



Saint Paul's Church National Historic Site

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Anne Hutchinson

Anne Hutchinson, an uncommon woman who posed one of the earliest challenges to Puritan orthodoxy in 17th century Massachusetts, was killed by Native American Indians in 1643 at a spot located about one mile from St. Paul's Church National Historic Site.

She was born in England as Anne Marbury in 1591, and married Will Hutchinson. In 1634 they immigrated to the Puritan colony of Massachusetts Bay. Anne became a skilled midwife, popular with the women of Boston. She was also a follower of John Cotton, a minister who preached the Covenant of Grace, which stressed God's free gift of salvation to unworthy people. These views contrasted with Puritan beliefs about the need to engage in good works, study and reflection in preparation for receiving grace. In 1636, Hutchinson began holding women's meetings in her home to discuss the minister's sermons. The meetings became popular forums, and drew men as well.

Moving beyond Cotton's views, Hutchinson adopted the belief that the elect could communicate directly with God and be assured of salvation, an immensely appealing vision for Puritans, who were usually in a state of tension over their chances of salvation. Her views made the regular Puritan church and ministers less important. In addition, her role as a leading religious and political dissenter was perceived as dangerous to the traditional order of gender roles.

Hutchinson's views and her growing popularity were a threat to the leaders of the colony, notably Governor John Winthrop. Charged as a heretic, she was brought before the colony's General Court in November 1637, and for two days defended herself skillfully, matching biblical references and wits with Winthrop and other accusers. But during the trial she claimed that God had communicated with her through "an immediate revelation" that he would curse the Puritans and their descendants if they harmed her. This claim led to a sentence of banishment.

Hutchinson, along with her family and a small number of followers, were exiled to the religiously tolerant colony of Rhode Island, although the Massachusetts authorities continued to harass her. Her husband Will died in 1642, and Anne and her party of 16 people, including several of her children, moved on. They came to what was then the Dutch colony of New Netherland (today's New York) to settle near two of her friends -- John Throgmorton and John Cornell -- who had also been banished from Boston. The exact location of Hutchinson's settlement has been a matter of dispute, but it appears to have been along what is today the New England Thruway (Interstate 95), at Baychester Avenue, about one mile from this National Historic Site. She lived there for less than a year.

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Her demise was the result of poor relations and conflicting land claims between the Dutch and local Siwanoy Indians. The Dutch had purchased the land from the Siwanoy in 1640, but New Netherland colonists did not settle in the area. The natives continued to harass outlying colonists, largely because of the policy of brutality pursued by colony Governor William Kief. According to Indian custom, by the time the Hutchinson group arrived, the Dutch had relinquished their claim to it. Anne and her party received permission from the Dutch to settle in the area, but not from the Siwanoy, who viewed the settlement as an intrusion.

The Hutchinson party ignored several warnings by the Siwanoy to abandon the settlement, perhaps secure in their religious beliefs that God would protect them. In August 1643, a band of Siwanoy attacked the houses and killed all the settlers, except for Anne's 10-year-old daughter Susanna, who was carried off to live with the Indians.

Anne Hutchinson's views and odyssey endured as powerful symbols of religious freedom and the importance of individual conscience. More than 20 years later, when Thomas Pell sold land to the ten families who founded the town of Eastchester, the bill of sale referred to the area as **Hutchinsons**. Early property boundaries referred to Hutchinson's Creek, Hutchinson's Meadow, Hutchinson's Field and Hutchinson's Stock (the remnant of the chimney and the foundation her house). The creek that ran near her settlement became known as Hutchinson River and in the 20th century the new state highway was named Hutchinson River Parkway.

