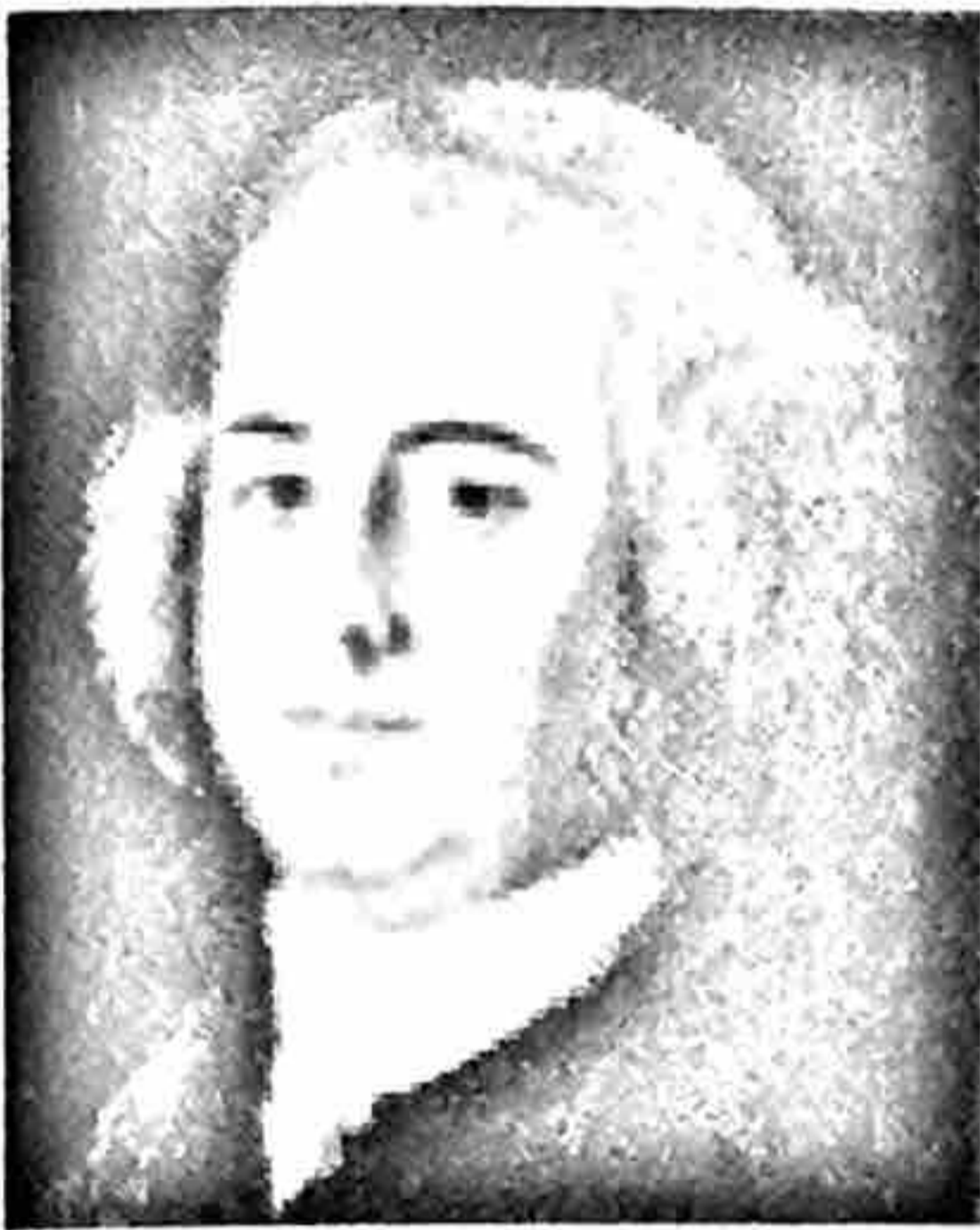


13 A Massacre in Boston



John Adams hated to study when he was a boy. "I spent my time... in driving hoops, playing marbles...wrestling, swimming, skating."

Samuel Adams had a young cousin named John. "I have heard of one Mr. Adams," said King George to the Massachusetts governor, "but who is the other?" The other—honest, serious John Adams—would become even more famous than Sam.

Sam was an agitator and an organizer who helped start a revolution. John was a farmer and a lawyer, a solid citizen, who helped lead that revolution. Someone who knew John Adams said that he possessed more learning than anyone in the colonies. That may not have been an exaggeration. John had

done a lot of reading and studying. And he knew how to use his mind.

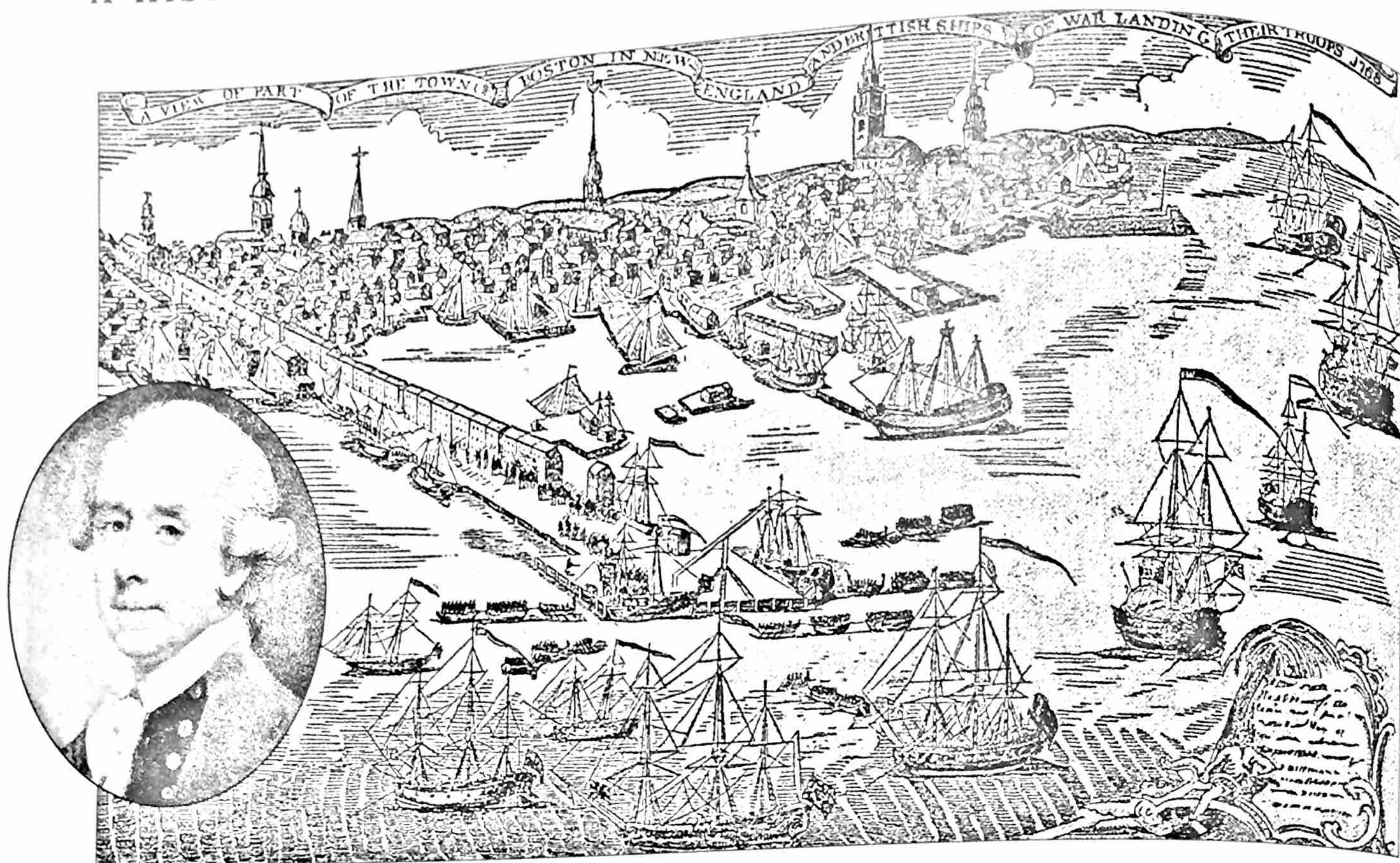
Here is a story about both Adams cousins: the story of the Boston Massacre. A massacre, as you may know, is a gruesome killing. That's what happened in Boston in 1770.

The story begins in 1765, when the English Parliament passed a law that said American citizens had to provide quarters for British soldiers. The quarters they were talking about are not the kind you get when you add two dimes and a nickel. Quarters can also be houses where soldiers live. The law was called the Quartering Act. English soldiers, who were called "redcoats" because of the color of their uniforms, were to be quartered in American towns and cities.

Well, the Americans didn't want British redcoats quartered in their towns, or cities, or even in their country. So when the soldiers arrived, in 1768, the colonists weren't very kind to them. Sometimes they made fun of them, sometimes they threw snowballs or rocks, sometimes they called them lobsterbacks, or worse names.



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In 1768 the British fleet sailed into Boston harbor (above) and unloaded regiment after regiment of redcoats. General Thomas Gage (inset) had the thankless job of commanding an army that didn't want to be there among a people who didn't want it to be there either.

The people in Boston were especially annoyed, and, at first, wouldn't even provide quarters. So the soldiers set up tents on the Boston Common (a big grassy area in the center of town) and played their drums and bugles—loudly—at the most inappropriate times. Most of the English soldiers didn't want to be in America anyway. They were poorly paid, and many were homesick. Some ran away from the British army. (Soldiers who run away are called deserters. British deserters who were caught were shot.) A few redcoats—especially the officers—were treated well. Some married American women.

But for most of the British soldiers, the winters in Boston seemed longer and colder and more miserable than any they had ever known. On a freezing March day in 1770, one of the king's soldiers was looking for work to earn some extra money. Someone started making fun of him and told him to get a job cleaning toilets. (Only they didn't have the kind of toilets we have today. They had outdoor "privies," which were dirt-floored holes, and they smelled.) One thing led to another, and there was a fight.

That started things. Soon a noisy, jeering group of mischief-makers gathered in front of the Boston Custom House. They began pushing and shoving and throwing stones and pieces of ice at the British sentry. He got knocked down and he called for help. Captain Thomas Preston came to the rescue with eight British soldiers.

There is some confusion about what happened next. The mob is said to have taunted the redcoats, yelling "Fire! Fire!" Captain Preston is said to have yelled, "Hold your fire!" Then a British soldier was hit with a big stick. He claimed he heard the word "fire," so he fired his gun into the crowd. The street gang moved forward; the redcoats panicked and fired at unarmed people. Five Americans died; seven were wounded.

None of them was a hero. The victims were troublemakers who got worse than they deserved. The soldiers were professionals (the British army was supposed to be the best in the world), who shouldn't have panicked. The whole thing shouldn't have happened. Sam Adams made the most of it. He called it the Boston Massacre and had Paul Revere engrave a picture of the scene. Revere was a silversmith who made fine teapots and pitchers. He was also a dedicated Patriot, a dentist, a printer, a good horseback rider, and a friend of Samuel Adams.

The picture that Paul Revere chose to etch into a piece of copper—so it could be printed over and over again—showed British soldiers firing at peaceful Boston citizens. That wasn't the way it had actually happened—Adams and Revere knew that—but the drawing made good propaganda. It made people furious at the British. That drawing was soon seen all over the colonies. It helped start a war.

There is one hero in the story of the Boston Massacre: John Adams. John didn't want British soldiers in Boston; he wanted free-



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