

IRON WORK FARM in ACTON, Inc.

P.O. Box 1111, Acton, MA 01720

Fall Newsletter

September, 2001

Volume II, Number 2

Abigail Dane Faulkner and the Salem Witchcraft Trials

by Anne Forbes, IWF Secretary

Visitors to the Faulkner Homestead often remark on the name of the first Faulkner family member to own the property--Ammi Ruhammah (Ammiruhamah) Faulkner, who took over the Jones fulling mill on Fort Pond Brook in 1738, and bought the mill, the house, and Ephraim Jones' farm in 1742. His name, which means "my people have obtained mercy", marks his role as an unborn child in saving the life of his mother during one of the most extraordinary times in our nation's early history.

Ammi Ruhammah's mother, Abigail (Dane) Faulkner, the daughter of the minister of Andover, was accused, convicted, and condemned to death as a witch during the infamous Salem witchcraft trials of 1692. She had married Francis Faulkner, son of Andover's most prominent landowner, in 1675. By the time of her accusation, she had borne six children, and her husband was so ill that she had assumed the management of his affairs.

After being accused of witchcraft by the children of several of her neighbors, Abigail Faulkner was tried at Salem, and condemned to death. Unlike some of the others who pleaded guilty in the hope of receiving a lighter sentence, she persisted in protesting her innocence, answering her examiners' questions with great shrewdness--even hinting that it was the judges who were bewitched by the devil. One other thing set her apart: she was found to be pregnant with her seventh child. While others were hanged for their alleged crimes, Abigail's judges were reluctant to cause the death of an unborn child, and ordered her jailed while awaiting the birth, instead. Imprisoned with her were two of her daughters who had also been accused--Abigail, age 8, and Dorothy, age 10. They remained in jail for nearly four months. By the time her son was born on March 20, 1693, sentiment had turned against the zealous judges and magistrates who had conducted the witchcraft trials, and Abigail and her children had been released.

She was not declared innocent, however, and in 1703, when Ammi Ruhammah was ten years old, Abigail Faulkner petitioned the governing authorities of Massachusetts to remove all witchcraft accusations against her from the record, and to officially clear her name and restore her reputation. Fearing that the accusations would "Remaine as a perpetual brand of Infamy upon my family," in 1710 she again asked that "my name that has been wronged may be restored," and sued the authorities for damages, including all the expenses of "providing for my self and children while we were in prison." Abigail Faulkner died in Andover in 1730.

Abigail Dane Faulkner's story was showcased in an exhibition at the Commonwealth Museum in 1992, and appears in most of the definitive accounts of the Salem witchcraft trials, including the recent *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman: Witchcraft in Colonial New England*, by Carol Karlson. The account is best read, however, in the court records themselves. Copies will be on display at the October 28 open house at the Faulkner House.

In Memoriam: Sandy Williams

Sandy Williams of Littleton, Iron Work Farm President from 1995 to 1999, passed away at his daughter's home in Maine on September 8. Among the many accomplishments of his tenure were the reorganization of IWF finances incorporating an official endowment, and numerous construction and restoration projects at both properties. He oversaw the stabilization of the Faulkner House shed in 1996, and conceived the Forest Management Plan for the Faulkner Homestead in 1997. Never afraid of hard work, he insulated the

IRON WORK FARM in ACTON, Inc.

P.O. Box 1111, Acton, MA 01720

Fall Newsletter

September, 2001

Volume II, Number 2

Abigail Dane Faulkner and the Salem Witchcraft Trials

by Anne Forbes, IWF Secretary

Visitors to the Faulkner Homestead often remark on the name of the first Faulkner family member to own the property--Ammi Ruhammah (Ammiruhamah) Faulkner, who took over the Jones fulling mill on Fort Pond Brook in 1738, and bought the mill, the house, and Ephraim Jones' farm in 1742. His name, which means "my people have obtained mercy", marks his role as an unborn child in saving the life of his mother during one of the most extraordinary times in our nation's early history.

Ammi Ruhammah's mother, Abigail (Dane) Faulkner, the daughter of the minister of Andover, was accused, convicted, and condemned to death as a witch during the infamous Salem witchcraft trials of 1692. She had married Francis Faulkner, son of Andover's most prominent landowner, in 1675. By the time of her accusation, she had borne six children, and her husband was so ill that she had assumed the management of his affairs.

After being accused of witchcraft by the children of several of her neighbors, Abigail Faulkner was tried at Salem, and condemned to death. Unlike some of the others who pleaded guilty in the hope of receiving a lighter sentence, she persisted in protesting her innocence, answering her examiners' questions with great shrewdness--even hinting that it was the judges who were bewitched by the devil. One other thing set her apart: she was found to be pregnant with her seventh child. While others were hanged for their alleged crimes, Abigail's judges were reluctant to cause the death of an unborn child, and ordered her jailed while awaiting the birth, instead. Imprisoned with her were two of her daughters who had also been accused--Abigail, age 8, and Dorothy, age 10. They remained in jail for nearly four months. By the time her son was born on March 20, 1693, sentiment had turned against the zealous judges and magistrates who had conducted the witchcraft trials, and Abigail and her children had been released.

She was not declared innocent, however, and in 1703, when Ammi Ruhammah was ten years old, Abigail Faulkner petitioned the governing authorities of Massachusetts to remove all witchcraft accusations against her from the record, and to officially clear her name and restore her reputation. Fearing that the accusations would "Remaine as a perpetual brand of Infamy upon my family," in 1710 she again asked that "my name that has been wronged may be restored," and sued the authorities for damages, including all the expenses of "providing for my self and children while we were in prison." Abigail Faulkner died in Andover in 1730.

Abigail Dane Faulkner's story was showcased in an exhibition at the Commonwealth Museum in 1992, and appears in most of the definitive accounts of the Salem witchcraft trials, including the recent *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman: Witchcraft in Colonial New England*, by Carol Karlson. The account is best read, however, in the court records themselves. Copies will be on display at the October 28 open house at the Faulkner House.

In Memoriam: Sandy Williams

Sandy Williams of Littleton, Iron Work Farm President from 1995 to 1999, passed away at his daughter's home in Maine on September 8. Among the many accomplishments of his tenure were the reorganization of IWF finances incorporating an official endowment, and numerous construction and restoration projects at both properties. He oversaw the stabilization of the Faulkner House shed in 1996, and conceived the Forest Management Plan for the Faulkner Homestead in 1997. Never afraid of hard work, he insulated the

IRON WORK FARM in ACTON, Inc.

P.O. Box 1111, Acton, MA 01720

Fall Newsletter

September, 2001

Volume II, Number 2

Abigail Dane Faulkner and the Salem Witchcraft Trials

by Anne Forbes, IWF Secretary

Visitors to the Faulkner Homestead often remark on the name of the first Faulkner family member to own the property--Ammi Ruhammah (Ammiruhamah) Faulkner, who took over the Jones fulling mill on Fort Pond Brook in 1738, and bought the mill, the house, and Ephraim Jones' farm in 1742. His name, which means "my people have obtained mercy", marks his role as an unborn child in saving the life of his mother during one of the most extraordinary times in our nation's early history.

Ammi Ruhammah's mother, Abigail (Dane) Faulkner, the daughter of the minister of Andover, was accused, convicted, and condemned to death as a witch during the infamous Salem witchcraft trials of 1692. She had married Francis Faulkner, son of Andover's most prominent landowner, in 1675. By the time of her accusation, she had borne six children, and her husband was so ill that she had assumed the management of his affairs.

After being accused of witchcraft by the children of several of her neighbors, Abigail Faulkner was tried at Salem, and condemned to death. Unlike some of the others who pleaded guilty in the hope of receiving a lighter sentence, she persisted in protesting her innocence, answering her examiners' questions with great shrewdness--even hinting that it was the judges who were bewitched by the devil. One other thing set her apart: she was found to be pregnant with her seventh child. While others were hanged for their alleged crimes, Abigail's judges were reluctant to cause the death of an unborn child, and ordered her jailed while awaiting the birth, instead. Imprisoned with her were two of her daughters who had also been accused--Abigail, age 8, and Dorothy, age 10. They remained in jail for nearly four months. By the time her son was born on March 20, 1693, sentiment had turned against the zealous judges and magistrates who had conducted the witchcraft trials, and Abigail and her children had been released.

She was not declared innocent, however, and in 1703, when Ammi Ruhammah was ten years old, Abigail Faulkner petitioned the governing authorities of Massachusetts to remove all witchcraft accusations against her from the record, and to officially clear her name and restore her reputation. Fearing that the accusations would "Remaine as a perpetual brand of Infamy upon my family," in 1710 she again asked that "my name that has been wronged may be restored," and sued the authorities for damages, including all the expenses of "providing for my self and children while we were in prison." Abigail Faulkner died in Andover in 1730.

Abigail Dane Faulkner's story was showcased in an exhibition at the Commonwealth Museum in 1992, and appears in most of the definitive accounts of the Salem witchcraft trials, including the recent *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman: Witchcraft in Colonial New England*, by Carol Karlson. The account is best read, however, in the court records themselves. Copies will be on display at the October 28 open house at the Faulkner House.

In Memoriam: Sandy Williams

Sandy Williams of Littleton, Iron Work Farm President from 1995 to 1999, passed away at his daughter's home in Maine on September 8. Among the many accomplishments of his tenure were the reorganization of IWF finances incorporating an official endowment, and numerous construction and restoration projects at both properties. He oversaw the stabilization of the Faulkner House shed in 1996, and conceived the Forest Management Plan for the Faulkner Homestead in 1997. Never afraid of hard work, he insulated the