

The boston massacre  
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October 11, The Boston Massacre Trial, 1770 In September 1768, the Governor sent forth to Boston two British military troops to help restore order and respect for British law after many of Boston's residents refused to pay the required custom duties (Linder, 2001). Physical altercations were already evident by time March of 1770 came to a start, after a fist fight had taken place between soldiers and workers at a cable-making company. By time March 5th came rolling around, tensions between soldiers and civilians were at their breaking point. All it took was an accusation and a bit of taunting on the side of the civilians for the first blow to be delivered that day from the musket of a soldier to the face of the insulting civilian.

After that first blow, more civilians gathered around and further assaulted the soldier. Elsewhere, another group of soldiers was facing an assault by means of snowballs. The decision was made by the military captain on duty that the soldiers should simply turn away, that they had no legal right to fire upon the civilians. Unfortunately, the civilians took this as an advantage and threw all sorts of objects at the soldiers. It was during this that the soldiers began firing on the surrounding crowd, killing five people and injuring six others.

A trial was held in the aftermath of the riot to determine who was at fault for the incident. The captain of the military was arrested later that night under charges that his soldiers had no right to fire upon the crowd. The captain was found guilty of his crime and sentenced to a meager seven months in prison. However, an attorney by the name of John Adams came to Boston, looking to

defend the actions of the military captain, but it was by the hand of a grand jury that stuck with the conclusion that the captain and eight of his soldiers were guilty of the events. They were all sent back to prison. The main trial itself was set in October. It was during these trials that the military captain and his soldiers were found innocent of all charges - the captain had not given orders to fire, and the soldiers had been acting out of self-defense (York, 2010).

There was much speculation about whether or not the captain and his soldiers should have been entirely at fault for the gruesome events that took place on that day in March. The civilians, especially those that had lost family members in the riot, were set upon the fact that the soldiers not only had no reason to fire upon the crowd, but did not have the permission to do so. Even some members of the jury felt that the taunting and launching of snowballs and sticks at the soldiers should not have been enough to cause the soldiers to turn on the crowd with their guns - weapons that snowballs and sticks stood no chance against.

From the timeline of events that led to the massacre, the decision by the trial to acquit the captain and his soldiers of all charges is still a questionable one. While it is true that the soldiers had held off as long as possible, understanding that they were in a more powerful position than the civilians, they still attacked the crowd while they were in the midst of being what can be described as child's play. However, it still needs to be considered that the soldiers really were acting in self-defense. If the civilians had behaved themselves a little better, the soldiers would not have felt the need to react against them in any way.

#### Works Cited

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