

The Wigmaker's Boy and 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 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 fi 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.

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