

DOCUMENT #1

A Massacre in Boston

Here is a story about both Adams cousins: the story of the Boston Massacre. A massacre, as you may know, is a gruesome killing. That's what happened in Boston in 1770.

The story begins in 1765, when the English Parliament passed a law that said American citizens had to provide quarters for British soldiers. The quarters they were talking about are not the kind you get when you add two dimes and a nickel. Quarters can also be houses where soldiers live. The law was called the Quartering Act. English soldiers, who were called "redcoats" because of the color of their uniforms, were to be quartered in American towns and cities.

Well, the Americans didn't want British redcoats quartered in their towns, or cities, or even in their country. So when the soldiers arrived, in 1768, the colonists weren't very kind to them. Sometimes they made fun of them, sometimes they threw snowballs or rocks, sometimes they called them lobsterbacks, or worse names.

The people in Boston were especially annoyed, and, at first, wouldn't even provide quarters. So the soldiers set up tents on the Boston Common (a big grassy area in the center of town) and played their drums and bugles -loudly- at the most inappropriate times. Most of the English soldiers didn't want to be in America anyway. They were poorly paid, and many were homesick. Some ran away from the British army. (Soldiers who ran away are called deserters; British deserters who were caught were shot.) A few redcoats-especially the officers-were treated well. Some married American women.

But for most of the British soldiers, the winters in Boston seemed longer and colder and more miserable than any they had ever known. On a freezing March day in 1770, one of the king's soldiers was looking for work to earn some extra money. Someone started making fun of him and told him to get a job cleaning toilets. (Only they didn't have the kind of toilets we have today. They had outdoor "privies," which were dirt-floored holes, and they smelled.) One thing led to another, and there was a fight.

That started things. Soon a noisy, jeering group of mischief-makers gathered in front of the Boston Custom House. They began pushing and shoving and throwing stones and pieces of ice at the British sentry. He got knocked down and he called for help. Captain Thomas Preston came to the rescue with eight British soldiers.

There is some confusion about what happened next. The mob is said to have taunted the redcoats, yelling "Fire! Fire!" Captain Preston is said to have yelled, "Hold your fire!" Then a British soldier was hit with a big stick. He claimed he heard the word "fire," so he fired his gun into the crowd. The street gang moved forward; the redcoats panicked and fired at unarmed people. Five Americans died; seven were wounded.

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None of them was a hero. The victims were troublemakers who got worse than they deserved. The soldiers were professionals (the British army was supposed to be the best in the world), who shouldn't have panicked. The whole thing shouldn't have happened. Sam Adams made the most of it. He called it the Boston Massacre and had Paul Revere engrave a picture of the scene. Revere was a silversmith who made fine teapots and pitchers. He was also a dedicated patriot, a dentist, a printer, a good horseback rider and a friend of Samuel Adams.

The picture that Paul Revere chose to etch into a piece of copper- so it could be printed over and over again- showed British soldiers firing at peaceful Boston citizens. That wasn't the way it had actually happened- Adams and Revere knew that- but the drawing made good propaganda. It made people furious at the British. That drawing was soon seen all over the colonies. It helped start a war.

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Excerpts from textbooks about the Boston Massacre

1. BOSTON MASSACRE

In the fall of 1768, 1000 British soldiers (known as redcoats for their bright red jackets) arrived in Boston under the command of General Thomas Gage. With their arrival, tension filled the streets of Boston. Since the soldiers were poorly paid, they hired themselves out as workers, usually at rates lower than those of American workers. Resentment against the redcoats grew. Soldiers and street youths often yelled insults at each other. "Lobsters for sale!" the youths would yell, referring to the soldiers' red coats. "Yankees!" the soldiers jeered. *Yankee* was supposed to be an insult, but the colonists soon took pride in the name.

On March 5, 1770, tensions finally exploded into violence. A group of youths and dockworkers—among them Crispus Attucks—started trading insults in front of the Custom House. A fight broke out, and the soldiers began firing. Attucks and four laborers were killed.

The Sons of Liberty called the shooting the **Boston Massacre**. They said that Attucks and the four others had given their lives for freedom. The incident became a tool for anti-British propaganda in newspaper articles, pamphlets, and posters. The people of Boston were outraged.

Meanwhile, the redcoats who had fired the shots were arrested for murder. John Adams, a lawyer and cousin of Samuel Adams, defended them in court. Adams was criticized for taking the case. He replied that the law should be "deaf...to the clamors of the populace." He supported the colonial cause but wanted to show that the colonists followed the rule of law. Adams argued that the soldiers had acted in self-defense. The jury agreed. To many colonists, however, the Boston Massacre would stand as a symbol of British tyranny.

--Garcia, Ogle, Risinger, Stevos, Jordan. (2001) Creating America.
McDougal Littell Inc.

2. THE BOSTON MASSACRE

Before the French and Indian War, English troops had never been stationed in the colonies. Now, during peacetime, several thousand Redcoats were suddenly quartered in Boston. Tensions mounted. Most people in Boston did not hesitate to show their dislike for the soldiers, but they avoided violence. On March 5, 1770, serious trouble erupted. A squad of soldiers guarding the hated customs house was being taunted by a crowd of sailors, loafers, and small boys. Snowballs filled the air, harmless to the soldiers but infuriating. Suddenly the Redcoats began to fire into the crowd. When order was restored, three Americans lay dead on the ground. Two others died later of their wounds.

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The captain of the guards, Thomas Preston, and five of his men were arrested and accused of murder. A few Boston radicals, led by Sam Adams, now began to hint that the colonies should declare their independence. Adams was a founder of the local Sons of Liberty and one of the authors of the Massachusetts Circular Letter. Another radical, the silversmith Paul Revere, made and distributed an engraving of this **Boston Massacre** that portrayed Captain Preston commanding his sneering soldiers to fire at innocent, unarmed American civilians.

--Garraty. (1986). *American history*. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

3. SAM ADAMS AND THE BOSTON MASSACRE

In response to colonial non-importation, smuggling opposition to the customs racketeers, and to the colonists' denials of Parliament's right to tax America, the government sent British troops to Boston. That simply increased colonial resistance.

One of the ablest organizers of colonial rebellion was Sam Adams of Boston. He was a strange man who always had trouble managing his own affairs, but could persuade others how to run theirs. He came from a well-known family and went to Harvard College, where he studied Latin and Greek. When his father set him up in business, he soon lost his father's money. Then when he became tax collector for the town of Boston, he got into trouble when he failed to hand over all the taxes he collected. He was always in debt, and many Bostonians considered him a shady character. But Adams made himself a master of propaganda and mob tactics. He was clever at creating a sensation out of every incident and blaming it all on the British. Two regiments of British troops sent to Boston in 1768 had been taunted for months by people there. Then late one March night in 1770 a small group of redcoats was jeered at and pelted with snowballs by a few restless unemployed workers. In their confusion, the British troops fired and killed five colonists. The first to die was Crispus Attucks, a black man of giant stature who was the leader of the throng.

Sam Adams advertised this event as the "Boston Massacre" where bloodthirsty British soldiers slaughtered innocent Americans. Later, Sam's cousin, John Adams, defended the soldiers in court and was able to get them acquitted of murder. But most Americans still believed Sam Adams's portrayal of the event.

--Boorstin, Kelly. (1981). *A History of the United States*. Ginn.

DOCUMENT #3

A Shoemaker and the Boston Tea Party

by
ALFRED F. YOUNG

GEORGE ROBERT TWELVES HEWES lived in Boston a good part of his life and was a shoemaker all of his life. He was active in most of the famous events of the American Revolution that took place in Boston: the Boston Massacre, the Boston Tea Party, and the tarring and feathering of people. He became a soldier and sailor in the Revolution and then left Boston, living out his life in country towns. When he was in his nineties, he was "discovered" in western New York; someone wrote a biography of him. He was brought back to Boston in 1835, where someone wrote another biography of him. He was the hero of the day for the Fourth of July. His portrait was painted and he became a celebrity.

This portrait portrayed him not as a shoemaker but in his Sunday best clothes, an old man leaning on a cane. The picture was called *The Centenarian* because Hewes thought he was ninety-nine years old, just on the verge of one hundred. He was wrong—off by six years. He was only ninety-three. I don't think it was an intentional lie, but he then passed into history as a nearly one hundred-year-old man and as the last survivor of the Tea Party. But he wasn't the last survivor; there were twenty-five others.

THE FIRST BIG ACTIVITY in Boston was around the Stamp Act, which was 1765-1766; an awful lot of working people were involved. The leader of the popular demonstrations was a shoemaker named Ebenezer McIntosh, who had formerly been leader of the annual November Guy Fawkes Day ritual. He was chosen by the political Leaders to help organize the demonstrations against the Stamp Act, an act of the British Parliament putting a tax on printed matter—newspapers, books, pamphlets, even playing cards and legal documents. It aroused a storm in the colonies.

The British repealed the Stamp Act because of the protest, but they insisted that they had the right to pass laws regulating trade in all cases whatsoever, including (implementing) new taxes. They passed new trade regulations and new tax laws. There was further protest of a much more violent sort. They sent troops to Boston to enforce the laws—some 4,000 troops to a city of 15,000, which means they were very much of a presence.

As far as I could figure out, Hewes had not been active in the Stamp Act demonstrations. He started talking about revolution at the point where the soldiers arrived in town, reacting very much to the personal things that took place on the streets. He saw a soldier hit a woman and rob her . . . He mended shoes for a British captain, and he was not paid. When he protested, the soldier involved . . . was whipped as a punishment. Hewes was appalled that he caused this man to be whipped, but this series of personal things aroused him against the soldiers.

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Then there was an event which became famous. Soldiers moonlighted- they were allowed to take off-duty jobs. One evening [in March 1770] a soldier asked for work at a wharf ropewalk. The ropewalk workers told him where he could go, with a great deal of profanity. More soldiers came in and there was a fight between the ropewalk workers and the soldiers. Both sides were furious. Soldiers were beaten and vowed revenge. They were going to get even with the townspeople. The townspeople vowed that they were not going to take any more of this sort of stuff. That was the matrix of events leading to the killings on March 5, which became known as the Boston Massacre.

Hewes said that it all began on the night of the fifth with an apprentice boy yelling at one of the soldiers for not paying his master, who was a barber, for some work in the barbershop. There was a fight over this and there was a gathering of people. It was not a large crowd at first, but the people in the crowd were angry with the soldiers for hurting the apprentice boy.

People started throwing snowballs, which were probably laced with stones. The guard was called out, some six or seven soldiers, and they formed a circle to protect the sentry. Soon there was a larger gathering of townspeople, maybe a hundred or so, in the square. The townspeople taunted the soldiers too: "Fire, Fire, Fire, We dare you. We're standing in the king's highway. We have a right to stand here." The soldiers were restrained. At some point, there was a shout of "fire" and the soldiers fired. They shot into the crowd. Four people were killed and several others were wounded.

Hewes was present. He was not armed, but he came out because he knew his townspeople were under attack. As he remembered it years later . . . one of the men, James Caldwell, fell in his arms, wounded. Hewes remembered, sixty years later, that he took Caldwell to Dr. Thomas Young on such and such a lane, and then he went to another lane to inform Caldwell's ship captain that he had been shot. Extraordinary.

There had been protests all over the colonies about the Stamp Act... but the [deployment] of the soldiers was only in the colony of Massachusetts. It did not arouse the rest of the colonies as much, although they were watching. The massacre, as it was called by the patriots, did arouse large numbers of people all over, who were frightened [by this event].

AS SOON AS THE EVENTS in Boston got going, there was a struggle between conflicting groups. The leadership, people like Samuel Adams and John Adams, wanted to keep the so-called mob under their control. They wanted people to demonstrate under their leadership. They were very nervous about people demonstrating against the British on their own.

For example, tarring and feathering was usually carried out against customs officials or customs informers, and it was usually carried out by crowds heavily composed of sailors and people around the docks. This was not approved of by the leadership. [In fact] the leadership came out and tried to rescue the man who was being tarred and feathered by saying, "Leave him to the courts."

The motto of the leadership in the decade before the Revolution was, "No violence or you'll hurt the cause." "No mobs, no tumults"- that was their phrase. So they tried to control the activity. They didn't control it at the time of the Boston Massacre. That was

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a chaotic event, which nobody wanted to take place and was not orchestrated by the leadership. And, as soon as the killing took place, the leadership rushed out to assume command of the protest and to meet with the royal governor.

The same thing was going on as they reported the events. Paul Revere's engraving of the massacre was in tune with the way the leadership wanted people to see it, that is, the British shooting down a group of hapless civilians who were completely passive. The truth is that the civilians were quite aggressive against the soldiers.

From the beginning, there was a struggle to control what I call the memory of the Revolution. The leadership was very concerned with what people would think about Boston, which had a reputation as a mobbish town, and respectable and having legitimate protest . . . So they were able to control the Tea Party. That was the beginning of an effort to control the knowledge of what took place in the Revolution

After the Revolution, that process continued of trying to control the knowledge of what happened. Conservatives in the 1790's, who would be called Federalists, were very uneasy with this tradition of the Revolution, which stressed popular activity.

The conservatives in Boston, for the longest time, didn't want to read the Declaration of Independence. They didn't read it at the Fourth of July celebrations. It was very anti-British, and the conservative Federalists were sort of sympathetic to the British. Secondly, the Declaration talked about all men being created equal, and about the right of revolution. In the 1790s, conservatives were very frightened of the French Revolution. They wanted to play down what we would call the popular, or radical, side of the Revolution.

In the course of that, they celebrated the Fourth of July, but they didn't celebrate the Tea Party; they didn't celebrate the Stamp Act demonstrations; and they certainly didn't celebrate the Boston Massacre. As we moved into the nineteenth century, the descendants of the leadership, people like Harrison Gray Otis and Josiah Quincy, after whom the market in Boston is named, presented a version of the Revolution that erased the Tea Party and the Boston Massacre; they erased the mob side of the Revolution.