

¶ SWP No. 96.3

(Petition for Mary Osgood , Eunice Fry , Deliverance Dane , Sarah Wilson, Sr. , and Abigail Barker)

To the honoured court of Assize held at Salem, The humble address of several of the inhabitants of Andover.

May it please this honoured court,

We being very sensible of the great sufferings our neighbours have been long under in prison, and charitably judging that many of them are clear of that great transgression which hath been laid to their charge, have thought it our duty to endeavour their vindication so far as our testimony for them will avail. The persons in whose behalf we are desired and concerned to speak something at present are Mrs. Mary Osgood , Eunice Frye , Deliverance Dane , Sarah Wilson and Abigail Barker , who are women of whom we can truly give this character and commendation, that they have not only lived among us so inoffensively as not to give the least occasion to any that know them to suspect them of witchcraft, but by their sober godly and exemplary conversation have obtained a good report in the place, where they have been well esteemed and approved in the church of which they are members.

We were surprized to hear that persons of known integrity and piety were accused of so horrid a crime, not considering, then, that the most innocent were liable to be so misrepresented and abused. When these women were accused by some afflicted persons of the neighbourhood, their relations and others, tho' they had so good grounds of charity that they should not have thought any evil of them, yet, through a misrepresentation of the truth of that evidence that was so much credited and improved against people, took great pains to persuade them to own what they were, by the afflicted, charged with, and, indeed, did unreasonably urge them to confess themselves guilty, as some of us who were then present can testify. But these good women did very much assert their innocency, yet some of them said they were not without fear lest Satan had some way ensnared them, because there was that evidence against them which then was by many thought to be a certain indication and discovery of witchcraft, yet they seriously professed they knew nothing by themselves of that nature: Nevertheless, by the unwearied sollicitations of those that privately discoursed them both at home and at Salem, they were at length persuaded publicly to own what they were charged with, and so submit to that guilt which we still hope and believe they are clear of. And, it is probable, the fear of what the event might be, and the encouragement that it is said was suggested to them, that confessing was the only way to obtain favour, might be too powerful a temptation for timorous women to

withstand, in the hurry and distraction that we have heard they were then in. Had what they said against themselves proceeded from conviction of the fact, we should have had nothing to have said for them, but we are induced to think that it did not, because they did soon privately retract what they had said, as we are informed, and, while they were in prison, they declared to such as they had confidence to speak freely and plainly to, that they were not guilty of what they had owned, and that what they had said against themselves was the greatest grief and burden they laboured under: Now, though we cannot but judge it a thing very sinful for innocent persons to own a crime they are not guilty of, yet, considering the well ordered conversation of those women while they lived among us, and what they now seriously and constantly affirm in a more composed frame, we cannot but in charity judge them innocent of the great transgression that hath been imputed to them. As for the rest of our neighbours, who are under the like circumstances with these that have been named, we can truly say of them that while they lived among us, we have had no cause to judge them such persons as, of late, they have been represented and reported to be, nor do we know that any of their neighbours had any just grounds to suspect them of that evil that they are now charged with.

Dudley Bradstreet

Francis Dane, sen.

Thomas Barnard

Tho. Chandler, sen.

John Barker

Henry Ingolls, sen.

Wm. Chandler, sen.

Samuel Martin

Stephen Parker

Samuel Ingolls

Ephraim Stevens

John Abbot, sen.

Samuel Blanchard

Wm. Ballard

Thomas Hooper

John Hooper

Wm. Abbot

James Russell

Oliver Holt

John Presson

Francis Dane, jun.

George Abbot

Elizabeth Rite

Wm. Peters

Sam. Peters

Walter Wright

Hooker Osgood

Benj. Stevens

Ann Bradstreet

Joanna Dane

Eliza. Stevens

Eliza. Barnard

Phebe Robinson

Daniel Poore

John Ingolls

Henry Ingolls, jun.

John Frie, sen.

James Frie

John Aslebee

Samuel Holt

Wm. Chandler, jun.

John Chandler

Joseph Robinson

Thomas Johnson

Tho. Johnson, jun.

Andrew Peters

Mary Peters

Hannah Chandler

Hannah Dane

Bridget Chandler

Mary Johnson

Robert Russel

Mary Russel.

(Thomas Hutchinson, History of Massachusetts-Bay, II. 32-33)
