

# The Boston Massacre:

## A Letter from Abigail Adams

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Hello, Sarah! It has been a while. How are things in Virginia? I hope the children and Charles's new job are going well. You would not believe what has happened these past few months! I should start at the beginning because it has been eventful. I am sure that you have heard many stories and rumors about the event in March that many are calling the Boston Massacre. Our family has been in the mist of what followed that dreadful day.

It all began the morning of March 5th. I was in the kitchen when I heard gunshots and yelling. We thought that it had just been the British who had come in October of 1766 practicing (Boston Massacre Historical Society). John was playing with Abigail, when all of a sudden the fire bells started ringing. ("Boston Massacre Site: The Freedom Trail") John ran outside to help. I looked out the window, but I could not see any smoke or blazes, only our neighbors going to see what had happened.

An hour later, John came home with a worried look on his face. I asked him what happened. He said there had been a small group of people who had been protesting against the British, and the protesting got out of hand. Crispus Attucks, Samuel Gray, and James Cadwell had been shot by the British soldiers, and were dead! Patrick Carr, Samuel Maverick died later. (History.com Editors)

John was asked to defend the British soldiers who shot the boys. He said yes, can you believe it! I was so heartbroken by the death of those poor boys and I know John was too.

The next day, just as we were sitting down for dinner, John's second cousin, Samuel Adams (McCullough) came asking for John and he appeared quite upset. John told me to take Abigail and Thomas upstairs. I did, and as soon as I got upstairs, I heard an argument between John and Samuel.

Samuel began yelling, "How could you?! How could you defend them after what happened to those men? They never meant for that club to hit Private Montgomery! The British had no right to shoot just because the group was yelling and throwing snowballs at them." Samuel paused for an answer, and John started to reply, "I am defending them because I am showing support with Josiah Quincey for the colonial defense system." (History.com Editors) Samuel started yelling again, but John stopped him, saying, "I believe that every man has the right to a fair trial. (McCullough) Surely you would want to know what happened, and why they shot into the mob? If we do not give them a fair trial we are just like them. I do not think the British should go unpunished but we should follow the law."

Samuel said that “Paul Revere is painting a picture of the scene and calling it the Bloody Massacre. Revere and I are going to make copies, use it as propaganda, and send it to the other twelve colonies to raise awareness.” (“On This Day”) “I’m sorry for yelling, John, it was wrong of me but the British would not have given us a trial so why should we give one to them?”

John then spoke “ I would like the British to be punished as well, but this is not the way to do it. All is forgiven Samuel, go home to your wife.” (“Samuel Adams”) Then Samuel left. I came downstairs. I asked John, “Was all of that true?” John nodded, and went to his study.

Now I will take you to just two weeks ago. John came home with some new information about the trial. He told me, according to the British soldiers, a mob of about sixty had come up to a guard at the Customs House yelling. As more people gathered, the mob escalated to throwing snowballs, sticks, rocks, and daring the guard to shoot. (Wallenfeldt) The guard worried about a riot occurring, and he called in reinforcements. This angered the mob and a club hit one of the soldiers. In all of the confusion one of the soldiers fired. Since one fired the rest of them, thinking that the soldier heard the command “fire”, proceeded to fire without permission. Which resulted in the killing of five young men. (“Boston Massacre.” Ushistory.org) He said tomorrow, the court would discuss the proper punishment for their actions.

One night, John came home very late, he looked exhausted. I knew the trial had taken its toll on him. I asked him what the fate of the soldiers would be? He said six were found not guilty. The other two were declared guilty, and would be branded on their thumb with an “M” to symbolize manslaughter. (History.com Editors) John said the reason he had been so late on his way home, was that Samuel had stopped him and took him to a town meeting. Many members of the community want the British to be removed from Boston, and for the colonies to break away from England.

The next day, I asked him more about the trial and the meeting. He said that the trial was very long, and terrible because almost all of Boston was Patriots. He had to fight very hard to ensure the soldiers got a fair trial, and the witnesses were telling the truth,

not just saying things out of hatred. He said “I do not want the British to win, I just want justice to be served.” (McCullough) Samuel is a Patriot, like John is. Samuel does not understand that he needs to think about what he is doing, and what will happen in the future.

I do not know what the future will hold for Boston or our Thirteen Colonies but I think John will have a big impact on what happens here. I fear there may be more loss of life in the future as these are troubling times. I will keep you updated on events here in Boston. Keep well, friend.

Sincerely,

Abigail Adams

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