The Boston Massacre

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Our family’s printing business was really busy these last few weeks leading up to the upcoming tenth anniversary of what’s now called the Boston Massacre, printing posters and pamphlets. By the way, my name’s Anne, and I’m now twenty years old. I’m a printer’s assistant in our family business.

Over several years, I could see how Paul Revere and other Patriot leaders had cleverly used the incident as a theme to highlight the unhappiness of the colonists with the many taxes and unfair rules imposed by the King’s representatives. Laws like the Townshend acts had already angered many colonists and made them feel like their rights were being violated, just like the Stamp act before that.

My mind drifted back to that day a decade ago on March 5th 1770, when a fight in front of the Custom House on King Street, quite close to our home, had turned deadly. I was only ten years old, living with my parents Charles and Lucia, my brothers Benjamin and Thomas, and my baby sister Charlotte. We were clearly a Patriot family. We’d have heated political discussions around dinner, especially when Uncle Sebastian, Aunt Ada and Cousin Daniel were visiting.

It all started that day, when Father rushed through the door looking worried. Mother heard him come in and started to say, “You‘re late for-” but stopped upon seeing his face.

“What’s the matter?” Mother asked.

“There’s an angry mob out there. Those Redcoats are shooting at the Patriots just for protesting!”

Father sat down at the table and told us what had happened. He was returning from a short walk and saw King Street packed with colonists yelling at armed British soldiers. Some were throwing sticks and snowballs at them and daring them to fire.

Captain Preston then arrived and tried to get the crowd to stop and go away. All of a sudden, one of the soldiers, who was later identified as Private Montgomery, was hit with an object and fired at the crowd. After a few seconds of stunned silence, more soldiers fired and a few colonists died. We later learned that at least five colonists had lost their lives.

“I ran from there knowing that I couldn’t risk getting into the middle of all that.” Father said.

Over the next few days, a few soldiers, an officer, and some civilians were charged with murder. There was a trial where John Adams, a lawyer by profession and a Patriot himself, argued for the soldiers believing that they deserved a fair trial.

I also remembered that one year later, at a discussion over dinner, when Uncle Sebastian and his family visited, he described how the Boston Massacre, as it had come to be known widely, was becoming a uniting incident for patriotism in the colonies. People like the Sons of Liberty and Paul Revere had used it very well to motivate colonists and to show the injustice of British rule.

The last ten years had been eventful and had seen the movement against British rule grow. Subsequent protests and incidents like the Boston Tea Party had occurred as a result of further unfair rules imposed by the British. In 1775, King George III declared the colonies to be in rebellion against the monarchy. The American Revolution had clearly begun and many people felt that the Boston Massacre was critical to its beginning.

We patriots have had enough of the British thinking they can control us. My brothers and cousin have gone to fight in the Revolutionary War. I hope they come back victorious.

Now back to printing those pamphlets…

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