

Testimony Excerpts (7 Different Accounts)

Deposition of Theodore Bliss



At home. I heard the Bells for fire. Went out. Came to the Town House. The People told me there was going to be a Rumpus with the Soldiers. Went to the Custom house. Saw Capt. Preston there with the Soldiers. Asked him if they were loaded. He said yes. If with Ball. He said nothing. I saw the People throw Snow Balls at the Soldiers and saw a Stick about 3 feet long strike a Soldier upon the right. He sallied and then fired. A little time a second. Then the other s l fast after one another.

One or two Snow balls hit the Soldier, the stick struck, before firing. I know not whether he sallied on account of the Stick or step'd back to make ready. I did not hear any Order given by the Capt. to fire. I stood so near him I think I must have heard him if he had given an order to fire before the first firing. I never knew Capt. Preston before. I can't say whether he had a Surtout on, he was dressed in red. I know him to be the Man I took to be the Officer.

The Man that fired first stood next to the Exchange lane. I saw none of the People press upon the Soldiers before the first Gun fired. I did after. I aimed a blow at him myself but did not strike him. I am sure the Captain stood before the Men when the first Gun was fired. I had no apprehension the Capt. did give order to fire when the first Gun was fired. I thought, after the first Gun, the Capt. did order the Men to fire but do not certainly know. I heard the word fire several times but know not whether it came from the Captain, the Soldiers or People. Two of the People struck at the Soldiers after the first Gun. I dont know if they hit 'em. There were about 100 people in the Street. The muzzles of the Guns were behind him. After the first Gun the Captain went quite to the left and I to the right.

Deposition of Benjamin Burdick



When I came into King Street about 9 o'Clock I saw the Soldiers round the Centinel. I asked one if he was loaded and he said yes. I asked him if he would fire, he said yes by the Eternal God and pushd his Bayonet at me. After the firing the Captain came before the Soldiers and put up their Guns with his arm and said stop firing, dont fire no more or dont fire again.

I heard the word fire and took it and am certain that it came from behind the Soldiers. I saw a man passing busily behind who I took to be an Officer. The firing was a little time after. I saw some persons fall. Before the firing I saw a stick thrown at the Soldiers. The word fire I took to be a word of Command. I had in my hand a highland broad Sword which I brought from home. Upon my coming out I was told it was a wrangle between the Soldiers and people, upon that I went back and got my Sword.

I never used to go out with a weapon. I had not my Sword drawn till after the Soldier pushed his Bayonet at me. I should have cut his head off if he had stepd out of his Rank to attack me again. At the first firing the People were chiefly in Royal Exchange lane, there being about 50 in the Street. After the firing I went up to the Soldiers and told them I wanted to see some faces that I might swear to them another day. The Centinel in a melancholy tone said perhaps Sir you may.

James Woodall

I saw one Soldier knocked down. His Gun fell from him. I saw a great many sticks and pieces of sticks and Ice thrown at the Soldiers. The Soldier who was knocked down took up his Gun and fired directly. Soon after the first Gun I saw a Gentleman behind the Soldiers in velvet of blue or black plush trimmed with gold. He put his hand toward their backs. Whether he touched them I know not and said by God I'll stand by you whilst I have a drop of blood and then said fire and two went off and the rest to 7 or 8.... The Captain, after, seemed shocked and looked upon the Soldiers. I am very certain he did not give the word fire.

Newton Prince, a Negro, a member of the South Church

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 who is gone to King street. Some said for Gods sake don't lets touch the main Guard. I went down. Saw the Soldiers planted by the Custom l house two deep. The People were calling them Lobsters, daring 'em to fire 1, saying damn you why don't you fire. I saw Capt. Preston out from behind 1 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. a 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 l after the Guard Drums beat to arms. The People whilst striking on the Guns 1 cried fire, damn you fire. I have heard no Orders given to fire, only the people in general cried fire.

William Sawyer

The people kept huzzaing. Damn 'em. Daring 'em to fire. Threw Snow balls. I think they hit 'em. As soon as the Snow balls were thrown and a club a Soldier fired. I heard the Club strike upon the Gun and the corner man next the lane said fire and immediately fired. This was the first Gun. As soon as he had fired he said Damn you fire. I am so sure that I thought it was he that spoke. That next Gun fired and so they fired through pretty quick.

Isaac Pierce

The Lieut. Governor asked Capt. Preston didn't you know you had no power to fire upon the Inhabitants or any number of People collected together unless you had a Civil Officer to give order. The Captain replied I was obliged to, to save my Sentry.

John Cole

I saw the officer after the firing and spoke to the Soldiers and told 'em it was a Cowardly action to kill men at the end of their Bayonets. They were pushing at the People who seemed to be trying to come into the Street. The Captain came up and stamped and said Damn their bloods fire again and let 'em take the consequence. I was within four feet of him. He had no surtout but a red Coat with a Rose on his shoulder. The people were quarrelling at the head of Royal Exchange lane.¹² The Soldiers were pushing and striking with the Guns. I saw the People's Arms moving but no Sticks.

<http://www.bostonmassacre.net/trial/d-bliss.htm>