

Setting the Record Straight

Double, double toil and trouble:
Fire burn and cauldron bubble.
~ W. Shakespeare

Because of this book's title and content, the information to follow serves to help you, dear reader, ponder and digest some valuable morsels on healers, witches, and other supposed "malfeasants." Rather than provide a comprehensive history or narrative on the topic, I intend to clear the way – to disconnect evil and negativity from hearts and minds toward healers, witches, and any seemingly related craft. So, this chapter provides a chance to get up close and personal with your attitudes about the topic before navigating the stories and accounts held within *The Witch's Cloak*.

Before we begin, I ask where you stand on witches, oracles, midwifery, herbalism, and the like?

What are your thoughts and current understanding of them?

What remnants of fear or concern surface as you stand on the precipice of this great adventure – *The Witch's Cloak*?

Let's find out.



There has been much mystery, intrigue, and misinformation around witches and other related healing arts. Devil spawn. Lucifer's concubine. These are just some of the associations grown throughout the centuries, born of fear and mistrust. Unfortunately, fairy tales, folklore, history, and Hollywood have all contributed to a negative image of witches. Still, the damaging impact of these sources remains unmatched to church-created hysteria, as you'll soon discover or may already know. On the other hand, in the last two decades, more interest in alternative wellness, unconventional treatment, and New Age practices have paved the way, leading to broader acceptance.

What does it mean to be a witch? Well, the term encompasses many healing approaches that have innate connections, like branches of a tree. Witches and related healing practitioners use many tools, materials, and methods – intuition, psychic reading, direct communication with the otherworld, purposeful manifesting, herbal healing, energy healing, tarot, crystals, and more – to carry out their skills according to their personal intent. Use your imagination because this kind of healing encompasses a wide swath of possibilities. However, practicing any of these spiritual tools doesn't necessarily make one a witch, any more than using all of them does.

Yes, witch, healer, oracle, herbalist, energy worker. Many a label fits under one black pointy hat. I like the term

healer, but on many days, calling myself a witch feels just right.

So, who are you?



Long ago, society revered and cherished seers, oracles, and healers for their craft.

In the Middle East, ancient civilizations not only worshipped powerful female deities, but it was often women who practiced the holiest of rituals. Trained in the sacred arts, these priestesses became known as wise women and may have been some of the earliest manifestations of what we now recognize as the witch.

These wise women made house calls, delivered babies, dealt with infertility, and cured impotence. According to Fontaine, "What's interesting about them is that they are so clearly understood to be positive figures in their society. No king could be without their counsel, no army could recover from a defeat without their ritual activity, no baby could be born without their presence."¹

However, as the mass consciousness became increasingly steeped in fear – especially of the unseen and those dedicated to working with it – being a healer, herbalist, seer, or midwife, bore the risk of being labeled as a

¹*The History of Witches, From Revered Healers to Persecuted Spellcasters*, October 31, 2015/Updated October 13, 2020, allthatsinteresting.com.

practitioner of the dark arts. Eventually, any work with the unseen became synonymous with the term witch.



Much mystery has shrouded the early roots of witches and healers. (And lifetimes of turmoil and persecution have likely compounded the secrecy.) Their long and winding lineage is intimately linked to the first birthing of religion called Druidry – a Paganistic view of Source discovered as early as 25,000 years ago in the caves of western Europe.

Druids, meaning “knowledge of the oak,” revered trees and worshipped Mother Earth. They valued and honored Her sacredness as provider, nurturer, and protector. Possessing an advanced knowledge of plant medicine and herbalism, Druids knew how to work with and communicate with floras and manipulate energies for creation. They were scholarly writers, musicians, and poets, and as diviners and oracles, their guidance was highly prized.

Esteemed and sought out for counsel and healing across the ages, Druids fell under suspicion by the masses and suffered great persecution. The most famous period of genocide, attributed to the Romans, caused the Order to nearly disappear by 700-800 AD. (However, their presence grew again through revitalization efforts in Europe that started in the 1800s.)

Eventually, Paganism found its way into medieval Europe. Practices with distinct Druidic roots – herbalism, midwifery, divination, and healing – otherwise known as witchcraft, were primarily performed by women. Sadly, around the 1200s, an evolution of negative attitudes and fear toward these practices progressively came to mirror

the unfortunate history of the Druids. This oppression, however, arrived via the church, as clergymen, attempting to control the masses, declared witchcraft heresy during a movement known as The Inquisition. Under the thumb of male-dominated churchdom, terror, misogyny, and toxic patriarchy surged. As society bent to this human-created god of fear, execution and death followed, and witchcraft and the healing arts became targets.

What was once a revered and honored craft – helping others heal, delivering babies, offering guidance and counsel, using herbs to treat disease and promote wellness – witches and those accused of witchcraft became labeled as heretics: operating against God (thus the church) and consorting with the devil.

As fear-based tactics continued to be employed by many well-respected clergymen, a mounting dread of the Bubonic Plague brought additional terror and with it the potent and deadly marriage of superstition and blame. With witchcraft cemented in societies' minds as demonic activity (1300s), countless pointing fingers found a “who” to fault and punish for a disease caused by flea-borne bacteria. One might say the Plague left a trail of destruction in its wake – bodies destroyed by illness and those caught in the aftermath, tortured and killed as Plague-guilty witches.

Then in 1487, after two centuries of condemnation, two German Dominican monks, Heinrich Kramer and Jacob Sprenger, published *The Malleus Maleficarum* (Latin for “The Hammer of Witches”), the most famous medieval treatises on witches. It fueled over two additional centuries of terror. And though *The Malleus Maleficarum* stands as its own kind of malevolence, it's not the only publica-