



Anne Hutchinson

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An imposing figure in the early history of America, Anne Hutchinson registered one of the earliest challenges to Puritan orthodoxy in 17th-century Massachusetts, and 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, a successful merchant. In 1634, they joined large numbers of people immigrating to Massachusetts Bay to practice their Puritan religion, which differed from the dominant Church of England. Anne became a skilled midwife, popular with the women of Boston. She espoused 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 weekly sermons. The meetings became popular forums, and eventually drew men as well.

Hutchinson's views and her growing popularity -- at a time when women rarely even spoke at public meetings -- were understood as a threat to the stability of the colony by Puritan leaders, 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 Anne claimed that God had communicated with her through "an immediately revelation" that he would curse the Puritans and their descendants if they harmed her. Partly for this claim, she was given a sentence of banishment, forced to take up residence in nearby Rhode Island.

Her husband Will died in 1642, and Anne and her party of 16 people, including several of her children, came to what was then the Dutch colony of New Netherland (today's New York) to settle near two of her friends who had also been banished from Boston. They settled, roughly, along what is today the New England Thruway (Interstate 95), at Baychester Avenue, about one mile from St. Paul's Church N.H.S. Her arrival, unfortunately and tragically, overlapped with what history calls **Keift's War**, a vicious conflict between local Siwanoy Indians and the Dutch authorities, under Governor Keift.

Dutch claims to the area were tenuous, and certainly not respected by the Siwanoy in the midst of a general war. Anne and her party received permission from the Dutch to settle in the area, but she never consulted the Siwanoy, who viewed the settlement as an

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

In the 1660s, a new group of settlers originally called the area Hutchinsons. The creek that ran near her settlement became known as the Hutchinson River and in the 20th century the new state highway was named the Hutchinson River Parkway. But on a much broader plane, Anne Hutchinson's cause and odyssey have endured as powerful symbols of religious freedom and individual conscience.