

The Wigmaker's Boy and the Boston Massacre



Paul Revere created this engraving to protest the Boston Massacre.

In 1770, the wig shop where Edward Garrick worked was very busy. George III, king of England, had sent hundreds of soldiers to Boston, and each soldier wore a white wig. Six days a week, the teenage apprentices greased, curled, and powdered the long hair of the soldiers' wigs.

After work on Monday, March 5, Edward was standing on King Street. Captain John Goldfinch walked by. Weeks before, another apprentice in the wig shop had shaved this officer. The master had promised the captain's money to that boy, but Goldfinch was slow to pay.

Edward yelled, "There goes the fellow that won't pay my master!" The captain ignored Edward. He had paid his bill that afternoon, but he wasn't going to answer a greasy boy.

Later that evening, Edward was still grumbling about Goldfinch. "He's mean!" the boy complained to his friend, Bartholomew.

Hugh White, the private guarding the Customs House, answered back. "The captain's a gentleman," he told Edward.

"There are no gentlemen in that regiment," Edward cried. White snapped, "Let me see your face!"

Edward stepped into the moonlight. Clonk! White hit him on the head with his musket. Edward staggered and started to cry. Bartholomew yelled: "What do you mean by abusing people like

that?" White jabbed his bayonet at the boys.

The apprentices ran away but came back with friends. They yelled "Lobster!" at the red-coated private. And then they threw snowballs.

The noise brought more people. Some had already been brawling with soldiers that night. They surrounded White's sentry box. Men from the Customs House ran for help. Soon more soldiers arrived.

Edward went home, but the crowd grew. People threw sticks and rocks. Angry and afraid, White and six other privates shot into the crowd of unarmed people. They killed five people and wounded six.

To many colonists, this unfortunate event proved that the king's army would kill the king's own people. To many British, it showed that colonists were rude and riotous. And the spark of that violence was just a young



Death of Crispus Attucks at the Boston Massacre, by James Wells Champney, 1856.



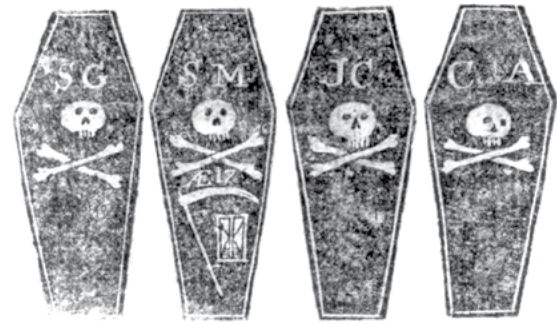
Crispus Attucks

The first person killed by the British during the Boston Massacre was Crispus Attucks. Attucks was a sailor on a whaling ship. Not much is known about his life, but he may have been an escaped slave. Attucks led the group of men who hurled snowballs and debris at the British soldiers. Some accounts say that he threw a piece of wood that struck a soldier. This caused the British to open fire. But others say that he was leaning on a stick when the shooting started. Attucks was hit in the chest with two bullets and died immediately. His body was carried to Faneuil Hall in Boston. It lay in state until he and the other massacre victims were buried three days later.

A section of a newspaper column with illustration by Paul Revere of four coffins bearing skull and crossbones and the initials of those killed: Samuel Gray, Samuel Maverick, James Caldwell, and Crispus Attucks.

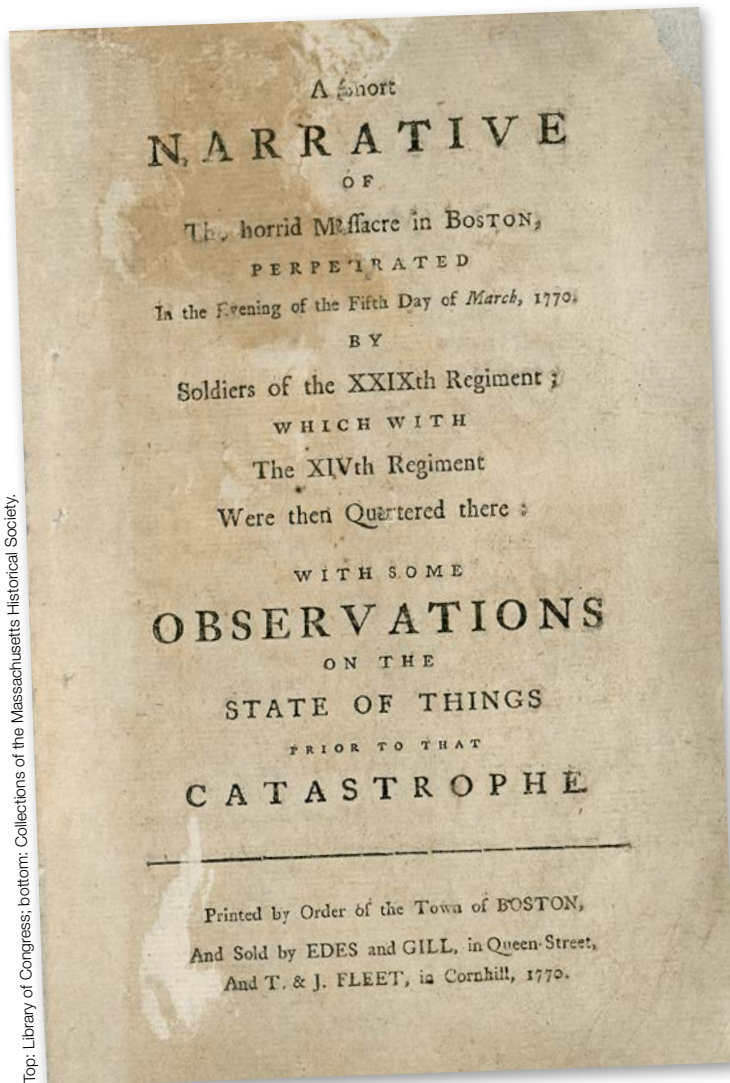
wigmaker who thought a captain hadn't paid for a shave.

Samuel Adams, an agitator who helped start the revolution, called this event the Boston Massacre and had Paul Revere



engrave a picture of the scene. Revere, a dedicated Patriot and friend of Samuel Adams, created an etching that showed British officers firing at peaceful Boston citizens. Revere and Adams both knew that this wasn't the way it actually happened, but the drawing was seen all over the colonies and infuriated colonists. Everyone in America wanted to blame the British soldiers for the horrible violence. John Adams, Samuel's cousin, believed the soldiers deserved a fair trial, and represented the redcoats in court. A Boston jury ruled that six of the soldiers were not guilty and two were guilty of manslaughter.

When asked years later about the American Revolution, John Adams, who was later elected President of the United States, said that the most important revolution began even before the war itself. "The revolution was in the minds and hearts of the people," said Adams. John Adams was fighting for something more important than independence from England. He wanted a chance to form a totally new government based on fairness and self-government. Samuel and John Adams believed Americans could run their own nation and elect their own leaders. These cousins wanted to help form an American republic.



Eager to share their own version of events with the government in Britain, Boston selectmen appointed James Bowdoin, Samuel Pemberton, and Joseph Warren to prepare an account of the Boston Massacre. Their narrative—together with an appendix containing ninety-six depositions—was published as a pamphlet a few days later, and copies were sent to England in response to military depositions.

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John Tudor's Diary, 1770

John Tudor, a church deacon in Boston, supported the patriot cause, but disagreed with mob action. He recorded his account of the Boston Massacre in his diary.

On Monday evening the 5th, a few minutes after nine o'clock, a most horrid murder was committed in King Street before the customhouse door by eight or nine soldiers under the command of Captain Thomas Preston.

This unhappy affair began when some boys and young fellows threw snowballs at the sentry placed at the customhouse door. At this, eight or nine soldiers came to his aid. Soon after, a number of people collected. The Captain commanded the soldiers to fire, which they did, and three men were killed on the spot and several mortally wounded, one of which died the next morning.

Captain Thomas Preston's Letter to a Friend, 1770

Thomas Preston was a British officer who served in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. He commanded some of the troops in the Boston Massacre in 1770. Charges were brought against him and other soldiers, but he was acquitted in a trial held in Boston. John Adams was his attorney. It is still unknown whether or not Preston gave the order to fire on the colonists; many historians believe that he did not.

The mob still increased and were more outrageous, striking their clubs . . . against another, and calling out, come on you rascals, you bloody backs, you lobster scoundrels, fire if you dare . . . we know you dare not . . . At this time I was between the soldiers and the mob, [doing] all in my power to persuade them to retire peaceably, but to no purpose. They advanced to the points of the bayonets, struck some of them, and even the muzzles of the pieces and seemed to be [trying to start a fight] with the soldiers . . . While I was thus speaking, one of the soldiers having received a severe blow with a stick, stepped a little on one side and instantly fired, on which . . . asking him why he fired without orders, I was struck with a club on my arm . . . On this a general attack was made on the men by a great number of heavy clubs and snowballs being thrown at them . . . some persons at the time from behind calling out . . . why don't you fire. Instantly three or four of the soldiers fired, one after another . . . On my asking the soldiers why they fired without orders, they said they heard the word fire and supposed it came from me. This might be the case as many of the mob called out fire, fire, but I assured the men that I gave no such order, that my words were, don't fire, stop your firing.



Paul Revere created this image of the Boston Massacre to highlight British tyranny and stir up anti-British sentiment among his fellow colonialists.



Death of Crispus Attucks at the Boston Massacre, by James Wells Champney, 1856, depicts Crispus Attucks in the Boston Massacre of 1770. Attucks, part African and part Native American, was the first person killed in the American Revolution after a mob attacked a British soldier in front of the Boston Custom House. An escaped slave and a seaman, Attucks was killed by British soldiers, who fired shots into the unruly crowd, killing four people; a fifth person would later die.