



Devil Made Me Do It!: Crime And Punishment In Early New England

Juliet Haines Mofford

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Tales of the country's original criminals—and how the courts punished them for their misdeeds

Scarlet Letters, wanton dalliances, Sabbathbreaking, and debt: Colonial laws were easily broken and the malefactors who broke them, swiftly punished. How did our ancestors deal with murder and mayhem? How did seventeenth- and eighteenth-century New England communities handle deviants? How have definitions of criminal behavior and its punishment changed over the centuries? What were early prisons like? What were the duties of a turn-key? Find out all this and more in *The Devil Made Me Do It*.

Drawing on early court dockets, diaries, sermons, gaolers' records, and other primary sources, Juliet Haines Mofford investigates historical cases from a time when accused felons often pleaded in their own defense: "The Devil made me do it!"

Among the questions that emerge in this fascinating book: Would spinster Sarah Booker be punished today for her 1769 theft of three skeins of linen yarn? Would Joan Andrews still get a T for Theft pinned upon her bodice for cheating a client by placing two stones in the firkin of butter she sold him?

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