

# A Real Scarlet Letter Story

For those who believe that Nathaniel Hawthorne made up the idea for poor Hester's Scarlet Letter, here's proof that early New England used it as a punishment:

Judge Smith's Old Records, 293 and 294--Aug. 1719: "It appearing to this Court that notwithstanding the frequent inhibitions & fines that have been inflicted on John Drewe & Rebecca Cook for their adulterous actions that yet in contempt thereof they still proceed in open lewdness wch. is a scandale to religion & a palpable breach of his majestys laws.

It is therefore ordered that the said John Drewe do forthwith pay as a fine to His Majesty the sum of L.20. otherwise that 20 lashes be layd on his naked back at the Carts tayle from one end of the bank to the other & that the said Rebecca Cook at the same time set in the Cart with her face to the Criminal.

Moreover that the said Drewe ware the letter A during one year on the outside of his coat in full view under the penalty of ten stripes for such defect to be inflicted on him by any of his majestys Justices of this Government & so toties quoties from time to time and that the said Drew & Rebecca Cook pay all Cost & charge."

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