* Abigail tells Betty, "Your Mama's dead and buried!", (Screenplay, Scene 21; play, Act 1, Scene 1). ***Betty Parris' mother was not dead and was very much alive in 1692***. Elizabeth (Eldridge) Parris died four years after the witchcraft trials, on July 14, 1696, at the age of 48. Her gravestone is located in the Wadsworth Cemetery on Summer Street in Danvers, MA.
* The Parris family also included two other children -- an older brother, Thomas (b. 1681), and a younger sister, Susannah (b. 1687) -- not just Betty and her relative Abigail, who was probably born around 1681.
* Abigail Williams is often called Rev. Parris' "niece" but in fact there is no genealogical evidence to prove their familial relationship. She is sometimes in the original texts referred to as his "kinfolk" however.
* Miller admits in the introduction to the play that he boosted ***Abigail Williams' age to 17 even though the real girl was only 11, but he never mentions that John Proctor was 60 and Elizabeth, 41***, was his third wife. Proctor was not a farmer but a tavern keeper. Living with them was their daughter aged 15, their son who was 17, and John's 33-year-old son from his first marriage. Everyone in the family was eventually accused of witchcraft. Elizabeth Proctor was indeed pregnant, during the trial, and had a temporary stay of execution after conviction, which ultimately spared her life because it extended past the end of the period that the executions were taking place.
* ***There never was any wild dancing rite in the woods led by Tituba***, and certainly Rev. Parris never stumbled upon them.
* The first two girls to become afflicted were Betty Parris and Abigail Williams, and they had violent, physical fits, not a sleep that they could not wake from. Rev. Deodat Lawson's eye-witness account described Abigail trying to dig under chairs and attempting to run up the chimney. One interpretation of this behavior is that she was experiencing PTSD, a symptoms of which can be repeating behavior from the original traumatic event. If this is so, Abigail could well have been in a household under attack from the Wakanabi in Maine - but since we have no information about where she came from before entering the Parris household, we just can't be sure.
* ***The Putnams' daughter was not named Ruth, but Ann***, like her mother, probably changed by Miller so the audience wouldn't confuse the mother and the daughter. In reality, the mother was referred to as "Ann Putnam Senior" and the daughter as "Ann Putnam Junior."
* ***Ann/Ruth was not the only Putnam child out of eight to survive infancy. In 1692, the Putnams had six living children***, Ann being the eldest, down to 1-year-old Timothy. Ann Putnam Sr. was pregnant during most of 1692. Ann Sr.'s sister, however, did lose a fair number of infants, though certainly not all, and by comparison, the Nurse family lost remarkably few for the time.
* Rev. Parris claims to Giles Corey that he is a "graduate of Harvard" -- he did not in fact graduate from Harvard, although he had attended for a while and dropped out.
* ***Rebecca Nurse was hanged on July 19, John Proctor on August 19, and Martha Corey on September 22 -- not all on the same day on the same gallows as Miller depicts it***. And the only person executed who recited the Lord's Prayer on the gallows was Rev. George Burroughs -- which caused quite a stir since it was generally believed at the time that a witch could not say the Lord's Prayer without making a mistake. They also would not have been hanged while praying, since the condemned were always allowed their last words and prayers.
* Reverend Hale would not have signed any "death warrants," as he claims to have signed 17 in the play. That was not for the clergy to do. Both existing death warrants are signed by William Stoughton.
* The elderly George Jacobs was not accused of sending his spirit in through the window to lie on the Putnam's daughter - in fact, it was usually quite the opposite case: women such as Bridget Bishop were accused of sending their spirits into men's bedrooms to lie on them. ***In that period, women were perceived as the lusty, sexual creatures whose allure men must guard against!***
* The real John Procter (vs. the fictional John Proctor in the play) maintained his innocence throughout, however another accused man - whose wife was also accused - did confess, recant his confession, and was hanged: Samuel Wardwell of Andover. When pressed to confirm the text of his confession, Wardwell refused, stating, "the above written confession was taken from his mouth, and that he had said it, but he said he belied himself." He also said, "He knew he should die for it, whether he owned it or not." (See *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, No.538, p. 577)
* The hysteria did not die out "as more and more people refused to save themselves by giving false confessions," as the epilogue of the movie states. The opposite was true: more and more people were giving false confessions and four women actually pled guilty to the charges. Some historians claim that this was because it became apparent that ***confession would save one from the noose***, but there is evidence that the Court was planning to execute the confessors as well. What ended the trials was the intervention of Governor William Phips. Contrary to what Phips told the Crown in England, he was not off in Maine fighting the Indians in King William's War through that summer, since he attended governor's council meetings regularly that summer, which were also attended by the magistrates. But public opinion of the trials did take a turn. There were over a hundred people still in custody when the general reprieve was given, but they were not released until they paid their prison fees. Neither did the tide turn when Rev. Hale's wife was accused by Abigail Williams, as the play claims (it was really a young woman named Mary Herrick), nor when the mother-in-law of Magistrate Jonathan Corwin was accused -- although the "afflicted" did start accusing a lot more people far and wide to the point of absurdity, including various people around in other Massachusetts towns whom they had never laid eyes on, including notable people such as the famous hero Capt. John Alden (who escaped after being arrested).
* Abigail Williams probably couldn't have laid her hands on £31 in money in Samuel Parris' house, to run away with John Proctor, when Parris' annual salary was contracted at £66, only a third of which was paid in money. The rest was to be paid in what was called "country rate" = foodstuffs and other supplies, but even then, Parris had continual disputes with the parishioners about supplying him with much-needed firewood they owed him, primarily because the people who were in charge of collecting the minister's salary were ones who disapproved of deeding the parsonage to Parris as part of his compensation.
* Certain key people in the real events appear nowhere in Miller's play: John Indian, Rev. Nicholas Noyes, Sarah Cloyce, and most notably, Cotton Mather.
* Giles Corey was not executed for refusing to name a witness, as portrayed in the movie. The stage play is more accurate: he was accused of witchcraft, and refused to enter a plea, which held up the proceedings, since the law of the time required that the accused enter a plea and agree to be tried "before God and the country" (i.e. a jury). He was pressed to death with stones, but the method called*peine forte et dure*. When he was excommunicated, it was understood that his ***choice was tantamount to suicide***. Corey likely realized that if he was tried at all, he would be executed anyway. His land was not an issue: he had already deeded his property to his children. (Interestingly, Miller wrote both the play and the screenplay... Who knows why he changed it to a less-accurate explanation for his punishment and execution?)
* The alleged "afflicted" comprised not just a group of a dozen teenage girls -- there were men and adult women who also claimed "affliction," including John Indian, Ann Putnam, Sr., and Sarah Bibber -- and there were more in Andover, where the total number of people accused was greater than any other town, including Salem Village.
* At the end of Act II, Scene 2 in the play (p. 75), John Proctor states, ""You are pulling down heaven and raising up a whore." In the film (Scene 74. EXT DAY. WATER's EDGE, p. 79), John Proctor says this line, but follows it with, "I say God is dead!" This idea of the death of God dates from the 19th century work of German philosopher, Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche (1844-1900).