

the Indians of the Ohio Valley would for the most part support France in the coming conflict. The Indians took Washington's mistakes as an indication of Britain's inability to win the war, and nothing that occurred in the next four years made them change their minds. In 1755 a combined force of French and Indians ambushed General Edward Braddock, two regiments of British regulars, and some colonial troops a few miles south of Fort Duquesne. Braddock was killed and his men demoralized by their complete defeat. For three more years one disaster followed another for Great Britain. Everywhere the two sides clashed, the French were consistently victorious.⁸



The Boston Massacre

Certain historical events consistently appear in U.S. history textbooks over time. The Boston Massacre is one of these. The massacre has become part of our national historical narrative, and helps provide moral justification for the war against the British. It is interesting to note, then, that the textbooks reviewed here offer such different perspectives on this well-known event.

1823

The Boston Massacre today is seen as one of those great patriotic moments in our history where everyday American colonists stood up to the tyranny of the British government. Ironically, rather than heralding the cause of the Bostonians, this textbook seemed to blame them for egging on an unnecessary fight.

On the fifth of March, while some of the British troops in Boston were under arms, they were insulted and pelted by a mob having clubs, snow balls, stones, &c. The soldiers were dared to fire. One, who had received a blow, fired. Six others discharged their pieces, by which three of the citizens were killed, and five wounded. The town was immediately in an up-

WHAT EFFECT DID THIS OCCURRENCE PRODUCE?

This occurrence produced an intense excitement throughout the town. The funeral of the boy was attended by an immense concourse of people. For some days nothing else was talked of and everywhere were heard the most violent denunciations and threats of vengeance.

GIVE AN ACCOUNT OF THE SOLDIERS SHOOTING INTO THE CROWD IN STATE STREET, BOSTON

After this, disputes and collisions between the people on the one hand, and the soldiers, and the government officers, and all who were supposed to favor the British side, on the other, grew more and more frequent and alarming. When blood begins to be shed in such contentions, the effect is always to exasperate the parties more and more against each other, instead of intimidating them. At length, on one occasion, a very serious collision took place in Boston between the troops and the citizens, which increased the general excitement to a higher degree than ever. One night—it was in the evening of the fifth of March, 1770—some young men threw snow-balls at a sentinel who was on guard at the Customhouse. He probably repelled the assault somewhat rudely, and this led to a disturbance. Soon a crowd collected, and there were indications of a riot. The captain of the guard, hearing of this difficulty, sent a sergeant and six men to the spot. He thought the appearance of the soldiers would intimidate the crowd and drive them away, but it seemed only to increase their excitement and exasperation. At last the command was given to fire. The soldiers obeyed. Three of the crowd were killed on the spot, and two more were mortally wounded. This occurrence produced a prodigious sensation, and aroused the people almost to phrensy [*sic*]. They called it a massacre. ¹¹

1866

It is interesting to note that throughout much of the nineteenth century, U.S. history textbooks blamed the mob in Boston for this tragic event. This selection was different from the rest because it not only brought in a rope maker as a cause for the hostilities but also, for the first time, gave a name to Crispus Attucks, a "gigantic negro," as a hero.

Samuel G. Goodrich (aka Peter Parley), the author of this textbook, was known for both his writing style, which bordered on pure fiction, and for having taken a stand against slavery, which would explain Attucks's portrait as a hero in this selection.

During the session of the British parliament in the spring of 1770, an act was passed for repealing all the duties which caused so much complaint, except that on tea. This was continued, to show that they had not yielded the right to impose taxes, if they chose to exercise it. As might have been expected, however, the colonists were still dissatisfied.

The British troops remained in Boston, and seemed determined to remain there, notwithstanding the known disgust of the citizens at the idea of having a foreign force stationed among them. There was, it is true, for some time, no open quarrel, but the citizens and soldiers were continually insulting each other.

Things could not long remain thus. On the 2d of March, 1770, as a soldier was going by the shop of a rope-maker, he was attacked and severely beaten. He ran off, but soon returned with a number of his comrades, and attacked and beat some of the rope-makers.

The people were now excited to the highest pitch. Between seven and eight o'clock in the evening of March 5, a mob collected armed with clubs, and proceeded toward King-street, now State-street, crying, "Let us drive out these rascals—they have no business here—drive them out! Drive out the rascals!" Meanwhile, there was a cry that the town had been set on fire.

The bells rang, and the throng became still greater, and more tumultuous. They rushed furiously to the custom-house, and seeing an English sentinel there, shouted, "Kill him! Kill him!"—at the same time attacking him with pieces of ice and whatever they could find. The sentinel called for the rest of the guard, and a few of them came forward.

The guard now marched out with their guns loaded. They met a great crowd of people, led on by a gigantic negro, named Attucks. They brandished their clubs and pelted the soldiers with snowballs, abusing them with harsh words, shouting in their faces, and even challenging them to fire. They even rushed close upon the very points of their bayonets.

The soldiers stood awhile like statues, the bells ringing and the mob pressing upon them. At last, Attucks with twelve of his men, began to strike upon their muskets with clubs, and to cry out to the mob, "Don't be

roar; and nothing but an engagement to remove the troops, saved them from falling a sacrifice to the indignation of the people.

The captain, Preston, who commanded, and eight soldiers, were tried, and acquitted; two soldiers excepted, who were brought in guilty of manslaughter. This affray was represented in its worst light, and had no small influence in increasing the general indignation against the British.⁹

1855

By the mid-nineteenth century, American schoolchildren were still learning that the Boston Massacre was caused by the Bostonians' reaction to the British soldiers. In this antebellum textbook, the author further pointed an accusatory finger at Boston's children and the "negro who had excited the disturbance." This "negro" was Crispus Attucks, who was part African American and likely part Native American. Attacks, throughout much of the 1800s and 1900s, was often either completely ignored or blamed for what transpired that evening. By the end of the twentieth century, Attucks would again cause controversy by being used as an example for what was wrong with modern-day textbooks.

In Boston, the presence of the British soldiers caused constant affrays. In one of these, the soldiers fired upon the populace and killed three men: one of these men was the negro who had excited the disturbance. This deed was called the Boston Massacre, and caused high indignation among the people: they were, however, much in fault, having aroused the attack which ended so fatally.

In the course of a few months, the captain who had ordered the soldiers to fire was tried in Boston for murder: notwithstanding the strong feeling of the excited Bostonians against him, two distinguished citizens, John Adams and Josiah Quincy, undertook his defence, and he was acquitted.

Even the children of the town were greatly disturbed by the presence of British troops among them.

In the winter, the boys were in the habit of building little hills of snow, and sliding down them to the pond on the Common, for amusement. The English soldiers, to provoke them, would often beat down these hills. On one occasion, having rebuilt them, and finding, on their return from school, that they were again demolished, several of the boys determined to

wait upon the captain and complain of his soldiers. The officer made light of it, and the soldiers became more troublesome than ever. At last, a meeting of the larger boys was held, and a deputation was sent to General Gage, the commander-in-chief. He asked why so many children had called upon him. "We come, Sir," said the tallest boy, "to demand satisfaction." "What!" said the General, "have your fathers been teaching you rebellion, and sent you to exhibit it here?" "Nobody sent us, Sir," replied the boy, while his eyes flashed and his cheek reddened at being accused of rebellion; "we have never injured nor insulted your troops, but they have trodden down our snow-hills, and broken the ice on our skating-grounds. We complained, and they called us young rebels, and told us to help ourselves if we could. We told the captain of this, and he laughed at us. Yesterday our works were destroyed the third time, and we will bear it no longer." The nobler feelings of the general's heart were awakened, and, after gazing upon them in silent admiration for a moment, he turned to an officer by his side, and said, "The very children here draw in a love of liberty with the air they breathe. You may go, my brave boys, and be assured, if my troops trouble you again, they shall be punished."¹⁰

1856

Textbooks in the early 1800s seemed to emphasize stories in which young boys showed their bravery and patriotism to the United States. Considering that the country was about to plunge into the Civil War, one has to wonder how the concept of patriotism was taught between the North and the South. This selection was unique due to the story about the boy being killed as a cause of the Boston Massacre. Interestingly, this young lad's name was not important enough for the author to recount.

Give an Account of the Shooting of the Boy in Boston

At one time the boys became involved in an affray with one of the men who was thus obnoxious to them, and followed him to his house. The man went in, and thus escaped out of their hands. The boys then began to throw snowballs and pieces of ice at the house. The man became exasperated with them, and, thinking that he had a right to protect his dwelling from such an attack, brought a gun to the window and fired, and killed one of the boys.

afraid—they dare not fire—the miserable cowards—kill the rascals—crush them underfoot!"

Attucks now lifted his arm against the captain of the guard, and seized hold of a bayonet. "They dare not fire!" shouted the mob again. At this instant the firing began. Attucks dropped dead immediately. The soldiers fired twice more, and two others were killed and others still wounded. The mob dispersed, but soon returned to carry off the bodies.

The whole town was now in an uproar. Thousands of men, women, and children rushed through the streets. The sound of drums, and cries of "To arms! to arms!" were heard from all quarters. The soldiers who had fired on the people were arrested, and the governor at last persuaded the mob to disperse and go quietly to their homes.

The next morning, the troops in the city were ordered off to Castle William, one of the city fortifications. On the 8th of March, the three slain citizens were buried. The shops were all closed during the ceremony, and the bells in Boston and the adjoining towns were all the while tolling. An immense procession followed to the churchyard. . . .

There is no doubt that in most of these transactions the mob were in the wrong; the source of the mischief lay, however, in the fact that the British government insisted upon keeping an army among a people outraged by a series of unjust and irritating laws. This conduct showed that the king and parliament of Great Britain intended to compel the colonists to submission by force of arms, and not to govern them by fair and proper legislation.¹²

1880

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, a romanticized patriotic narrative of this story had emerged in full bloom.

As the people of Boston showed the most decided opposition to the tax, a body of the king's soldiers were sent to keep them in subjection. The presence of these "redcoats," or "lobsterbacks," as they were called by the boys in the streets, caused constant affrays, in one of which, known as the "Boston Massacre," the soldiers fired on the people. A gush of smoke overspread the scene. It rose heavily, as if it were loath to reveal the dreadful spectacle beneath it. Eleven of the sons of New England lay stretched

upon the street. Some, sorely wounded, were struggling to rise again. Others stirred not nor groaned, for they were past all pain. Blood was streaming upon the snow; and though that purple stain melted away in the next day's sun, it was never forgotten nor forgiven by the people (1770).¹³

1936

By the early to mid-twentieth century, the story of the Boston Massacre had been assigned its pivotal, historical role in American history books.

The Boston Massacre: An Excited Country

The king and his followers were determined to enforce the unpopular laws. In order to show their determination in the matter, troops were sent to Boston to help enforce the trade laws. These troops were looked upon by the colonists as intruders. There were many street quarrels between soldiers and citizens. The soldiers gambled, held horse races, and indulged in other sports, all of which annoyed the church-going Bostonians. Finally the fatal clash came. On March 5, 1770, as the result of a street quarrel the soldiers fired into a crowd of men and boys who had been calling them names and pelting them with snowballs. This event, afterwards known as the "Boston Massacre," stirred the whole country against Great Britain and helped to fan the fire of hatred.¹⁴

1996

While every textbook tells the story of the Boston Massacre, it was not until later in the twentieth century that some began to argue that this event was probably used as a public relations ploy to get the colonists fired up about breaking ties with England.

One of the ablest organizers of colonial rebellion was Sam Adams of Boston. . . . 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 con-

fusion, 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.¹⁵

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Lexington and Concord

Over the past two hundred years, the story of the American Revolution has not changed a great deal in how it has been taught to U.S. students. Therefore, rather than observing a grand shift in the narrative, it is usually the smaller changes in this story that makes its historiography so interesting. Yet even small adjustments, such as differing accounts as to who warned the Minutemen that "the British are coming" or who took the first shot on Lexington Greene, can strongly influence how we understand this story and our historical past.

1794

The acts that this section alluded to were the Stamp, Tea, and other British Parliament Acts placed on the colonists in the years before the Revolutionary War. Unique to the more modern versions of this story was the addition of the town of Salem and the nonexistence of any midnight rides.

Preparations began to be made, to oppose by force, the execution of these acts, of parliament. The militia of the country were trained to the use of arms, great encouragement was given for the manufacture of gunpowder, and measures were taken to obtain all kinds of military stores.