

0. HISTORY of the PILLORY - Story Preface

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Among other customs which the Puritans continued to observe in America, after leaving England, was use of the pillory. This form of punishment was intended, among other things, to publicly humiliate wrongdoers. This pillory is located at Michelham Priory in the UK town of Hailsham (southeast of London). Once a place where Augustinian monks lived, this priory has records reaching back to 1229—and—people say it's haunted.

Although Puritans left England to escape religious persecution, people living in the Massachusetts Bay Colony were expected to conform to strict, autocratic standards established by the community's leaders. All of the leaders, of course, were men.

Seeking to remain essentially British, as they tried to purify the Church of England from within, the Puritans carried on with certain customs they had known before The Great Migration. One of those traditions was

punishment in the pillory.

Tracing its history to the 12th century, the pillory was a common sight in towns throughout Britain and on the continent. It consisted of an upright board with a hole in the middle where a person's head was set. As often as not, a person's ears were nailed to the board. Usually there were two openings for hands.

Also known as a neck-stretcher, the pillory's purpose was to publicly punish (and humiliate) people for all kinds of offenses. Frequently, a pillory could be rotated, so members of the public could get a good look at the person on display, as depicted by William Pyne in *The Costume of Great Britain* (1805). The most famous pillory in London was at Charing Cross.

Sometimes people locked in a pillory had bricks, or other heavy objects, thrown at them. Not a few died as a result, since they were unable to protect themselves with their hands.

Others, like Daniel Defoe (the author of *Robinson Crusoe*) who spent three days in the Charing Cross pillory (beginning July 31, 1703) for writing a pamphlet (*The Shortest Way with Dissenters*), were showered with flowers by a sympathetic crowd. Most, however, endured the more usual barrage of smelly eggs and rotting vegetables, dead cats or animal offal, sticky mud and human waste.

This type of punishment, at least in Britain, was finally abolished in 1837. How was it used in colonial America?

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/HISTORY-of-the-PILLORY-Puritans-and-The-Scarlet-Letter>

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## Media Stream



### Massachusetts Bay Colony - Map

Image online, courtesy the [University of West Georgia](#) website.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Massachusetts-Bay-Colony-Map>



### Pillory at Michelham Priory

What, exactly, is a pillory?

Resembling a set of stocks - into which a seated person's ankles (and sometimes wrists) would be inserted - a pillory usually requires its occupant to stand (not sit). And ... unlike stocks (which focus only on hands and feet), a pillory includes a hole for a person's neck.

Michelham Priory, located southeast of London in the UK town of [Hailsham \(East Sussex\)](#), still has an old pillory. Once a place where Augustinian monks lived, this priory has records extending back to 1229.

People tell tales about Michelham - especially tales that it's haunted.

One of the many ghosts which people claim they've seen, at Michelham, is that of Thomas Sackville. Once the priory's owner, Sackville - so the stories go - still haunts the halls of his old place to this very day.

Click on the image for a better view.

Image, by an unnamed photographer, online via [Pillory History](#). Fair use for educational purposes.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Pillory-at-Michelham-Priory>



### Pillory - Punishment for Cheating, Perjury & Other Misdemeanors

Image online, courtesy [Pillory History](#).

Report of the "[Whitehall Evening Post](#)," from [April 13, 1780](#), online via [Macquarie University](#) (in Sydney, Australia).

PD

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### Pillory - Titus Oates - Hands Restrained

Image, described above, online courtesy Spartacus Schoolnet.

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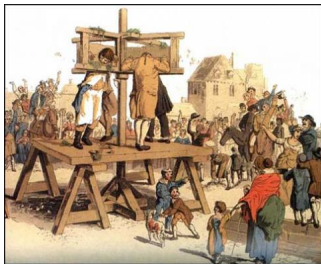


### Pillory - Public Ridicule

This image of a Colonial pillory, which appears in many places, is also included in *Curious Punishments of Bygone Days*, by Alice Morse Earle, at page 44.

PD

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### Pillory - People Publicly Punished

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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### London's Pillory

Image, described above, online courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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### London - Charing Cross Station

Image online, courtesy Webscapades.

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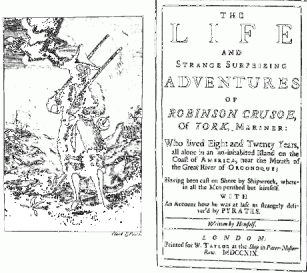


### Daniel Defoe - Portrait

Image, described above, online courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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### Robinson Crusoe - Early Edition

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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### Defoe in the Charing Cross Pillory

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