, a harmonious community founded and strengthened by faith.

But the task before them was no small one. And if they failed to live up to the covenant they had set for themselves there would be no way to hide their failure. Now the name "Salem" is well remembered, not for its shining virtue but for its witch trials and accusations. A community torn apart by superstition, fear and persecution. Winthrop's warning, come true.

Can your Salem turn out differently? The eyes of the world are upon you...

The Kingdom is Salem Village and the people who live there, not the larger Puritan society. There are other neighboring Puritan communities which may thrive even if your village withers. Like any small town, the community is close-knit. Everyone knows everyone's business. Keeping secrets is near impossible.

Your game could focus entirely on witch trials and persecution, or you could address the difficulties of carving a just, pious and harmonious community out of the untamed wilderness.

HISTORICAL NOTES

As with all real world settings, remember that your game trumps historical facts, but here are some notes about the real Salem to give you inspiration.

English Puritan settlers founded the Massachusetts Bay Colony in the 1630s and the infamous witch trials occurred 60 years later, still over a century before the colonies declared independence from the King of England.

In a Puritan community, there is little separation between government, society and religion. Religious participation is mandatory. A minister leads prayer, but each person has a close bond with God that no clergy should come between.

Puritan faith forbids indulgences like instrumental music (choirs are fine), dance, toys or celebration of pagan holidays like Christmas or Easter.

CUSTOMIZE (*pick one answer for each*)

- Witchcraft is [just superstition which only the ignorant believe | just superstition, though most believe it | completely real; spells and charms have power]
- Our game starts [when the colony is still young and struggling, only a few years after the founding | once the colony has become stable, many years after the founding | once the colony is settled and civilized, decades after the founding]
- How common are witch trials in Salem? [No one has ever been accused, yet | Few and far between | A common occurrence. Barely a season goes by without someone standing accused]

THREATS

- Witches! Evil walks among us, or so we believe...
- Lust. Scandals of adultery or youth sneaking off to slake their carnal desires.
- Gluttony. Townsfolk crave luxuries and rich living, turning their eyes away from humility and God.
- Greed. People put personal profit before the common good.
- Gossip. Tongues wag. Neighbor spreads rumor against neighbor.
- Failing crops. Do we suspect witchcraft or natural drought?
- Beasts in the woods. It is dangerous beyond the eaves of the village.
- Our town is surrounded by sinners. Neighboring communities have lost their way.
- Non-Puritan "dissenters" are settling here. They do not share our faith.

LOCATIONS

- Meeting House. Center of the community. Doubles as a church and courthouse.
- Village green. Field for outdoor community gatherings.
- Parsonage. House provided by the community for the minister. Might stand empty if there is no minister.
- Mill. Waterwheel turns a stone to grind grain.
- Dead oak. Sit at the edge of town. Struck by lightning.

- Graveyard. All our ancestors are laid to rest here.
- Bald Hill. Looks out over the winding creeks and gentle meadows of Salem Village.
- Inn on Ipswitch Road. [more suitable location if the colony is settled and civilized, not if it is young and struggling]
- Field Wall. Low stone wall, dividing two properties in town. A popular place to loiter and gossip.
- Well. Another good place to loiter and gossip.
- Banks of the Crane River creek, running through the village.

CHARACTER SEEDS

These seeds highlight your relationship to the community and the faith, but they are only starting points. Your character will doubtless change and evolve as events unfold.

- Critic. You disagree with how the community is run. You may have spoken out publicly or merely grumbled to those you trust.
- Doubter. You are not sure you are worthy.
- Faithful. You trust in the plan and work hard to make the community succeed.
- Feuder. Your family has a standing grudge against another family. The bad blood runs deep.
- Patriarch/Matriarch. Leader of your extended family. Might be a loving grandparent or an exacting tyrant.
- Black Sheep. Everyone knows you don't fit in. What made you so disliked?
- Watchdog. You keep an eye out for the failings of others so that they can be corrected.
- Virtuous. Respected as an exemplar of good moral character, at least in one particular regard. Pick the virtue you are known for: abstinence, kindness, humility, charity, faith.

Pick a trade or position in the community. Puritan societal roles are very gender determined.

Men's trades: carpenter, cooper, farmer, hunter, innkeeper, mason, merchant, miller, smith, wainwright

Men's positions: magistrate (judge), minister, patriarch

Women: maiden, matriarch, midwife, spinster, widow, wife & mother

NAMES

Rather than the modern Mr. and Mrs., men are addressed as Goodman and women addressed as Goodwife (e.g. Goodman Glover, Goodwife Porter). Goodwife can be abbreviated to "Goody" (e.g. Goodwife Porter is Goody Porter). Individuals of higher status might be addressed as Master or Mistress instead.

Male: Abraham, Charles, Cotton, Isaac, Jacob, James, John, Matthew, Nathan, Philip, Samuel, Simon, Thomas

Female: Abigail, Ann, Deliverance, Dorothy, Elizabeth, Esther, Judith, Mary, Patience, Prudence, Rachel, Rebecca, Sarah

Surnames: Bayley, Bishop, Burroughs, Glover, Goodwin, Hale, Hawthorne, Hubbard, Martin, Newton, North, Parker, Parris, Porter, Proctor, Putnam, Stoughton, Walcott, Williams

CROSSROADS

- Hang Goodwife Mary Walcott for a witch?
Witnesses say she was seen by the light of the moon to enter the dark wood and take on the form of a dog.
- Make Deliverance Glover wear a scarlet letter as punishment for adultery?
- Drive the Haversham family out of the village? They just moved here from the town of Marblehead but they are not Puritans.
- Build a new, larger meeting hall?
- Yield farmlands beyond Planters Brook to the village of Ipswich?
Citizens in Ipswich claim that the farmlands were ceded to them by an old agreement with the old patriarch of the Hubbards before he died. There is a written deed, but it is hard to verify its authenticity. Can the men of Ipswich be trusted?
- Celebrate the anniversary of the town's founding?
Celebration of pagan holidays is not the Puritan way, but would it be vain or sinful to give thanks to God for our safe arrival in this bountiful land?

NOTES

Inspired by a *Fiasco* game played with Caroline Hobbs, Jerome Virnich and Pat Kemp, which used the *Salem 1692* playset by Logan Bonner and Lillian Cohen-Moore. That play session was filmed by Peter Adkison and used as the basis for the film *The Devil Walks In Salem* (www.facebook.com/TheDevilWalksInSalem).

And of course, inspired by the actual Salem colony, witch trials and all.