



Paul Revere, *The Bloody Massacre*, engraving, 1770, detail

“the Blood of our Fellow Citizens running like Water”

The Citizen-Soldier Confrontations of Early 1770

19 January 1770	The “Battle of Golden Hill”	New York City
22 February 1770	The Shooting of Christopher Seider	Boston
5 March 1770	The Boston Massacre	Boston

—A Selection from News Reports, Memoirs, Illustrations, Poetry & A History—

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—“FIRST BLOOD”: THE BATTLE OF GOLDEN HILL—

NEW YORK CITY, JANUARY 19, 1770—

Because the Golden Hill confrontation between colonists and British soldiers is the first in which serious injuries were incurred, it is often called the “first blood” incident of the Revolution. New Yorkers battled with troops attempting to cut down the Liberty Pole on Golden Hill (in present-day downtown Manhattan) — three previous poles having been destroyed by British troops since 1766.

The New-York Gazette, 5 February 1770

ON Saturday Night the 13th Instant [of this month], about eight o’Clock, a Party of Soldiers, near forty in Number, began to execute a Design [plan] they had formed to cut down the Liberty Pole. To effect this with the greater Safety, they placed Sentinels in the different Roads that lead to it and the most public Places to discover any Number of the Inhabitants that should be making towards the Pole to obstruct them. In this Situation they were discovered seeing the Spurs by some Persons that were crossing the Fields, who went into Mr. Montanye’s and reported it to sundry [several] Persons in the House . . . Captain White was attacked near the House by a Soldier who drew his Bayonet on him and threatened to take his Life if he alarmed [warned] the Citizens, upon which the Soldier returned to his Companions at the Pole. The People at Mr. Montanye’s came out and called out Fire in order to alarm the Inhabitants. Soon after a Fire was seen at the Pole, which proved to be a Fuse that the Soldiers had put in it in order to communicate Fire to a Cavity which they had made in the Pole and filled with Powder, with a Design to split it. The Fuse did not communicate [start] the Fire, nor do the Execution that was expected, which the People at Mr. Montanye’s observing, hissed at the Soldiers, and as the former had but just before called out Fire, the latter considered it as a Taunt on their abortive [failed] Labor.

These Sons of *Mars* [British soldiers] could not brook [tolerate] the least Sign of Satisfaction in the Citizens at their heroic Attack on a Pole’s proving unsuccessful. No, they, unprovoked, determined on a more heroic Action, which was to storm Mr. Montanye’s House, and accordingly entered it with drawn Swords and Bayonets, insulted the Company and beat the Waiter. Not satisfied with this mal-Treatment, they proceeded to destroy every Thing they could conveniently come at. They broke Eighty-four Panes of Glass, two Lamps and two Bowls, after which they quitted the House with Precipitation [haste] lest any of them should be discovered.

After a British officer sent a guard to the pole, no further violence occurred that night. Three days later, however, British soldiers succeeded in exploding the pole and placing its remnants at the door of Mr. Montanye. Tensions escalated until Friday, the 19th, when two “Sons of Liberty” attempted to stop British troops who were posting a handbill around the city.

The Soldiers, still bent on further Insults to the Citizens, on Friday the 19th published the following Paper and went in Posses through the Streets, putting them up at the most public Places of the City, and threw some of them into the Mayor’s Entry.

*God and a Soldier all men doth adore
In Time of War, and not before:
When the War is over, and all Things righted,
God is forgotten, and the Soldier slighted.*

WHEREAS an uncommon and riotous disturbance prevails throughout this city by some of its inhabitants, who style themselves the S——s of L——y, but rather may more properly be called real enemies to society, and whereas the army, now quartered in New York, are represented in a heinous light to their officers and other, for having propagated a disturbance in this city by attempting to destroy their Liberty Pole in the Fields, which, being now complete, without the assistance of the army, we have reason to laugh at them and beg the public only to observe how chagrin’d those pretended S——s of L——y look as they pass through the streets, especially as these great heroes thought their freedom depended on a piece of wood . . .

[It] is well known since their [troops’] arrival in New York they have watched night and day for the safety and protection of the city and its inhabitants; [they] have suffered the rays of the scorching sun in summer and the severe colds of freezing snowy nights in winter, which must be the case, and fifty times worse had there been a war, which we sincerely pray for in hopes those S——s of L——y may feel the effects of it, with famine and destruction pouring on their heads. . . . [A]ddressed to the public for which, may the shame they mean to brand our names with, stick on theirs. Signed by the 16th Regiment of Foot [Infantry]

Mr. Isaac Sears and Mr. Walter Quackenbos, seeing six or several Soldiers going towards the Fly Market, concluded they were going to it to put up some of the above Papers [handbills]. Mr. Sears seized the Soldier that was fixing the Paper by the Collar and asked him what Business he had to put up Libels against the Inhabitants? and that he would carry him before the Mayor. Mr. Quackenbos took

hold of one that had the Papers on his Arm. A Soldier standing to the Right of Mr. Sears drew his Bayonet, upon which the latter took a Ram's Horn and threw it at the former, which struck him in the Head, and then the Soldiers, except the two that were seized, made off and alarmed others in the Barracks. They immediately carried the two to the Mayor and assigned him the Reason of their bringing them before him. The Mayor sent for Alderman Desbrosses to consult on what would be proper to be done in the Matter.

In the mean Time, a considerable Number of People collected opposite to the Mayor's. Shortly after, about twenty Soldiers with Cutlasses and Bayonets from the lower Barracks made their Appearance, coming to the Mayor's through the main Street. When they came opposite to Mr. Peter Remsen's, he endeavored to dissuade them from going any further (supposing they were going to the Mayor's) representing to them that they would get into a Scrape, but his Advice was not taken, owing, as he supposes, to one of two of their Leaders who seemed to be intoxicated.

The People collected at the Mayor's determined to let them pass by peaceably and unmolested, and opened for them to go through. Captain Richardson and some of the Citizens, judging they intended to take the two Soldiers from the Mayor's by force, went to his Door to prevent it. When the Soldiers came opposite to his House, they halted. Many of them drew their Swords and Bayonets; some say they all drew. But all that were present agree that many did, and faced about to the Door and demanded the Soldiers in Custody. Some of them attempted to get into the House to rescue them. Capt. Richardson and others at the Door prevented them, and desired them to put up their Arms and go to their Barracks, that the Soldiers were before the Mayor who would do them Justice. The Soldiers within likewise desired them to go away to their Barracks and leave them to the Determination of the Mayor.

Upon the Soldiers drawing their Arms, many of the Inhabitants, conceiving themselves in Danger, ran to some Sleighs that were near and pulled out some of the Rungs. The Mayor and Alderman Desbrosses came out and ordered the Soldiers to their Barracks. After some Time, they moved up the Fly. The People were apprehensive that, as the Soldiers had drawn their Swords at the Mayor's House and thereby condemned the Civic Authority and declared War against the Inhabitants, it was not safe to let them go through the Streets alone lest they might offer Violence to some of the Citizens: To prevent which they followed them and two Magistrates aforesaid to the Corner of Golden Hill, and in their going, several of the [obscured] reasoned with them on the Folly of their drawing [obscured] Swords, and endeavored to

persuade them to sheath them, assuring them no Mischief was intended them, [obscured] without Success.

They turned up Golden Hill and about the Time they gained the Summit, a considerable Number of Soldiers joined them, which inspired them to reinsult the Magistrates and exasperate the Inhabitants, which was soon manifested by their facing about, and one in Silk Stockings and neat Buckskin Breeched (who is suspected to have been an Officer in Disguise) giving the Word of Command, "Soldiers draw your Bayonets and cut your Way through them." The former was immediately obeyed, and they called out, "Where are your Sons of Liberty now?" and fell on the Citizens with great Violence, cutting and slashing. This convinced them that their Apprehensions were well founded, for although no Insult or Violence had been offered to the former, yet instead of going peaceably to their Barracks, as they were ordered by the Magistrates, they in Defiance of their Authority (Veteran-like) drew their Arms to attack Men who, except six or seven that had Clubs and Sticks, were naked [unarmed]. These few that had the Sticks maintained their Ground in the narrow Passage in which they stood and defended their defenseless Fellow Citizens for some Time against the furious and unmanly Attacks of armed Soldiers, until one of them missing his Aim, in a Stroke made at one of the Assailants, lost his Stick, which obliged the former to retreat to look for some Instrument of Defense. The Soldiers pursued him down to the main Street. One of them made a Stroke with a Cutlass at Mr. Francis Field, one of the People called Quakers, standing in an inoffensive Posture in Mr. Field's Door, at the Corner, and cut him on the Right Cheek, and if the Corner had not broke the Stroke, it would have probably killed him. This Party that came down to the main Street cut a Tea-Water Man driving his Cart, and a Fisherman's Finger. In short, they madly attacked every Person that they could reach, and their Companions on Golden Hill were more inhuman, for, besides cutting a Sailor's Head and Finger [who] was defending himself against them, they stabbed another with a Bayonet, going about his Business, so badly that his Life was thought in Danger.

Not satisfied with all this Cruelty, two of them followed a Boy going for Sugar into Mr. Elsworth's House. One of them cut him on the Head with a Cutlass, and the other made a Lunge with a Bayonet at the Woman in the Entry, that answered the Child. Capt. Richardson was violently attacked by two of the Soldiers with Swords, and expected to have been cut to pieces but was so fortunate as to defend himself with a Stick for a considerable Time 'till a Halbert was put into his hands, with which he could have killed several of them, but he made no other Use

of it than to defend himself and his naked Fellow Citizens. . . .

From all which I think it is evident that the Inhabitants only acted on the Defensive. Capt. Richardson was a Witness of all that passed, from the Soldiers coming to the Mayor's Door, and declares that if they had not halted and acted as they did on Golden Hill, he verily believes there would not have been any Mischief done.

Some Time after the Commencement of the grand Affray on the Golden Hill, a Posse of Soldiers came down from another Quarter, opposite to the Street that leads down from the Hill, and called out to the Soldiers on the Hill "to cut their Way down, and they would meet them half Way." During the Action on the Hill, a small Party of Soldiers came along the Fly by the Market and halted near Mr. Norwood's. Some of the Inhabitants gathered round them when a Conversation ensued on the then Disturbances. Soon after, the former drew their Bayonets, upon which, as the Citizens were all unarmed, they cast about to look for Stones or some Instruments to defend themselves; but the Soldiers observing that they could not find any Thing, one of them made an Attempt to stab Mr. John White who, finding himself in imminent Danger, judged it most safe to take Flight toward the Mayor's. The Soldier pursued him with his drawn Bayonet and made several Attempts when he thought Mr. White within his reach to stab him, but in crossing the Gutter the Soldier fell, which gave the designed Victim an opportunity to escape or, in the Opinion of all present, he would certainly have fallen a Sacrifice to the unprovoked, malevolent and merciless Rage of his Pursuer. Several of the Soldiers that were on the Hill were much bruised, and one of them badly cut. Soon after the above Attack, many of the Magistrates collected from different Quarters of the City, and several of the Officers being made acquainted with the Affray, came to the Places of Action and dispersed the Soldiers.

Thus ended a Riot which would have been productive of much worse Consequences had the Citizens been armed. In the Evening the Soldiers cut one Lamp Lighter on the Head and drew the Ladder from under another while he was lighting the Lamps. On Saturday the Twentieth, a Soldier made an Attempt to stab a Woman coming from Market with a Bundle of Fish, run his Bayonet through her Cloak and Body Clothes. About Noon, at the Head of Chapel Street an Affray began between some Sailors and Soldiers, the Origin of which I have not been able with certainty to find out. . . .

The Mayor, giving over all hopes of quelling the Riot, had moved off from the Place of Action in order

to bring the Officers out, but some of the Citizens requested him not to quit the Fields and leave the Soldiers with their Arms to destroy the Inhabitants, upon which he returned, and soon after a great Body of People was coming up the Broad-Way which, the Soldiers seeing, they went off to their Barracks.

A Report being spread through the City that the Soldiers had rushed out of their Barracks and were slaughtering the Inhabitants in the Fields soon brought out a great Number of the Citizens to the New Gaol [jail]. While they were inquiring into the Cause of the Riot, a Number of Soldiers, not more than Twenty, came up from the lower Barracks and marched through a considerable Body of the Inhabitants collected along the Street (to the South of the Presbyterian Meeting) that leads to the Gaol, when they might very easily have avoided them and taken a Route to the Barracks across the Fields, where none of the Citizens stood, which would not have endangered or exposed them to a Riot, if they were not disposed to it. The People there opened and let them pass. When they got near through, a greater Body standing to the Southward of the Gaol Fence, one of the Soldiers, in the Presence of a very reputable Person, snatched a Stick from one of the Bystanders; others say that a Sword was taken from another. This brought on anew Affray which lasted about two Minutes, cutting and slashing on both Sides when, the Soldiers finding themselves roughly handled, they made the best of their Way to the Barracks, and some of the Inhabitants pursued them to the Gates, and one of them took a bayonet from a Soldier. In this Scuffle, one of the Citizens was wounded in the Face and had two of his Teeth broke by a Stroke of a Bayonet. A Soldier received a bad Cut on the Shoulder. These are the principal Wounds that the Combatants sustained. . . .

To conclude, it's evident that there has been Blood spilt on both Sides. I therefore submit it to my Superiors whether the Reputation of the Citizens or of the Soldiers can be incontestably vindicated, and indubitable Information thereof given to the Government at Home, unless there is a general legal Inquiry into the Whole of these Disturbances. The Inhabitants that were active are desirous that such an Examination should be made, and, as there are sufficient Mediums of Proof to begin it, if it is not done, the World will be at no Loss to what Cause to attribute the Neglect of it, and where all this Mischief first originated.

Jan. 31, 1770 AN IMPARTIAL CITIZEN.

“FIRST MARTYR”: THE SHOOTING OF CHRISTOPHER SEIDER

BOSTON, FEBRUARY 22, 1770

Shot and killed by an American customs official after picketing the store of a merchant who refused to boycott British goods, eleven-year-old Christopher Seider became an instant martyr and a symbol of resistance to tyranny. His funeral was attended by hundreds.

The Boston Gazette, 26 February 1770

On Thursday last in the Forenoon a barbarous Murder attended with *many* aggravating Circumstances as committed on the Body of a young Lad of about eleven Years of Age, Son to Mr.——— Snider¹ of this Town. A Number of Boys had been diverting themselves with the Exhibition of a Piece of Pageantry near the House of *Theophilus Lillie*,² who perhaps, at this Juncture of Affairs, may with the most Propriety be describ'd by the Name of an IMPORTER—This Exhibition naturally occasion'd Numbers to assemble, and in a very little Time there was a great Concourse of Persons, especially the *younger Sort*.—

One *Ebenezer Richardson*, who has been for many Years employ'd as an under Officer of the Customs, long known by the name of an INFORMER, and consequently a Person of a most abandon'd Character, it seems, took Umbrage at the suppos'd Indignity offer'd to the *Importers*, and soon became a party in the Affair—He first attempted to demolish the Pageantry, and failing in the Attempt he retired to his House which was but a few Rods from the Exhibition.

Several Persons passing by the House, Richardson, who seem'd to be determin'd to take this occasion to make a Disturbance, without the least Provocation gave them the most opprobrious Language, charging them with Perjury, &c. which rais'd a Dispute between them.—This, it is suppos'd, occasion'd the Boys to gather nearer Richardson's House, and he, thinking he had now a good Coloring [opportunity] to perpetrate the Villainy, threatened to fire upon them and swore by GOD that he would make the Place too hot for some of them before Night, and that he would make a Lane through them if they did not go away. Soon after, a Number of Brickbats or Stones were thrown among the People from Richardson's House, but the Witnesses, who were sworn before the Magistrates, declared that it did not appear to them that, till then, any Sort of Attack was made by the People on the House. This, however, brought on a Skirmish, and Richardson, discharg'd his Piece [fired his weapon] loaden with Swan Shot at the Multitude, by which the unhappy young person above-mentioned was mortally

having since died of his Wounds.

A Youth, Son to Capt. John Gore, was also wounded in one of his Hands and in both his Thighs, by which his Life was endanger'd, but he is likely soon to recover of his Wound. . . .

As soon as they [Richardson et al.] could be taken, for they made all possible Resistance, being armed with Muskets and Cutlasses, they were carried to Faneuil Hall, and upon Examination before four of his Majesty's Justices of the Peace, a Cloud of Witnesses appearing against them, they were committed to the County Goal [jail] under close Confinement, for a legal Trial before the Superior Court of the Province to be held here next Month.

. . . This innocent Lad is the first whose LIFE has been a Victim to the Cruelty and Rage of *Oppressors*! Young as he was, he died in his Country's Cause, by the hand of an execrable Villain, directed by others, who could not bear to see the Enemies of America made the *Ridicule of Boys*. The untimely Death of this amiable Youth will be a standing Monument to Futurity, that the Time has been when *Innocence itself was not safe!* The Blood of *young Allen* may be cover'd in *Britain*: but a thorough Inquisition will be made in *America* for that of *young Snider*, which crieth for Vengeance like the Blood of righteous *Abel*. And surely, if Justice had not been *driven from its Seat*, speedy Vengeance awaits his Murderers and their *Accomplices*, however secure *they* may think themselves *at present*: For whoso sheddeth, or *procureth the shedding* of Man's Blood, BY MAN SHALL HIS BLOOD BE SHED. . . .³

It is hoped the unexpected and melancholy Dead of young Snider will be a Means for the future of preventing any, but more especially the *Soldiery*, from being too free in the Use of their Instruments of Death. . . .

It is said that the Funeral of the young Victim THIS AFTERNOON at Four o'Clock, will be attended by as *numerous* a Train as ever was known here.—It is hoped none will be in the Procession but the Friends of Liberty, and then undoubtedly *all* will be hearty Mourners.

¹ Seider/Snider; the records indicate Seider is accurate, as the boy was the son of a German immigrant.

² The boys were picketing the shop of merchant Theophilus Lillie, who had been publicly condemned by Boston merchants for refusing to join the boycott of British goods (non-importation agreement). Richardson, of the reviled British customs office, attempted to break up the demonstration.

Seider's death, for which Richardson was later convicted and then pardoned by the king, occurred less than two weeks before the Boston Massacre.

³ Old Testament, Genesis 9:6.

PHILLIS WHEATLEY

On the Death of Mr. Snider Murder'd by Richardson*

1770

This poem by Phillis Wheatley, an enslaved African educated by her Boston slaveholders, was not included with her first volume of poetry, published in London in 1773, probably due to its political content. Wheatley also memorialized the Boston Massacre in a poem listed as "On the Affray in King Street, on the Evening of the Fifth of March" in the planned contents for a second volume, but no manuscript of the poem has been found.

In heaven's eternal court it was decreed
How the first martyr for the cause should bleed
To clear the country of the hated brood
He whet his courage for the common good.
Long hid before, a vile infernal here
Prevents Achilles in his mid career
Where'er this fury darts his Poisonous breath
All are endanger'd to the Shafts of death.
The generous Sires beheld the fatal wound
Saw their young champion gasping on the ground;
They rais'd him up, but to each present ear
What martial glories did his tongue declare.
The wretch appal'd no longer can despise
But from the Striking victim turns his eyes;
When this young martial genius did appear,
The Tory chiefs no longer could forbear.
Ripe for destruction, see the wretches' doom,
He waits the curses of the age to come;
In vain he flies, by Justice Swiftly chased
With unexpected infamy disgraced.
Be Richardson for ever banish'd here
The grand Usurpers' bravely vaunted Heir;
We bring the body from the wat'ry bower
To lodge it where it shall remove no more.
Snider, behold with what Majestic Love
The Illustrious retinue begins to move;
With Secret rage fair freedom's foes beneath
See in thy corse ev'n Majesty in Death.

* Some punctuation added.



Achilles:
Greek hero of the Trojan War,
immortalized in Homer's *Iliad*

"When this young martial genius did appear":
In a letter to the *Boston Gazette* of Feb. 26, 1770, the author, "A Mourner," notes that "several heroic pieces found in his [Seider's] Pocket, particularly *Wolfe's Summit of Human Glory*, gives reason to think he had a *martial Genius*, and would have made a clever Man." "Wolfe's Summit" likely refers to one of the many poems glorifying General James Wolfe for his victory in the 1759 Battle of Quebec that sealed British victory in the French and Indian War.

Ebenezer Richardson:
the reviled British customs inspector who shot and killed Christopher Seider during a confrontation with boys picketing the shop of a Boston merchant who refused to sign the city's non-importation agreement

corse: corpse

THE BOSTON MASSACRE

(KING STREET RIOT) BOSTON, 5 MARCH 1770

The Boston Gazette, 12 March 1770 [EXCERPTS]¹

B O S T O N, March 12.²

The Town of Boston affords a recent and melancholy Demonstration of the destructive Consequences of quartering Troops among Citizens in a Time of Peace, under a Pretense of supporting the Laws and aiding Civil Authority. Every considerate and unprejudic'd Person among us was deeply impressed with the Apprehension of these Consequences when it was known that a Number of Regiments were ordered to this Town under such a Pretext,³ but in Reality to enforce oppressive Measures, to awe & control the legislative as well as executive Power of the Province, and to quell a Spirit of Liberty which, however it may have been basely oppos'd and even ridicul'd by some, would do Honor to any Age or Country. A few Persons amongst us had determin'd to use all their Influence to procure so destructive a Measure with a View to their securely enjoying the Profits of an American Revenue, and unhappily both for Britain and this Country they found Means to effect it. . . .

The Evidences already collected show that many Threatenings had been thrown out by the Soldiery, but we do not pretend to say that there was any preconcerted Plan, when the Evidences are published, the World will judge—We may however venture to declare that it appears too probable from their Conduct that some of the Soldiery aimed to draw and provoke the Townsmen into Squabbles, and that they then intended to make Use of other Weapons than Canes, Clubs or Bludgeons. . . .

On the Evening of Monday, being the 5th Current, several Soldiers of the 29th Regiment were seen parading the Streets with their drawn Cutlasses and Bayonets, abusing and wounding Numbers of the Inhabitants.

A few minutes after nine o'clock, four youths, named Edward Archbald, William Merchant, Francis Archbald, and John Leech, jun[ior]. came down Cornhill together, and separating at Doctor Loring's corner, the two former were passing the narrow alley leading to 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 a mean countenance armed with a large cudgel bore him company. Edward Arch-



bald 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 arm-pit and grazed the skin. Merchant then struck the soldier with a short stick he had, & the other Person ran to the barrack & 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, collar'd and laid him over the head with the tongs. The noise brought people together, and John Hicks, a young lad, coming up, knock'd 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 10 or 12 of them came out with drawn cutlasses, clubs and bayonets, and set upon the unarmed boys and young folks, 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 10 or 12 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

¹ Full text in online exhibition *The Coming of the American Revolution*, Massachusetts Historical Society, at www.masshist.org/revolution/doc-viewer.php?old=1&mode=nav&item_id=347 (click Transcription). Some spelling and punctuation modernized by NHC for clarity.

² Color illustrations from Paul Revere's engraving *The Bloody Massacre* (see p. 12), courtesy of the Library of Congress.

³ 1768, after the *Liberty* riot and other hostile confrontations between Boston citizens and British officials.



asking where were the boogers? where were the cowards? But notwithstanding their fierceness towards naked [unarmed] men, one of them advanced towards a youth who had a split of a raw stave⁴ 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 Kingstreet, 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 Kingstreet, Capt. Preston, with a party of men with charged bayonets, came from the main guard to the Commissioners 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 townman 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 graz'd his hat and fell pretty heavy upon his arm. However, the soldiers continued the fire, successively, till 7 or 8, or as some say 11 guns were discharged.

By this fatal maneuver, 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 Hanover⁵ has directed their operations, 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 17 years of age, son of the widow Maverick, and an apprentice to Mr. Greenwood, Ivory-Turner, mortally wounded; a ball went through his belly, & was cut out at his back. He died the next morning.

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 [learned that] he will die.

A lad named John Clark, about 17 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,⁶ wounded; a ball went through his right

⁴ Staves: thin wooden slats forming the sides of barrels.

⁵ House of Hanover: the British royal dynasty including King George III.

⁶ Presumably the confrontation twelve days earlier in which Christopher Seider was killed by customs official Ebenezer Richardson (see p. 5).

his right arm, and he suffered great loss of blood.

Mr. Patrick Carr, about 30 years of age, who work'd with Mr. Field, Leather Breeches-maker In Queen-street, wounded; a ball enter'd 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 in his thigh.

The People were immediately alarmed with the Report of this horrid Massacre, the Bells were set a Ringing, and great Numbers soon assembled at the Place where this tragical Scene had been acted. Their Feelings may be better conceived than express'd; and while some were taking Care of the Dead and Wounded, the Rest were in Consultation what to do in those dreadful Circumstances—But so little intimidated were they, notwithstanding their being within a few Yards of the Main-Guard, and seeing the 29th Regiment under Arms and drawn up in King-Street, that they kept their Station and appear'd as an Officer of Rank express'd it, ready to run upon the very Muzzles of their Muskets.

The Lieut. Governor soon came into the Town-House and there met some of his Majesty's Council and a Number of Civil Magistrates. A considerable Body of the People immediately entered the Council Chamber, and expressed themselves to his Honor with a Freedom and Warmth⁷ becoming the occasion. He used his utmost Endeavors to pacify them, requesting that they would let the Matter subside for the Night, and promising to do all in his Power that Justice should be done and the Law have its Course. Men of Influence and Weight with the People were not wanting [lacking] on their part to procure their Compliance with his Honor's Request, by representing the horrible Consequences of a promiscuous and rash Engagement in the Night, and assuring them that such Measures should be entered upon [dealt with] in the Morning, as would be agreeable to their Dignity, and a more likely way of obtaining the best Satisfaction for the Blood of their Fellow-Townsmen.

The Inhabitants attended to these Suggestions, and the Regiment under Arms being ordered to their Barracks, which was insisted upon by the People, they then separated & returned to their Dwellings by One o'Clock. At 3 o'Clock Capt. Preston was committed [jailed], as were the Soldiers who fir'd, a few Hours after him.

Tuesday Morning presented a most shocking Scene, the Blood of our Fellow Citizens running like Water through King-Street and the Merchants Exchange, the principal Spot of the Military Parade for about 18 Months past. Our Blood might also be track'd



up to the Head of Long-Lane and through divers other Streets and Passages.

At eleven o'clock the inhabitants met at Faneuil Hall, and after some animated speeches becoming the occasion, they chose a Committee of 15 respectable Gentlemen to wait upon the Lieut. Governor in Council, to request of him to issue his Orders for the immediate removal of the troops.

The Message was in these Words:

THAT it is the unanimous opinion of this meeting that the inhabitants and soldiery can no longer live together in safety; that nothing can rationally be expected to restore the peace of the town & prevent further blood & carnage but the immediate removal of the Troops; and that we therefore most fervently pray his Honor that his power and influence may be exerted for their instant removal.

His Honor's Reply, which was laid before the Town then Adjourn'd to the Old South Meeting-House, was as follows,

Gentlemen,

I am extremely sorry for the unhappy differences between the inhabitants and troops, and especially for the action of the last evening, and I have exerted myself upon that occasion that a due inquiry may be made, and that the law may have its course. I have in council consulted with the commanding officers of the two regiments who are in the town. They have their orders from the General at New York. It is not in my power to countermand those orders. The Council have desired that the two regiments may be removed to the Castle.⁸ From the particular concern which the 29th regiment has had in your differences, Col. Dalrymple, who is the commanding officer of the troops, has signified that the regiment shall without delay be placed in the barracks at the Castle until he

⁷ Warmth, i.e., heat, with inflamed rage.

⁸ Castle William: a British fortress on an island in Boston harbor.

can send to the General and receive his further orders concerning both the regiments, and that the main guard shall be removed, and the 14th regiment so disposed and laid under such restraint that all occasion of future disturbances may be prevented.

The foregoing Reply having been read and fully considered—the question was put, Whether the Report be satisfactory? Passed in the Negative (only 1 dissentient) out of upwards of 4000 Voters.

It was then moved and voted John Hancock, Esq; Mr. Samuel Adams, Mr. William Molineux, William Phillips, Esq; Dr. Joseph Warren, Joshua Henshaw, Esq; and Samuel Pemberton, Esq; be a Committee to wait on his Honor, the Lieut. Governor, and inform him that it is the unanimous Opinion of this Meeting that the Reply made to a Vote of the Inhabitants presented his Honor in the Morning is by no Means satisfactory, and that nothing less will satisfy than a total and immediate removal of all the Troops.

The Committee submitted its statement to the lieutenant governor, who presented it to the town council.

The Council thereupon expressed themselves to be *unanimously* of opinion “that it was absolutely necessary for his Majesty’s service, the good order of the Town, and the Peace of the Province, that the Troops should be immediately removed out of the Town of Boston, and thereupon advised his Honor to communicate this Advice of the Council to Col. Dalrymple, and to pray that he would order the Troops down to Castle William.” The Committee also informed the Town that Col. Dalrymple, after having seen the Vote of Council, said to the Committee, “That he now gave his word of Honor that he would begin his Preparations in the Morning, and that there should be no unnecessary delay until the whole of the two Regiments were removed to the Castle.”

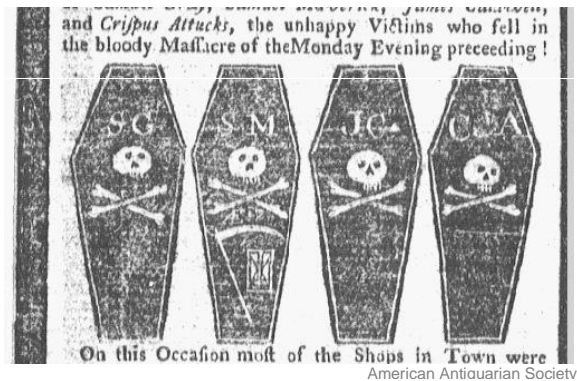
Upon the above Report being read, the Inhabitants could not avoid expressing the high Satisfaction it afforded them.

After Measures were taken for the Security of the Town in the Night by a strong Military Watch, the Meeting was Dissolved.

The 29th Regiment have already left us, and the 14th Regiment are following them, so that we expect the Town will soon be clear of all the Troops. The Wisdom and true Policy of his Majesty’s Council and Col. Dalrymple the Commander appear in this Measure. Two Regiments in the midst of this populous City, and the Inhabitants justly incensed: Those of the neighboring Towns actually under Arms upon the first Report of the Massacre, and the Signal only wanting to bring in a few Hours to the Gates of this City many Thousands of our brave Brethren in the Country, deeply affected with our Distresses, and

to whom we are greatly obliged on this Occasion—No one knows where this would have ended and what important Consequences even to the whole British Empire might have followed, which our Moderation & Loyalty upon so trying an Occasion, and our Faith in the Commander’s Assurances have happily prevented.

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. [namely] Mess[ieurs]. *James Caldwell* and *Crispus Attucks*, who were Strangers [not city residents], 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 Mr. Benjamin Gray (his Brother) on the North-side 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 that inhuman Tragedy! proceeded from thence through 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. _____

PAUL REVERE, THE BLOODY MASSACRE, MARCH 1770



Print: engraving with watercolor on laid paper, 25.8 x 33.4 cm. (plate), inscribed "Boston: Engrav'd Printed & Sold by Paul Revere, 1770." Library of Congress

Unhappy BOSTON! see thy Sons deplore,
Thy hallow'd Walks besmear'd with guiltless Gore:
While faithless P—n and his Savage Bands
With murd'rous Rancor stretch their bloody Hands;
Like fierce Barbarians grinning o'er their Prey,
Approve the Carnage, and enjoy the Day.

If scalding drops from Rage from Anguish Wrung
If speechless Sorrows lab'ring for a Tongue,
Or if a weeping World can ought appease
The plaintive Ghosts of Victims such as these:
The Patriot's copious Tears for each are shed,
A glorious Tribute which embalms the Dead.

But know, FATE summons to that awful Goal [jail],
Where JUSTICE strips the Murd'rer of his Soul:
Should venal C—ts the scandal of the Land,
Snatch the relentless Villain from her Hand,
Keen Execrations on this Plate inscrib'd,
Shall reach a JUDGE who never can be brib'd.

The unhappy Sufferers were Mess^s. SAM^L GRAY, SAM^L MAVERICK, JAM^S CALDWELL, CRISPUS ATTUCKS & PAT^K CARR Killed. Six wounded; two of them (CHRIST^R MONK & JOHN CLARK) Mortally ~

A POEM IN MEMORY of the (never to be forgotten) FIFTH OF MARCH, 1770¹

on the Evening of which a Party of the 29th Regiment
commanded by Capt. Preston fired upon the Inhabitants in
King-Street, by which five Persons were Killed, Viz. [namely]

SAMUEL GRAY, JAMES CALDWELL, PATRICK CARR.
SAMUEL MAVERICK, CRISPUS ATTACKS, and__

Broadside, Boston, 1770__

I.

The rising sun bespeaks the mournful day
When youths (though innocent) in blood did lay,
When bloody men shot forth the darts of death,
FIVE of our fellow creatures drop'd their breath.

II.

Look into King Street: there with weeping eyes
Repair, O Boston's sons — there hear the cries
Then see the men lie in their wallow'd gore!
There see their bodies, which fierce bullets tore.

III.

There hear their dying shrieks! their dying cries,
(Though but a few) before they clos'd their eyes!
Before the living took the dead away,
Those barb'rous monsters pierc'd them as they lay.

IV.

Down in the dark and silent graves they lie,
Their bodies rest, but vengeance is the cry.
O! may this day then never be forgot;
Remember well the place — the bloody spot.

V.

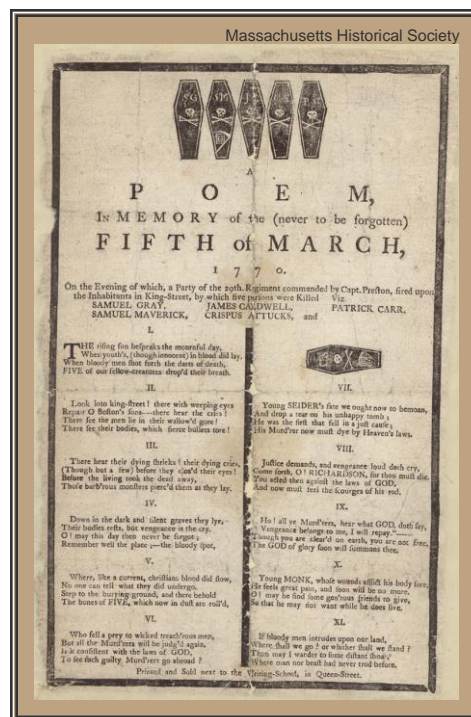
Where, like a current, Christian blood did flow,
No one can tell what they did undergo.
Step to the burying ground, and there behold
The bones of FIVE, which now in dust are roll'd.

VI.

Who fell a prey to wicked treach'rous men,
But all the Murd'ers will be judg'd again.
Is it consistent with the laws of GOD,
To see such guilty Murd'ers go abroad?²

VII.

Young SEIDER's fate³ we ought now to bemoan,
And drop a tear on his unhappy tomb;
He was the first that fell in a just cause;
His Murd'rer now must die by Heaven's laws.



VIII.

Justice demands, and vengeance loud doth cry,
Come forth, O! RICHARDSON,⁴ for thou must die.
You acted then against the laws of GOD,
And now must feel the scourges of his rod.

IX.

Ho! all ye Murd'ers, hear what GOD doth say,
"Vengeance belongs to me, I will repay." —
Though you are clear'd on earth, you are not free,⁵
The GOD of glory soon will summon thee.

X.

Young MONK,⁶ whose wounds afflict his body fore,
He feels great pain, and soon will be no more,
O! may he find some gen'rous friends to give,
So that he may not want while he does live.

XI.

If bloody men intrude upon our land,
Where shall we go? or whither shall we stand?
Then may I wander to some distant shore,
Where man nor beast had never trod before.

Printed and Sold next to the Writing School in Queen Street.

¹ On the Boston Massacre, Boston, 5 March 1770. Image reproduced by permission of the Massachusetts Historical Society. Spelling, punctuation, and some grammatical forms modernized by NHC for clarity.

² i.e., go free.

³ Christopher Seider: eleven-year-old son of a German immigrant who was shot and killed during a protest in Boston twelve days earlier (see pp. 5-6).

⁴ Ebenezer Richardson: British customs inspector who killed Christopher Seider.

⁵ Richardson was convicted of murder by a colonial court and eventually pardoned in 1772 by King George III. This broadside was probably published after the trials in autumn 1770 of the British soldiers in the Boston Massacre, in which all but two were acquitted.

⁶ Christopher Monk: a young man shot in the Boston Massacre (who died ten years later) for whom money was raised among the Boston citizenry.

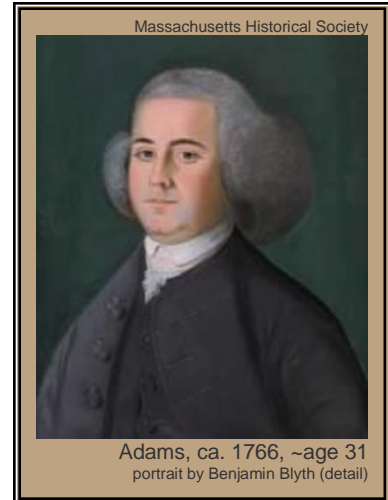
JOHN ADAMS

ON THE EVENTS OF FEBRUARY-MARCH 1770

- **THE DEATH OF CHRISTOPHER SEIDER.** Diary entry, 26 February 1770.

When I came into Town [Boston], I saw a vast Collection of People, near Liberty Tree — enquired and found the funeral of the Child, lately kill'd by Richardson was to be attended. Went into Mr. Rowes, and warmed me, and then went out with him to the Funeral, a vast Number of Boys walked before the Coffin, a vast Number of Women and Men after it, and a Number of Carriages. My Eyes never beheld such a funeral. The Procession extended further than can be well imagined.

This Shows there are many more Lives to spend if wanted in the Service of their Country. It Shows too that the Faction [*illegible*] is not yet expiring — that the Ardor of the People is not to be quelled by the Slaughter of one Child and the Wounding of another.



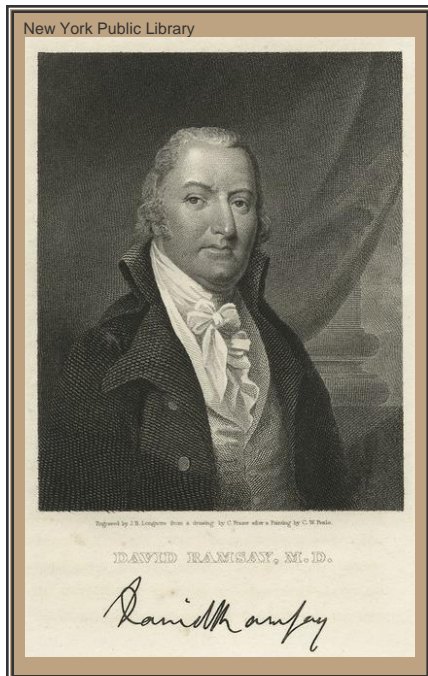
- **THE BOSTON MASSACRE** (5 March 1770). Autobiography, 1802-1807.*

The Evening of the fifth of March, I spent at Mr. Henderson Inches's House at the South End of Boston, in Company with a Club with whom I had been associated for several Years. About nine o'Clock We were alarmed with the ringing of Bells, and supposing it to be the Signal of fire, We snatched our Hats and Cloaks, broke up the Club, and went out to assist in quenching the fire or aiding our friends who might be in danger. In the Street We were informed that the British Soldiers had fired on the Inhabitants, killed some and wounded others near the Town house.

A Crowd of People was flowing down the Street to the Scene of Action. When We arrived We saw nothing but some field Pieces placed before the south door of the Town house and some Engineers and Grenadiers drawn up to protect them. . . . I walked down Boylston's Alley into Brattle Square, where a Company or two of regular Soldiers were drawn up in Front of Dr. Coopers old Church with their Musquets all shouldered and their Bayonets all fixed. I had no other way to proceed but along the whole front in a very narrow Space which they had left for foot passengers. Pursuing my Way, without taking the least notice of them or they of me, any more than if they had been marble Statues, I went directly home to Cold Lane. My Wife having heard that the Town was still and likely to continue so, had recovered from her first Apprehensions, and We had nothing but our Reflections to interrupt our Repose.

These Reflections were to me, disquieting enough. Endeavours had been systematically pursued for many Months, by certain busy Characters, to excite Quarrells, Rencounters and Combats single or compound in the night between the Inhabitants of the lower Class and the Soldiers, and at all risks to enkindle an immortal hatred between them. I suspected that this was the Explosion, which had been intentionally wrought up by designing Men, who knew what they were aiming at better than the Instrument employed. If these poor Tools should be prosecuted for any of their illegal Conduct they must be punished. If the Soldiers in self-defense should kill any of them they must be tried, and, if Truth was respected and the Law prevailed, must be acquitted. To depend upon the perversion of Law and the Corruption or partiality of juries would insensibly disgrace the jurisprudence of the Country and corrupt the Morals of the People. It would be better for the whole People to rise in their Majesty and insist on the removal of the Army, and take upon themselves the Consequences, than to excite such Passions between the People and the Soldiers and would expose both to continual prosecution civil or criminal and keep the Town boiling in a continual fermentation.

* John Adams autobiography, part 1, "John Adams," through 1776, sheet 12 of 53 [electronic edition]. *Adams Family Papers: An Electronic Archive*. Massachusetts Historical Society, www.masshist.org/digitaladams/. Some spelling and punctuation modernized by NHC for clarity.



AN AMERICAN LOOKS BACK AT 1770

■ DAVID RAMSAY, *The History of the American Revolution*, 1789.

A South Carolina physician, Ramsey served as a surgeon in the Revolutionary Army. After the war, he served in the Continental Congress under the Articles of Confederation (1782-83, 1785-86), and wrote his Revolution history in the late 1780s, as the new nation was crafting its final Constitution.

[With the repeal of most of the Townshend Act duties and the subsequent return of normal trade] many hoped that the contention between the two countries was finally closed. In all the provinces excepting Massachusetts, appearances seemed to favor that opinion. Many incidents operated there to the prejudice of that harmony which had begun elsewhere to return. The stationing a military force among them was a fruitful source of uneasiness. The royal army had been brought thither [in 1768] with the avowed design of enforcing submission to the Mother Country. Speeches from the throne and addresses from both houses of Parliament had taught them [British] to look upon the inhabitants as a factious turbulent people who aimed at throwing off all subordination to

Great Britain. They, on the other hand were accustomed to look upon the soldiery as instruments of tyranny, sent on purpose to dragoon them out of their liberties. Reciprocal insults soured the tempers, and mutual injuries embittered the passions of the opposite parties: besides, some fiery spirits who thought it an indignity to have troops quartered among them were constantly exciting the townspeople to quarrel with the soldiers. . . .

[Ramsay reviews the events of the Boston Massacre.]

The killed were buried in one vault, and in a most respectful manner, to express the indignation of the inhabitants at the slaughter of their brethren by soldiers quartered among them, in violation of their civil liberties. Preston, the captain who commanded, and the party which fired on the inhabitants, were committed to jail and afterwards tried. The captain and six of the men were acquitted. Two were brought in guilty of manslaughter. It appeared on the trial that the soldiers were abused, insulted, threatened, and pelted before they fired. It was also proved that only seven guns were fired by the eight prisoners. These circumstances induced the jury to make a favorable verdict. The result of the trial reflected great honor on John Adams and Josiah Quincy, the counsel for the prisoners, and also on the integrity of the jury, who ventured to give an upright verdict in defiance of popular opinions.

The events of this tragical night sunk deep in the minds of the people and were made subservient to important purposes. The anniversary of it was observed with great solemnity. Eloquent orators were successively employed to deliver an annual oration to preserve the remembrance of it fresh in their minds. On these occasions the blessings of liberty — the horrors of slavery — the dangers of a standing army — the rights of the colonies, and a variety of such topics were presented to the public view under their most pleasing and alarming forms. These annual orations administered fuel to the fire of liberty and kept it burning with an incessant flame.

The obstacles to returning harmony, which have already been mentioned, were increased by making the governor and judges in Massachusetts independent of the province. Formerly they had been paid by yearly grants from the [colonial] Assembly, but about this time provision was made for paying their salaries by the Crown. This was resented as a dangerous innovation, as an infraction of their charters, and as destroying that balance of power which is essential to free governments.