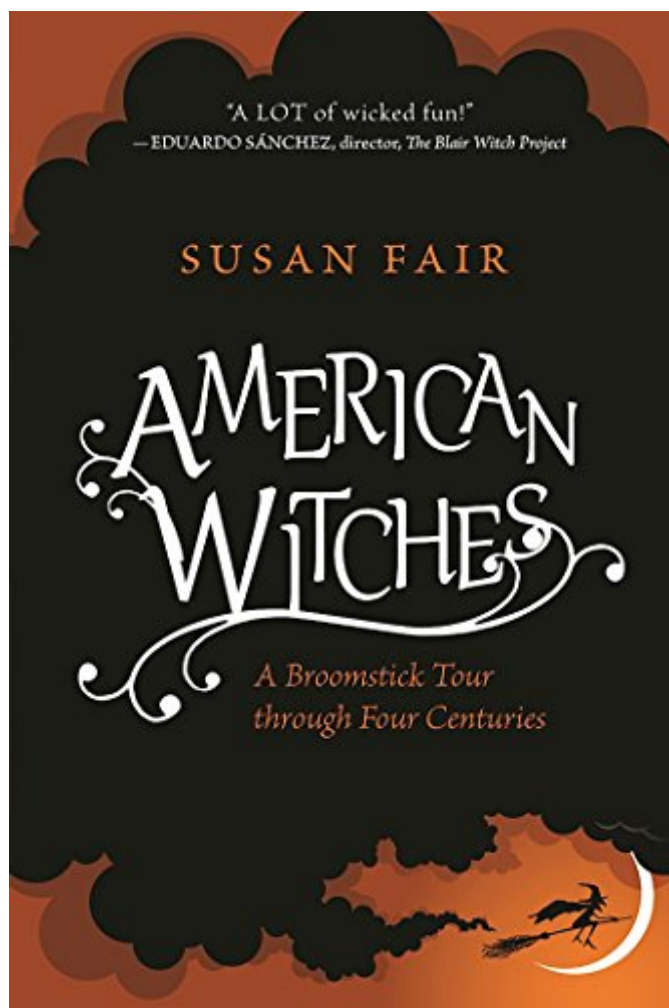


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# American Witches: A Broomstick Tour Through Four Centuries



## Synopsis

The history of American witches is way weirder than you ever imagined. From bewitched pigs hell-bent on revenge to gruesome twentieth-century murders, *American Witches* reveals strange incidents of witchcraft that have long been swept under the rug as bizarre sidenotes to history. On a tour through history that's both whimsical and startling, we'll encounter seventeenth-century children flying around inside their New England home "like geese." • We'll meet a father-son team of pious Puritans who embarked on a mission that involved undressing ladies and overseeing hangings. And on the eve of the Civil War, we'll accompany a reporter as he dons a dress and goes searching for witches in New York City's most dangerous neighborhoods. Entertainingly readable and rich in amazing details often left out of today's texts, *American Witches* casts a flickering torchlight into the dark corners of American history.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

*American Witches* is a light and engaging account of some of the darkest times in America's history.

Susan Fair has a good voice and tells the multitude of witchy tales in a modern voice with laymen terms that will appeal to even the most casual reader and/or student. The history of witchcraft that ran rampant across America started even before people made it to the country. Bringing suspicions from England (and everywhere else), many would-be settlers never made it across the ocean due to bewitched voyages. Thus begins a journey through the history of America from the early settlers, through the Salem Witch Trials, American Indian witch hunts, and beyond. Accounts of bewitched children, livestock (especially pigs), unknown monsters, vessels and crops were not uncommon in the charges lodged against many society outcasts. Reading these fantastical tales that were all absolutely true really make you question human nature, and how neighbors could turn on one another with such viciousness. While most of the book is an entertaining history lesson, there are also a few modern tidbits, some pop culture type info, including an insightful look at the Blair Witch Project and an interview with the director. While I found this book interesting and entertaining, keep in mind that history accounts are slower reads. That being said, I recommend this book to just about anyone that finds America's witchy history intriguing. It would also be a good read for students who find it difficult to learn from dry and boring history books. I know I certainly would have remembered more of my history lessons if they were written in this manner. I received an advanced copy of this book from the publisher via Edelweiss in exchange for an honest review.

I am very pleased that Susan's book on Witches was published! I am a fan of her book theme subjects and her witty yet friendly writing style. Her preface on being accused as a child of doing (or worse being) something terrible was relatable as an emotional personal experience. Indeed as Arthur Miller pointed out with the *Crucible*, being called a witch was similar to being called a communist in modern days; even today many of us are called both, and people still think that both are evil due to cultural conditioning. Susan begins her book with the 2nd European Colony in north America, Jamestown; which makes sense for the scope of the book as indicated by the subtitle segment "Four Centuries". Jamestown was the first English Colony, but the Spanish Colony of St. Augustine was actually first about 50 years earlier (RIP Dr. Albert Manucy, Spanish-American historian, love you grandad). As to how many witches were in the Spanish St. Augustine Colony, or if anyone was accused of witch-craft, I do not know. Considering the Spanish were responsible for THE Inquisition, it is certainly possible. Anyway, that is my only criticism of the book, which does not at all ruin my enjoyment of her stories, and respect for the importance of the subject. Some critics are quick to criticize humor with serious subjects, but often they just lack a healthy sense of the importance of being able to laugh when others cry. People respond to tragedy

in various ways, depending on their social conditioning, or psychological reaction to conditioning which they dislike. Susan's sense of humor in her style is delightful to those of us with an 'Edward Gorey' or 'Tim Burton' gothic satire sensibility. It is our love for dark or scary subjects which makes our glee pleasant and not harsh. Her descriptions are excellent, and at times so darkly honest, that levity is welcomed. "What was mended one day, would the next day be in pieces." This is the chaos magic of entropy, which haunts the weary world, even to this day. The mystery of magic in history, and the persecution of accused practitioners, is still a current issue. I recommend this book to anyone that loves the subject of 'witches', and words like 'faux-pas' and 'chutzpah'.

If you are looking for a solid history of witchcraft in America, scholarly, or at least for the serious reader, this isn't it. Nonetheless, I enjoyed reading it. The first part is more historical and makes it clear that the Salem trials were not wholly aberrant. Happily they don't overwhelm the material in the colonial period. After that, the historical thread snaps as she focuses on specific topics and places. There is a section on fortune-telling, which is arguably not appropriate since the authorities prosecuted or persecuted largely because they believed that it was Not magic, but rather a defrauding of the gullible. There is also a section on "pow-wowling," a kind of magic practiced mainly in rural areas, which doesn't seem to have been associated with the devil, but which nonetheless led to a murder by fearful neighbors. This is followed by a series of anecdotes not worked into the earlier history. It ends with a chapter about the "Blair Witch" and the effect of the movie on people who combine gullibility with obnoxiousness and drove the residents of Burkettsville crazy with their aggressive sight-seeing.

humorous and factual account of how witch hunting rose in early america. a fairly fast read too. my only qualm was a lot of time, i think, was spent on Mary Baker Eddy, who really didn't fit for me. her story is eccentric though.

I have read many written works on witchcraft history and, though informative, find them mostly dry and stilted. However, Susan Fair has written this delicious history of the American witch in a wonderful witty, humorous yet still thoroughly academic style that reads as easy and enjoyably as a favourite fiction novel. This is just fantastic work.

This book is a great read! It's very educational and has some humor about it at the same time, which I enjoyed. The book talked about Salem, but also gave a timeline of the witch craze coming

over from Europe and how it affected many different groups of people. Check it out if you get a chance!

Thoroughly enjoyed what was here. Blair Witch follow up was truly interesting. But would have liked more stories that were not "east coast".

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