

Boston Massacre

Eyewitness Account #1

By Newton Prince, a free African American or Black citizen of Boston who testified for the British at the trial: Obtained from Boston Massacre Historical Society at <http://www.bostonmassacre.net/trial/d-more.htm>.

"Heard the Bell ring. Ran out. Came to the Chapel. Was told there was no fire but something better, there was going to be a fight. Some had buckets and bags and some Clubs. I went to the west end of the Town House where [there] were a number of people. I saw some Soldiers coming out of the Guard house with their Guns and running down one after another to the Custom house. Some of the people said let's attack the Main Guard, or the Centinel [sic] who is gone to King street. Some said for [goodness] sake don't lets touch the main Guard. I went down. Saw the Soldiers planted by the Custom house two deep. The People were calling them Lobsters, daring'em to fire, saying ... why don't you fire. I saw Capt. Preston out from behind the Soldiers. In the front at the right. He spoke to some people. The Capt. 1 stood between the Soldiers and the Gutter about two yards from the Gutter. I saw two or three strike with sticks on the Guns. I was going off to the west A, of the Soldiers and heard the Guns fire and saw the dead carried off. Soon I after the Guard Drums beat to arms. The People whilst striking on the Guns cried fire, ... fire. I have heard no Orders given to fire, only the people in general cried fire."

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Eyewitness Account #2

Captain Thomas Preston's account (obtained from The History of Massachusetts at:

<http://historyofmassachusetts.org/the-boston-massacre>)

"...The mob still increased, and were more outrageous, striking their clubs or bludgeons one against another, and calling out, 'Come on, you rascals, you bloody backs, you Lobster Scoundrels; fire if you dare,, fire ...; we know you dare not;' and much more such language was used...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 without orders, I was struck with a club on my arm, which for some - time deprived my of the use of it; which blow, had it been placed on my head, most probably would have destroyed me. On this 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, '... 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 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!'"

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Eyewitness Account #3

By Richard Palmes, and obtained from Famous Trials.com at
<http://www.famous-trials.com/massacre/210-evidence>

"Somebody there said there was a Rumpus in King Street. I went down. When I had got there I saw Capt. Preston at the head of 7 or 8 Soldiers at the Custom house drawn up, their Guns breast high and Bayonets fixed. Found Theodore Bliss talking with the Captain. I heard him say why dont you fire or words to that effect. The Captain answered I know not what an d Bliss said ... why dont you fire. I was close behind Bliss. They were both in the front. Then I step'd immediately between them and put my left hand in a familiar manner on the Captains right shoulder to speak to him. Mr. John Hickling then looking over m y shoulder I said to Preston are your Soldiers Guns loaded. He answered with powder and ball. Sir I hope you don't intend the Soldiers shall fire on the Inhabitants. He said by no means. The instant he spoke I saw something resembling Snow or Ice strike the Grenadier on the Captains right hand being the only one then at his right. He instantly step'd one foot back and fired the first Gun. I had then my hand on the Captains shoulder. After the Gun went off I heard the word fire. The Captain and I stood in front about half between the breech and muzzle of the Guns. I don't know who gave the word fire. I was then looking on the Soldier who fired. The word was given loud. The Captain might have given the word and I not distinguish it. After the word fire in about 6 or 7 seconds the Grenadier on the Captains left fired and then the others one after another. The Captain stood still till the second Gun was fired. After that I turned and saw the Grenadier who fired first attempting to prick me b y the side of the Captain with his Bayonet. I had a large Stick in my hand. I struck over hand and hit him in his left arm. Knocked his hand from his Gun. The Bayonet struck the Snow and jarr'd the breech out of his hand. I had not before struck at any body. Upon that I turn'd, thinking the other would do the same and struck at any body at first and hit Preston. In striking him my foot slip'd and my blow fell short and hit him, as he afterwards told me, on the arm. When I heard the word fire the Captains back was to the Soldiers and face to me. Before I recovered the Soldier who fired the first Gun was attempting again to push me through. I tossed my Stick in his face. He fell back and I jump'd towards the land. He push'd at me there and fell down. I turn'd to catch his Gun. Another Soldier push'd at me and I ran off. Return'd soon and saw the dead carrying off and the party was gone. The Gun which went off first had scorched the nap of my Surtout at l the elbow. I did not hear the Captain speak after he answered me. Was there but ab out 3/4 of a minute in the whole. There was time enough between the first and second Gun for the Captain to have spoke to his Men. He stood leaning on the dagger in the scabbard. At the time of the firing there was between 50 and 80 People at some distance not crowding upon the Soldiers and thin before them."