

Welcome to the Rebecca Nurse Homestead, a visible link to many of the famous and infamous events of Salem Village and Danvers during colonial times.

The Nurse Homestead was originally part of a 300-acre grant given to Townsend Bishop in 1636. Francis Nurse rented the property in 1678, and purchased it outright in 1698. The land agreement proved successful for Francis, his wife Rebecca, and their eight children. The house traditionally dates from this period when the family moved to the property.

During the midwinter of 1691/92, girls living in Salem Village (Danvers) began having fits, and their parents searched frantically for a cause. In late February, the girls began naming Salem Village residents as witches. In March, the girls accused 71-year-old Rebecca Nurse as one of their tormentors. On March 23, the village constables arrested Rebecca. She was found guilty of witchcraft and hanged on July 19. After the execution, Rebecca's children secretly removed their mother's body to the homestead and buried it in an unmarked grave.

In 1775, Rebecca's great-grandson Francis occupied the house. He was a sergeant in Captain John Putnam's Militia Company, which was to be ready to march within a few minutes notice in case of trouble. On April 19, 1775, Nurse received the news that British troops were marching on Concord, and headed off with the rest of the Danvers men.

The Putnam family inherited the property in 1784, and remained here until 1908, when the Rebecca Nurse Memorial Association acquired it. In 1926 the Association gave the property to the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities. In 1981, the Danvers Alarm List Company, a colonial period living history organization assumed the ownership and operation of the property.



The Rebecca Nurse Homestead

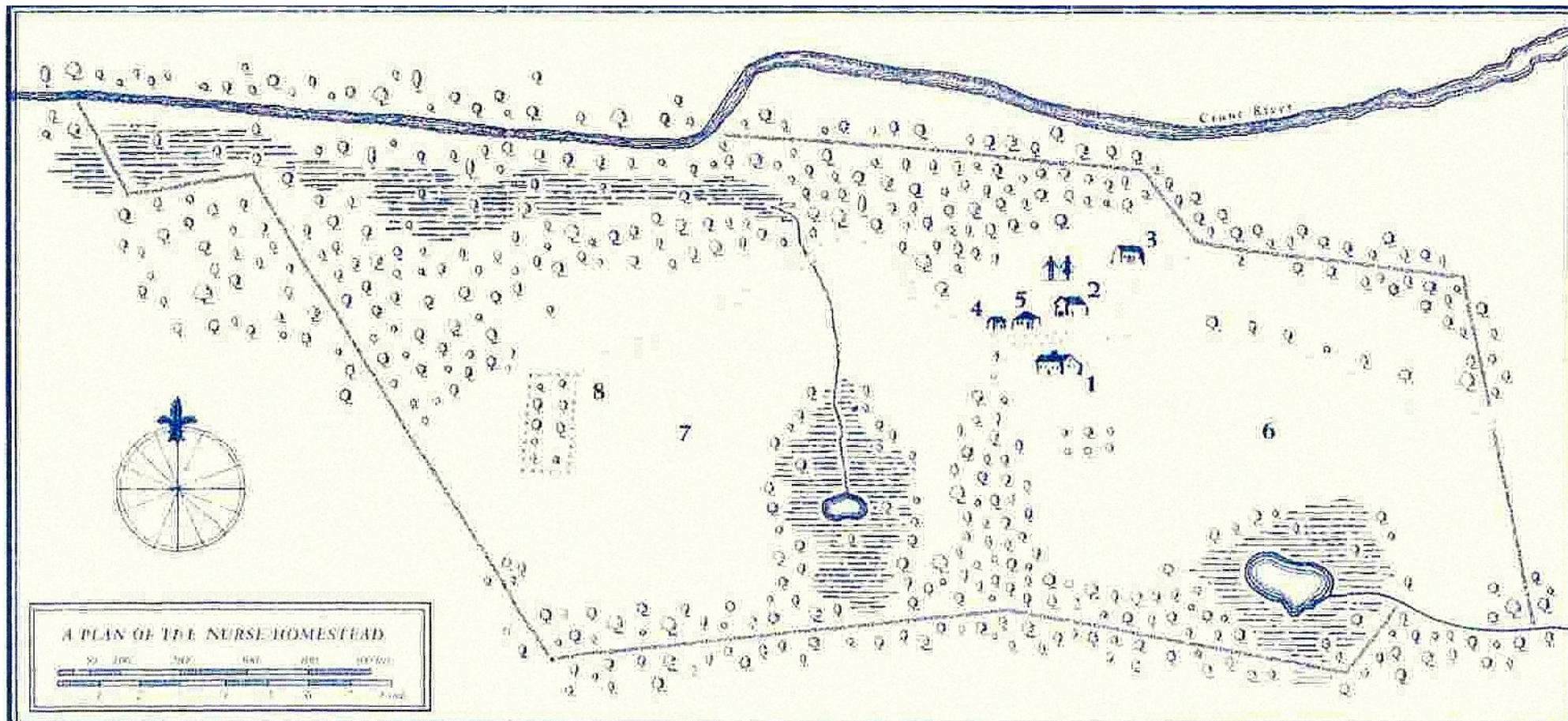
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1 - Nurse House

The house probably dates from shortly after the Nurse family began renting the homestead property in 1678. The lean-to kitchen along the north side of the house was added around 1720, and the jog to the west was built in 1850.

2 - Endecott Barn and Shop

This structure was originally built around 1681 as the home of Zerubabel Endecott, the son of Governor John Endecott. In 1973 a group of volunteers dismantled the oldest section of the house, as the property was slated for demolition. It was re-erected on the Nurse property in 1983 and sits on the location of the original Nurse barn, which burned down in 1964.

3 - Salem Village Meetinghouse

Built in 1984 for the film, "Three Sovereigns for Sarah," this replica structure is an exact reproduction of the 1692 Salem Village (Danvers) meetinghouse. In the meetinghouse, you can see a presentation on the witchcraft era.

4 - Shoemaker's Shed

At most farms in early New England, other occupations besides farming were taken up to help make ends meet. This nineteenth century shed has served as a shoe shop, a basket shop, and a cooperage (buckets and barrels).

5 - Dairy Shed

This late nineteenth, early twentieth century shed was originally used to store the farm's dairy products. It now serves as an office and meeting room.

6 & 7 - Eastern & Western fields

The Nurse Homestead includes 25 acres of fields, marshes, and woods. The eastern and western fields were originally part of a 300-acre land grant leased by Rebecca and Francis Nurse in 1678. The family purchased the land outright in 1698. The fields now grow crops for local dairy farms.

8 - The Nurse Graveyard

It is likely that Rebecca Nurse was secretly buried here by her family, who brought her body back from Gallows Hill following her execution in 1692. In 1885 the Nurse family erected a memorial to Rebecca, and in August 1992, during the Salem Village Witchcraft Tercentennial commemoration, the remains of another of the 1692 Witchcraft victims, George Jacobs, were laid to rest here.