

John Putnam III

John Putnam III was born 14 July 1667 at Salem Village, MA to John Putnam Jr and Rebecca Prince. He was made freeman in 1690 and held many minor town offices. He married a woman named Hannah by ~1691, and died c. 1737.

John III was involved in the Salem witch trials. On 15 February 1692, Hannah Putnam, the wife of John Putnam the weaver, gave birth to an apparently healthy daughter. On 13 April 1692, his two-month-old daughter was taken with convulsions. John is known to have remarked after Rebecca Nurse and Sarah Cloyse were arrested that he was not surprised they were witches since their mother (Joanna Towne) had been a witch. He had been “taken with strange kinds of fits” previously but soon recovered. However, now his infant daughter seemed to be dying. John and his wife Hannah gave a deposition against Rebecca Nurse, Mary Etsy, and Sarah Cloyse, as shown in document 362 of the Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt:

362. Deposition of John Putnam Jr. & Hannah Putnam v. Rebecca Nurse, Mary Esty, & Sarah Cloyse†

[Hand 1] The Deposition of John putnam weaver; and Hannah his wife who testifieth and saith that our child which dyed about the middle of April 1692: was as well ~~as~~ and as thriueing a child as most was: tell it was about eight weeks old: but a while affter ~{that} I the said Jno: putnam had Reported sum thing which I had hard consarning the mother of Rebekah nurs: Mary Estick and Sarah Cloyes I myself was taken with strange kind of fitts: but it pleased Allmighty God to Deliuer me from them: but quickly affter this our poor yong child was taken about midnight with strange and violent fitts: which did most greivously affright us acting much like to the poor bewitched parsons when we thought they would Indeed haue died: where upon we sent for our Mother putnam in the night Immediatly: and as soon as she came and se our child she tould us that she feared there was an euell hand upon it: and also as fast as possiblely could be we gott a Docktor to it: but all he did giue it could doe it no good: but ~{it} continewed in ~{a} strange and violent fitts for about Two days and Two nights and then Departed this life by a cruell and violent death being enuf to pears [“a” written over “i”] a stonny hart. for to the best of ~{our} understanding ~{it was} near fiue hours a dying

[Hand 2] Jurat in Curia

[Reverse] John Putman Hannah Putman

[Hand 1] John Putnam weauer and his wife.

Notes: This deposition against the three Towne sisters is a trial document most likely used at the trial of Rebecca Nurse. However, it may also have been used at the trial of Mary Esty on September 9. ◊ Used at trial. ◊ Hand 1 = Thomas Putnam; Hand 2 = Stephen Sewall

Essex County Court Archives, vol. 1, no. 82, Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court, Judicial Archives, on deposit James Duncan Phillips Library, Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, MA.

Further reading:

Putnam, Eben. *A History of the Putnam Family in England and America*. 1891.

Roach, Marilynne K. *The Salem Witch Trials: A Day-by-day Chronicle of a Community Under Siege*. Taylor Trade Publishing, 2004.

Rosenthal, Bernard, editor. *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*. Cambridge University Press, 2009.