

The First Execution for Religion on American Soil

Guest post by Murray Rothbard.

The first Quakers to arrive in America came to Boston in July 1656. They were two Englishwomen, Ann Austin and Mary Fisher. Although no law had yet been passed in Massachusetts prohibiting the arrival of Quakers, the two women were immediately imprisoned and searched carefully for “witch-marks.” Deputy Governor Richard Bellingham sent officers to the ship, searched the ladies’ baggage, seized their stock of Quaker literature, and had it summarily burned. The women were imprisoned for five weeks, during which time no one was allowed to visit or speak to them. No light or writing material was allowed in their cell, and the prisoners were almost starved to death. At the end of this ordeal, they were shipped back to Barbados.

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