

Boston Massacre

Colonist vs. British Perspective

Text and digital version of the Boston Gazette and Country Journal, March 12, 1770 followed by Text and digital version of the London Chronicle, April 28, 1770.



A few minutes after nine o'clock four youths, named Edward Archbald, William Merchant, Francis Archbald, and John Leech, jun., came down Cornhill together, and separating at Doctor Loring's corner, the two former were passing the narrow alley leading Mr. Murray's barrack in which was a soldier brandishing a broad sword of an uncommon size against the walls, out of which he struck fire plentifully. A person of mean countenance. armed with a large cudgel bore him company. Edward Archbald admonished Mr. Merchant to take care of the sword, on which the soldier turned round and struck Archbald on the arm, then pushed at Merchant and pierced through his clothes inside the arm close to the armpit and grazed the skin. Merchant then struck the soldier with a short stick he had; and the other person ran to the barrack and brought with him two soldiers, one armed with a pair of tongs, the other with a shovel. He with the tongs pursued Archbald back through the alley, collared and laid him over the head with the tongs. The noise brought people together; and John Hicks, a young lad, coming up, knocked the soldier down but let him get up again; and more lads gathering, drove them back to the barrack where the boys stood some time as it were to keep them in. In less than a minute ten or twelve of them came out with drawn cutlasses, clubs, and bayonets and set upon the unarmed boys and young folk who stood them a little while but, finding the inequality of their equipment, dispersed.

On hearing the noise, one Samuel Atwood came up to see what was the matter; and entering the alley from dock square, heard the latter part of the combat; and when the boys had dispersed he met the ten or twelve soldiers aforesaid rushing down the alley towards the square and asked them if they intended to murder people? They answered Yes, by G-d, root and branch! With that one of them struck Mr. Atwood with a club which was repeated by another; and being unarmed, he turned to go off and received a wound on the left shoulder which reached the bone and gave him much pain. Retreating a few steps, Mr. Atwood met two officers and said, gentlemen, what is the matter They answered, you'll see by and by. Immediately after, those heroes appeared in the square, asking where were the boogers? where were the cowards? But notwithstanding their fierceness to naked men, one of them advanced towards a youth who had a split of a raw stave in his hand and said, damn them, here is one of them. But the young man seeing a person near him with a drawn sword and good cane ready to support him, held up his stave in defiance; and they quietly passed by him up the little alley by Mr. Silsby's to King Street where they attacked single and unarmed persons till they raised much clamor, and then turned down Cornhill Street, insulting all they met in like manner and pursuing some to their very doors. Thirty or forty persons, mostly lads, being by this means gathered in King Street, Capt. Preston with a party of men with charged bayonets, came from the main guard to the commissioner's house, the soldiers pushing their bayonets, crying, make way! They took place by the custom house and, continuing to push to drive the people off pricked some in several places, on which they were clamorous and, it is said, threw snow balls. On this, the Captain commanded them to fire; and more snow balls coming, he again said, damn you, fire, be the consequence what it will! One soldier then fired, and a townsman with a cudgel struck him over the hands with such force that he dropped his firelock; and, rushing forward, aimed a blow at the Captain's head which grazed his hat and fell pretty heavy upon his arm. However, the soldiers continued the fire successively till seven or eight or, as some say, eleven guns were discharged.

By this fatal manoeuvre three men were laid dead on the spot and two more struggling for life; but what showed a degree of cruelty unknown to British troops, at least since the house of Hanover has directed their operation, was an attempt to fire upon or push with their bayonets the persons who undertook to remove the slain and wounded!

Mr. Benjamin Leigh, now undertaker in the Delph manufactory, came up and after some conversation with Capt. Preston relative to his conduct in this affair, advised him to draw off his men, with which he complied.

The dead are Mr. Samuel Gray, killed on the spot, the ball entering his head and beating off a large portion of his skull.

A mulatto man named Crispus Attucks, who was born in Framingham, but lately belonged to New-Providence and was here in order to go for North Carolina, also killed instantly, two balls entering his breast, one of them in special goring the right lobe of the lungs and a great part of the liver most horribly.

Mr. James Caldwell, mate of Capt. Morton's vessel, in like manner killed by two balls entering his back.

Mr. Samuel Maverick, a promising youth of seventeen years of age, son of the widow Maverick, and an apprentice to Mr. Greenwood, ivory-turner, mortally wounded; a ball went through his belly and was cut out at his back. He died the next morning.

A lad named Christopher Monk, about seventeen years of age, an apprentice to Mr. Walker, shipwright, wounded; a ball entered his back about four inches above the left kidney near the spine and was cut out of the breast on the same side. Apprehended he will die.

A lad named John Clark, about seventeen years of age, whose parents live at Medford, and an apprentice to Capt. Samuel Howard of this town, wounded; a ball entered just above his groin and came out at his hip on the opposite side. Apprehended he will die.

Mr. Edward Payne of this town, merchant, standing at his entry door received a ball in his arm which shattered some of the bones.

Mr. John Green, tailor, coming up Leverett's Lane, received a ball just under his hip and lodged in the under part of his thigh, which was extracted.

Mr. Robert Patterson, a seafaring man, who was the person that had his trousers shot through in Richardson's affair, wounded; a ball went through his right arm, and he suffered a great loss of blood.

Mr. Patrick Carr, about thirty years of age, who worked with Mr. Field, leather breeches-maker in Queen Street, wounded; a ball entered near his hip and went out at his side.

A lad named David Parker, an apprentice to Mr. Eddy, the wheelwright, wounded; a ball entered his thigh.

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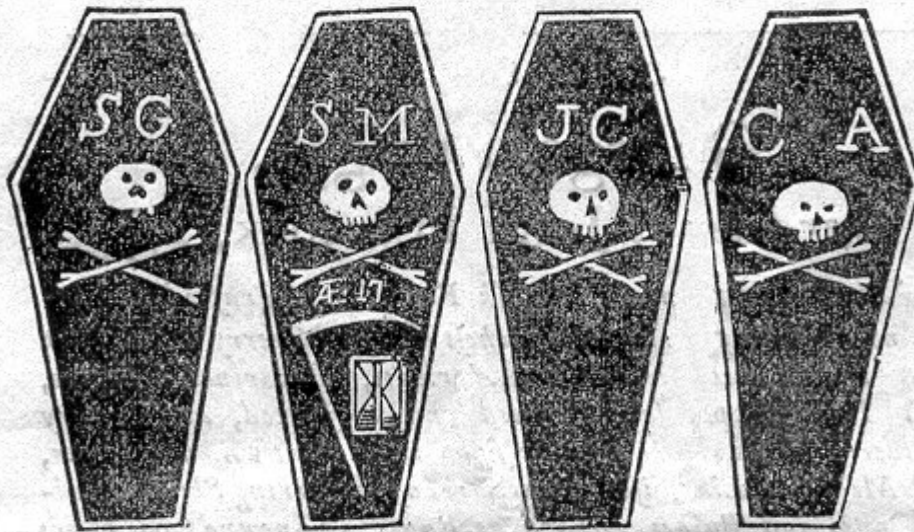
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A lad named Christopher Monk, about 17 years of age, an apprentice to Mr. Walker, Shipwright ; wounded, a ball entered his back about 4 inches above the left kidney, near the spine, and was cut out of the breast on the same side ; apprehended he will die.

A lad named David Parker, an apprentice to Mr. Eddy the Wheelwright, wounded, a ball entered in his thigh.

Last Thursday, agreeable to a general Request of the Inhabitants, and by the Consent of Parents and Friends, were carried to their *Grave* in Succession, the Bodies of *Samuel Gray*, *Samuel Maverick*, *James Caldwell*, and *Crispus Attucks*, the unhappy Victims who fell in the bloody Massacre of the Monday Evening preceding !



On this Occasion most of the Shops in Town were shut, all the Bells were ordered to toll a solemn Peal, as were also those in the neighboring Towns of Charlestown, Roxbury, &c. The Procession began to move between the Hours of 4 and 5 in the Afternoon; two of the unfortunate Sufferers, viz. Mess. *James Caldwell* and *Crispus Attucks*, who were Strangers, borne from Faneuil-Hall, attended by a numerous Train of Persons of all Ranks; and the other two, viz. Mr. *Samuel Gray*, from the House of M. Benjamin Gray, (his Brother) on the North-side of the Exchange, and Mr. *Maverick*, from the House of his distressed Mother Mrs. *Mary Maverick*, in Union-Street, each followed by their respective Relations and Friends: The several Hearses forming a Junction in King-Street, the Theatre of the inhuman Tragedy! proceeded from thence thro' the Main-Street, lengthened by an immense Concourse of People, so numerous as to be obliged to follow in Ranks of six, and brought up by a long Train of Carriages belonging to the principal Gentry of the Town. The Bodies were deposited in one Vault in the middle Burying-ground: The aggravated Circumstances of their Death, the Distress and Sorrow visible in every Countenance, together with the peculiar Solemnity with which the whole Funeral was conducted, surpass description.

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your time," and the crowd, always leaving in ones, I ordered not to leave in that way, ordering them then posted to the different companies of the 47th regiment. I ordered them to go around the other bridge. The 47th regiment only got under arms, but remained at their posts. I ordered the 1st regiment to follow me, a company of Old 34th regt., the commanding officer, to support him in every particular. Several officers going to join the

may also be a very good idea to have a copy of the book on hand for reference. The book is available for purchase from the publisher, and is also available for purchase from the publisher.

Excerpt of Article from *The London Chronicle*

April 26–28, 1770

The following is a substance of a letter from Boston, dated the 12th of March, relative to the unhappy affair between the Townsmen and the Soldiers on the 5th of that month:

For some time past frequent affrays have happened in the streets of this town between the inhabitants and the soldiers quartered there, and particularly on the 2nd and 3rd of March in which affrays one or two of the soldiers were much hurt. On the 5th of March, in the evening, a number of the townspeople, after insulting in the barracks, attacked a sentry upon duty at the Customhouse, and forced him from his post. Upon his requiring aid, Captain Preston (who was Captain of the day) sent a non-commissioned officer and 12 men to his assistance, and soon after followed himself. This party was also attacked, and insulted by the mob, and one of them, receiving a blow, fired his piece, after which six or seven others fired, by which three of the townspeople were killed upon the spot and several others wounded; one of which is since dead of his wounds. During this transaction there was a great tumult in the town. The people prepared to arm; expresses had been sent to the neighboring towns for assistance; and a resolution taken to give a general alarm, by firing the beacon; but by the persuasion of the Lieutenant Governor, the people were prevailed upon, after some time, to disperse; A barrel of tar, which was carrying to the beacon, was brought back, and the troops, which were under arms, retired to their barracks.

On the next morning the Council assembled to deliberate on the measures it might be advisable to pursue. It having been declared, by several of the members, that it was the determination of the people to have the troops removed from the town at all events, that this was the sense of the whole province, that the inhabitants of the other towns stood ready to come in, in order to affect this, and that they had formed their plan, of which this was only a part. And the inhabitants, assembled in town meeting, having by their selectmen, and by messages repeatedly represented, that nothing would satisfy the people, but a total and immediate removal of the troops. The Lieutenant-Governor thought fit to request the commanding officer, to cause both the regiments to remove to the barracks at the castle, which was accordingly done without further disturbance.

Upon examinations before two Justices of the Peace, Captain Preston being charged with ordering the troops to fire, was committed to prison: as were also seven or eight private men, charged with having fired in consequence of those orders.

Case of Capt. Thomas Preston of the 29th Regiment:

It is a matter of too great notoriety to need any proofs, that the arrival of his Majesty's troops in Boston was extremely obnoxious to its inhabitants. They have ever used all means in their power to weaken the regiments and to bring them into contempt, by promoting and aiding desertions, and with impunity, even where there has been the clearest evidence of the fact and by grossly and fallaciously propagate untruths concerning them. On the arrival of the 64th and 65th, their ardor seemingly began to abate, it being too expensive to buy off so many; and attempts of the kind rendered too dangerous from the members. But the same spirit revived immediately on its being known that those regiments were ordered for Halifax, and hath ever since their departure been breaking out with greater violence. After their embarkation, one of the Justices, not thoroughly aquatinted with the people and their intentions on the (?) opening and publicly in the hearing of great numbers of people, and from the seat of justice declared: "that the soldiers must now take care of themselves, nor trust too much to their arms, for they were but a handful; that the inhabitants carried weapons concealed under their clothes, and would destroy them in a moment if they pleased." This, considering the malicious temper of the people, was an alarming circumstance to the soldiers. Since which several disputes have happened between the townspeople and the soldiers of both regiments, the former being encouraged thereto by the countenance of even some of the Magistrates, and by protection of all the party against Government. In general such disputes have been kept too secret from the officers. On the 2nd instant, two of the 29th going through one Gray's ropewalk, the ropemakers insultingly asked them if they would empty a vault. This unfortunately had the desired effect by provoking the soldiers, and from words they went to blows. Both parties suffered in this affray and finally the soldiers returned to their quarters. The officers, on the first knowledge of this transaction, took every precaution in their power to prevent any ill consequences. Notwithstanding which, single quarrels could not be prevented, with inhabitants constantly provoking and abusing the soldiery. This insolence, as well as utter hatred of the inhabitants to the troops increased daily; insomuch that Monday and Tuesday, the 5th and 6th instant were privately agreed upon for a general engagement; in consequence of which several of the militia came from the country armed to join their friends, menacing to destroy any who should oppose them. This plan has since been discovered.

On Monday night about eight o'clock, two soldiers were attacked and beat. But the party of the towns people, in order to carry matters to the utmost length, broke into two Meeting Houses and rang the alarm bells, which I suppose was for fire, as usual, but was soon undeceived. About nine some of the guard came to and informed me, the towns inhabitants were assembling to attack the troops, and that the bells were ringing as a signal for that purpose, and not for fire, and that the beacon intended to be fired to bring in the distant people of the country. This, as I was Captain of the day, occasioned my repairing immediately to the main guard. In my way there I saw the people in great commotion, and heard them use the most cruel and horrid threats against the troops. In a few minutes after I reached the guard, about a hundred people passed it and went towards the Custom House, where the King's money is lodged. They immediately surrounded the sentinel posted there, and with clubs and other weapons threatened to execute their vengeance upon him. I was soon informed by a townsman, their intention was to carry off the soldier from his post, and probably murder him. On which I desired him to return for further intelligence; and he soon came back and assured me he heard the mob declare they would murder him. This I feared might be a prelude to their plundering the King's chest. I immediately sent a non-commissioned officer and twelve men to protect both the sentinel and the King's money, and very soon followed myself, to prevent, if possible, all disorder, fearing lest the officer and soldiery by the insults and provocations of the rioters, should be thrown off their guard and commit some rash act. They soon rushed through the people, and, by charging their bayonets in half circle, kept them at a little distance. Nay, so far was I from intending the death of any person, that I suffered the troops to go to the spot where the unhappy affair took place, without any loading of their pieces, nor did I ever give orders for loading them. This remiss conduct in me perhaps merits censure, yet it is evidence, resulting from the nature of things, which is the best and surest that can be offered, that my intention was not to act offensively, but the contrary part, and that not without compulsion. The mob still increased, and were more outrageous, striking their clubs or bludgeons, one against the other and calling out, 'Come on you rascals, you bloody backs, you lobster scoundrels; fire if you dare, G__damn you fire, and be damned, we know you dare not;' and much more such language was used. At this time I was between the soldiers and the mob, parleying with and endeavoring all in my power to persuade them to retire peaceably; but to no purpose. They advanced up to the points of the bayonets, struck some of them, and even the muzzles of the pieces and seemed to be endeavoring too close with the soldiers. On which some well behaved persons asked me if the guns were charged. I replied; yes. They even asked me if I intended to order the men to fire; I answered, no, by no means; observing to

them that I advanced before the muzzles of the men's pieces, and must fall a sacrifice if they fired; that the soldiers were upon the half-cock and charged bayonets, and my giving the word fire under those circumstances, would prove me no officer. 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 turning to and asking him why he fired with orders, I was struck with a club on my arm, which for some time deprived me of the use of it; which blow, had it been placed on my head, most probably would have destroyed me. On this a general attack was made on the men by a great number of heavy clubs and snow-balls being thrown at them, by which all our lives were in imminent danger; some persons at the same time from behind calling out; 'Damn your bloods, why don't you fire?' Instantly three or four of the soldiers fired, one after another, and directly after, three more in the same confusion and hurry.

The mob then ran away, except three unhappy men who instantly expired, in which number was Mr. Gray, at whose ropewalk the prior quarrel took place; one more is since dead; three others are dangerously and four frightfully wounded. The whole of this melancholy affair was transacted in almost 20 minutes. 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!' in short it was scarce possible for the soldiers to know who said fire, or don't fire, or stop your firing. On the people's assembling again to take away the dead bodies, the soldiers, supposing them coming to attack them were making ready to fire again, which I prevented by striking up their firelocks with my hand. Immediately after a townsman came and told me that 4 or 5,000 people were assembled in the next street and swore to take my life with every man's with me; on which I judged it unsafe to remain there any longer, and therefore sent the party and the sentry to the Main Guard, where the street is narrow and short, there telling them off into street firings, divided and planted them at each end of the street to secure their rear, momentarily expecting an attack, as there was a constant cry of the inhabitants, "To arms, to arms – turn out with your guns," and the town drums beating to arms. I ordered my drum to beat to arms and being soon after joined by the different companies of the 29th regiment, I formed them as the guard into street firings. The 14th regiment also got under arms, but remained at their barracks. I immediately sent a sergeant with a party to Col. Dalrymple, the commanding officer, to acquaint him with every particular. Several officers going to join their regiment were knocked down by the mob, one very much wounded and his sword taken from him. The Lieutenant-Governor and Colonel

Carr soon after met at the head of the 29th regiment, and agreed that the regiment should retire to their barracks, and the people to their houses; but I kept the piquet to strengthen the guard. It was with great difficulty that the Lieutenant-Governor prevailed upon the people to be quiet and retire: at last they all went off, excepting about a hundred.

A council was immediately called, on the breaking up of which three justices met, and issued a warrant to apprehend me and eight soldiers. On hearing of this procedure, I instantly went to the sheriff and surrendered myself, though for the space of four hours I had it in my power to have made my escape, which I most undoubtedly should have attempted, and could have easily executed, had I been the least conscious of any guilt.

On the examination before the Justices, two witnesses swore that I gave the men orders to fire; the one testified that he was within two feet of me; the other, that I swore at the men for not firing at the first word. Others swore they heard me use the word, "fire," but whether do or no do fire, they could not say; others that they heard the word, "fire," but could not say it came from me. The next day they got five or six more to swear I gave the word to fire. So bitter and inveterate are many of the malcontents here, that they are industriously using every method to fish out evidence that it was a concerted scheme to murder the inhabitants. Others are instilling the utmost malice and revenge into the minds of the people who are to be my jurors by false publication, votes of towns, and all other artifices, that so, from a settled rancor against the officers and troops in general, the suddenness of my trial, after the affair, while the people's minds are all greatly inflamed, I am, though perfectly innocent, under most unhappy circumstances, having nothing in reason to expect but the loss of life in a very ignominious manner, without the interposition of his Majesty's royal goodness.

Sources:

Thomas Hughes Rare and Early Newspapers

www.earlyamerica.com

www.nps.gov/revwar