



# The Specter of Salem: Remembering the Witch Trials in Nineteenth-Century America

*Gretchen A. Adams*

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In *The Specter of Salem*, Gretchen A. Adams reveals the many ways that the Salem witch trials loomed over the American collective memory from the Revolution to the Civil War and beyond. Schoolbooks in the 1790s, for example, evoked the episode to demonstrate the new nation's progress from a disorderly and brutal past to a rational present, while critics of new religious movements in the 1830s cast them as a return to Salem-era fanaticism, and during the Civil War, southerners evoked witch burning to criticize Union tactics. Shedding new light on the many, varied American invocations of Salem, Adams ultimately illuminates the function of collective memories in the life of a nation.

“Imaginative and thoughtful. . . . Thought-provoking, informative, and convincingly presented, *The Specter of Salem* is an often spellbinding mix of politics, cultural history, and public historiography.”—*New England Quarterly*

“This well-researched book, forgoing the usual heft of scholarly studies, is not another interpretation of the Salem trials, but an important major work within the scholarly literature on the witch-hunt, linking the hysteria of the period to the evolving history of the American nation. A required acquisition for academic libraries.”—*Choice*, Outstanding Academic Title 2009



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