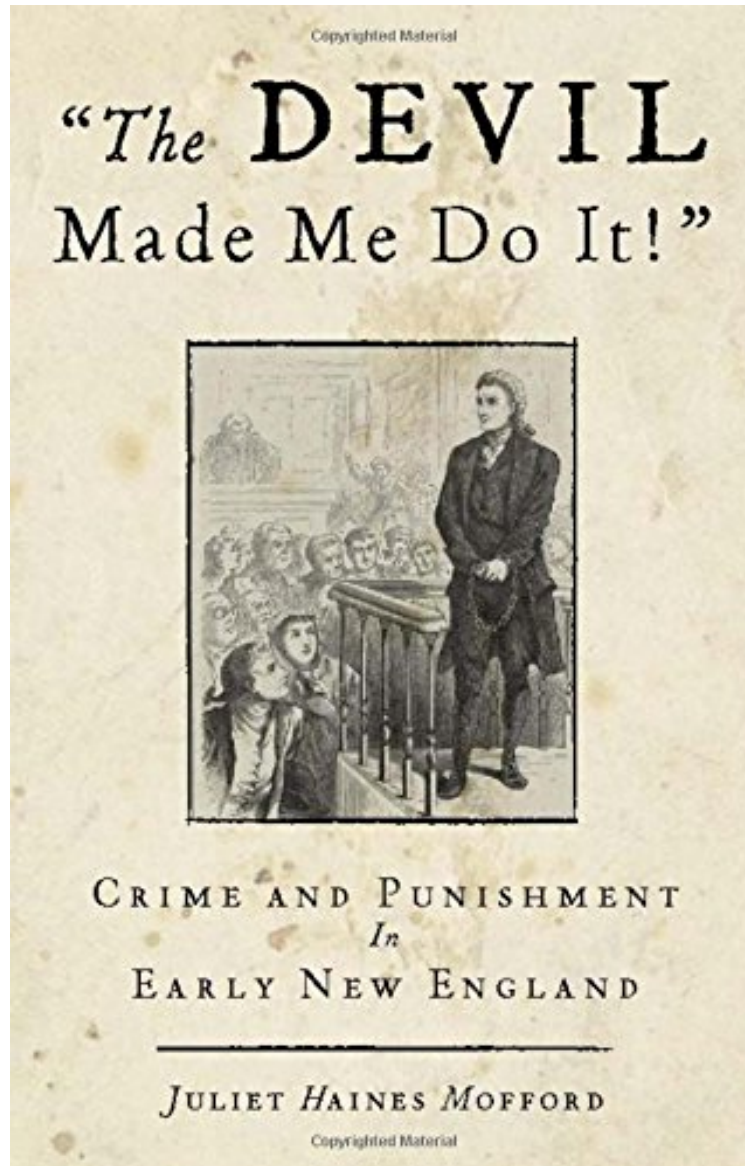


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## Devil Made Me Do It!: Crime And Punishment In Early New England

*Juliet Haines Mofford*

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**Juliet Haines Mofford : Devil Made Me Do It!: Crime And Punishment In Early New England** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Devil Made Me Do It!: Crime And Punishment In Early New England:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. The Godly, Sadistic PuritansBy Lee L.At first, I was quite bored

with this book, as it seemed to be nothing more than a never-ending litany of examples of what was considered crime in Colonial New England and how it was dealt with. *Scarlet Letter*, anyone? But the book held my interest. It is written in short vignettes that are constantly changing, and in some cases even became amusing. The early New Englanders seem to be nothing more than self-important sadists who enjoyed looking down their religious noses at those not sharing their beliefs, spying on their neighbors in the hope of finding something to tattle to authorities and whipping each other as a form of public entertainment. Flogging seems to be the preferred method of punishment in early New England, followed closely by fines, public humiliation, banishment and hanging (which in my opinion may actually have been preferable to having ones tongue bored through with a hot spike). Author Juliet Haines Mofford successfully tackles the job of condensing hundreds if not thousands of accounts into this enjoyable, interesting tome that entertains as well as informs. *The Devil Made Me Do It*, which was actually a viable defense in early New England, is written in everyday speak and very accessible prose that keeps this book from reading like a textbook, which it very well could have in the wrong hands. Mofford brings alive for us the era of early New England and the seriousness to the Puritans of crimes that today would be easily overlooked. Their deep-seated belief in Satans constant striving to corrupt their Godly settlements and their efforts to stave off satanic rule dominated their days and court trials. This book is a must-read for anyone interested in Colonial New England. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Great Book!!! By L. Keith Miller I've read many unusual histories and this was one of the most interesting. It was easy to read --- written in a smooth and flowing style. Although crammed with facts, the book doesnt get bogged down in the minutia of things. I was particularly impressed with the quality and depth of the research. The author refers to private letters and diaries, obscure church documents, court records and other sources not easily available to the ordinary citizen. *The Devil Made Me Do It* gives us a clear picture of how easily fear, ignorance and superstition can dominate a community including its court system. When a woman can be hanged for having more wit than her neighbors clearly the police and judges have become as absurd in their violence as the most vicious of the citizenry. This book provided me with a far deeper understanding of the values, prejudices and restrictions that are the bedrock of American culture. The author provides us with a balanced, unbiased view of events that mark that disgraceful epoch in our history. Even today the mean spirited, judgmental spirit of the Puritans can be seen through out this country. This book helps us understand ourselves. 4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Bewitched By Zoe Chamberlain *The Devil Made Me Do It* is an outstanding book and a must for anyone interested in the New England Colonial Period or for anyone who wants to read a good book for that matter. Juliet Mofford's introductory chapters are beautifully written and cover every aspect of the Puritan community. They are the perfect framework for the stories of the people who lived during the 17th and 18th centuries. There are no Puritan stereotypes here, but rather real life stories gathered from original court cases, journals, and diaries. We meet "railing scolds," men and women "disguised with drink," women with "wanton carriage," couples who displayed "obscene and lascivious behavior," and, of course, many people accused of witchcraft. The author effectively separates reality from myth and the reader will be surprised by many facets in regard to the Puritans, just one of which is that the women in these settlements were quite the equal of their men folks. Readers of *The Devil Made Me Do It* will surely be bewitched.

Tales of the countrys 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?

From the Back Cover Whether it was Sabbath-breaking, blasphemy, or public drunkenness, colonial laws were strict and frequently broken, and those who broke them could expect swift punishment. Laws were designed to reflect Puritan ideas of ensuring Gods blessings upon the community, as well as to tightly maintain order in ways that would benefit the entire colony. Each neighbor had a role in preserving family values and keeping the community safe from railing scolds, vagabonds, malefactors, and malefic witches.