An analysis of the influence of Samuel Adams on the Boston Massacre

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AN ANALYSIS OF THE INFLUENCE
OF SAMUEL ADAMS ON THE
BOSTON MASSACRE

A Thesis
Presented to the
Department of Communication
and the
Faculty of the Graduate College
University of Nebraska

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
University of Nebraska at Omaha

by
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May 1977
Thesis Acceptance

Accepted for the faculty of The Graduate College of the University of Nebraska at Omaha, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts.

Graduate Committee

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Samuel Adams, labeled the "father of the American Revolution" by William Wells, may have been neglected in the history books of America. "There is no doubt that without him the prerevolutionary protests of Massachusetts would have been muted considerably." Yet even to this day Samuel Adams is not given an important place in history. It is interesting that in 1777, before the Battle of Bunker Hill, General Gage, commander of the British troops, was authorized by the king to pardon all patriots who would serve the king, except Samuel Adams and John Hancock.

Biographers of Adams have all, independently of each other arrived at similar conclusions; Adams almost single handedly planned, and directed most of the events leading to the first shot at Lexington, and ultimately to the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

These conclusions are upheld by Paul Lewis in his biography, The Grand Incendiary. In the specific area of the Boston Massacre he proposed that Adams set the stage for the Boston Massacre.


The situation for Sam Adams, and he chose his setting with care, selecting the North End of Boston, where a battalion headquarters of the Twenty-ninth Regiment had been established near a cluster of small ropemaking factories. The ropemakers, of course, were ardent Sons of Liberty and Sam Adams's followers.4

The Massacre, so labeled by Sam Adams, occurred on March 5, 1770, concluding a lengthy encampment of British soldiers in the city limits of Boston. Although several accounts have been given of the Massacre, not all the facts about it are known. The question of who first yelled "fire," for example, is not known. The Captain in charge was not accused of giving a command to "fire." Possibly, with the fire alarms sounding and the confusion among the people, someone said "fire" in reference to a burning fire. Nevertheless, descriptive narratives taken from several accounts and combined offer, as much as is possible, the complete, accurate facts of March 5. The assertion by Lewis concerning Adams' involvement, has created interest about the true role of this patriot in the Boston Massacre.

In developing this study, the following questions served as guidelines for research to answer the initial question: Did Samuel Adams plan and/or cause the Boston Massacre?

1. Did Adams encourage the citizens to arm themselves against the troops?

2. Did Adams present the troops as a true threat to the citizens of Boston?

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3. Did he show that all legal means had failed, thus making violence necessary?

4. Did Adams, directly or indirectly, control the groups present at the Massacre?

5. Was Adams personally convinced that the troops would fire upon the citizens?

If these questions could be answered through the available evidence, the conclusions would have to be based on the following primary sources: the writings of Samuel Adams, the autobiography and personal papers of John Adams, and the contemporary history of Massachusetts by Thomas Hutchinson. The most useful secondary sources were biographies on the following individuals: Sam Adams, John Adams, James Otis, and Joseph Warren.

In conducting a study such as this, there are several things which must be taken into consideration. First, when analyzing the "guilt or innocence" of an individual, that individual needs to be as clearly understood as possible. With Samuel Adams, it would be significant to identify all salient characteristics which might have affected his actions. The first two chapters of this study included research on the biography and political ideology of Adams. Hopefully the information presented helped to establish more intimate aspects of Adams--the man.

The second area, which was vital to this study, was a description of the events leading to the Massacre. During the development of events in chapter four, references to Adams were excluded so that an objective (as possible) view could be obtained. Chapter five is an analysis of Adams' role in the Massacre, tying the first four chapters together in a complete overview.
Each chapter of this study was developed using primary and secondary sources. While these sources are thorough, they cannot be comprehensive; that is, all the facts and evidence cannot be known. The procedures employed in this research, therefore, involved collecting data, analyzing data, and interpreting data to arrive at an inferred conclusion. An example of this procedure can be seen in the answering of question four—did Adams directly or indirectly control the groups present at the Massacre?

Adams' name appeared on no membership lists and he was rarely seen in public with any political groups. How then, could it be proved that he was the leader of these groups? First, the groups involved had to be identified. Second, links between Adams and these groups or group members had to be established. Once these links were established, Adams' influence upon them needed to be assessed. In order to do this, it was necessary to make certain assumptions and proceed with an "if-then" analysis. If Adams was linked to these groups, which the research supported, and if one accepts the influential character of Adams portrayed by biographers, then possibly he influenced the actions of the groups present. An "if-then" relationship was established in this specific example as in others.

The perspective of the researcher played an important role in the analysis of the initial question. For example chapter three dealt with the political ideology of Sam Adams. The researcher approached this investigation believing Adams to be guilty. Because of this, the researcher set out to prove Adams' innocence. The writings of Adams and secondary sources on him provided the main sources, with little emphasis
given to other sources. The conclusions were that Adams seemed an unlikely "murderer."

However, the ultimate judging found Adams guilty of causing the Massacre, which seems to be a contradiction. Remember, however, that perspective was a vital concept when the analysis was made. Chapter three represented a singular analysis, centered around Adams, with little acknowledgement to outside events. Chapter five is, however, a much broader, more thorough look at Adams and his associations with various revolutionary elements.

The broader perspective offered a more accurate and complete picture. A closer look at both chapters would reveal little contradictory information. Chapter three concludes that it is unlikely that Adams actually planned the Massacre--his character made it unrealistic. Chapter five suggested that the people present at the event took control and perpetuated the bloodshed without having an encouraging leader present.

When reading historical research, it is important to remember that it is virtually impossible to know all the facts, evidence, and feelings of the people at the time. It is not the purpose of this study to find a definitive answer, but to analyze and weigh the available evidence to ascertain the probabilities surrounding the event known as the Boston Massacre.
You seem to wish me to write something to diminish the fame of Sam Adams, to show that he was not a man of profound learning, a great lawyer, a man of vast reading, a comprehensive statesman. In all this I shall not gratify you.

Sam Adams, to my certain knowledge, from 1758 to 1775, that is for seventeen years, made it his constant rule to watch the rise of every brilliant genius, to seek his acquaintance, to court his friendship, to cultivate his natural feelings in favor of his native country, to warn him against the hostile designs of Great Britain, and to fix his affections and reflections on the side of his native country . . . If Samuel Adams was not a Demosthenes in oratory, nor had half the learning of a Mansfield in law, or the universal history of a Burke, he had the art of commanding the learning, the oratory, the talents, the diamonds of the first water that his country afforded, without anybody knowing or suspecting he had but himself and very few friends.1

Because few people knew Samuel Adams as did his cousin John Adams, this description of the older man by his younger compatriot must represent one of the most accurate portraits of the man labeled "the Father of the Revolution." 2

Born September 16, 1722, to a wealthy, aristocratic family, Samuel Adams' fate to lead the colonies to independence was perpetuated


2 This is the date cited by Wells and Miller. Other sources gave September 22, and Ralph Harlow gave September 27.
by his father Deacon Adams, who established the political morality which guided his own life and his son's for two generations. A brewery business run by the elder Adams helped to financially maintain a high social standing for the family.

Following the custom of wealthier classes, young Adams spent eight years at the Boston Latin school learning Latin and Greek before entering Harvard at the age of fourteen. With only minimal records having been kept at this time, it is difficult to ascertain what took place during these years. William Wells, Adams' great-grandson-biographer, reports that young Adams needed discipline once for oversleeping and missing morning prayers. John C. Miller notes, however, that "During his senior year, Sam Adams was caught drinking rum; and, while he escaped with a five shilling fine, several of his less fortunate companions were both rusticated and degraded."

Upon graduation from college, Adams tried work first as a clerk and second with his father at the brewery. Neither of these professions pleased Sam Adams as much as politics. The formation of a political

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3 Deacon Adams influence is discussed in more detail in chapter three.

4 Further discussion of Adams' childhood is given in chapter three.


club with friends and the publication of a newspaper, the *Independent Advertiser*, occupied his time and inspired him to political appointment. Not until 1756, however, did Adams win an elected position.

For nearly a decade after his election as tax collector, Adams seemed destined to remain an obscure Boston politician to the end of his days. He failed to rise higher in politics at this time, not because his ability was inferior, but because the period was one of almost continuous war.

The Sugar Act of 1764 provided Adams with the political explosive to further his career. His pen and his leadership in radical groups such as the Sons of Liberty and the Loyal Nine propelled him onto the center stage where he would remain for the rest of his life. The cry of "taxation without representation" became the phrase most associated with Adams and his "cause for liberty." Persistent heckling of British authority by the Massachusetts Legislature proved to no avail, however, and the Sugar Act remained in effect.

A year later brought the Stamp Act.

Sam Adams rode into power on the wave of political and economical unrest [the Stamp Act] that swept over Massachusetts in 1765. The times were bad, Bostonians reasoned, and there was need of a man like Sam Adams who had been famous for his great zeal for liberty.

In this same year, Samuel Adams, by town meeting vote, took a position in the Massachusetts Legislature. Within another year he became the clerk for the house, a responsibility which entailed the authorship of

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7 Discussed in chapter three.

8 Miller, Pioneer in Propaganda, p. 22.

9 Ibid., p. 58.
correspondences sent from the assembly to any person or group. In other words, Adams became the mouthpiece for Massachusetts. He retained this distinctive position until 1774, and his election to the First Continental Congress.

Adams' friendship with James Otis, John Adams, John Hancock, Joseph Warren and countless others gave him the foundation for strong and successful leadership. No biography of any of these patriots would be complete without references to Samuel Adams. William Tudor, in his biography of James Otis, explains the difficulty of obtaining clear insights into this patriot's feelings about the times. "His [Otis'] papers have all perished, none of his speeches were recorded..." Tudor, the only author to include references to Samuel Adams which were not influenced by William Wells, indicates the significance of Adams in Otis' life with a nine page narrative in which he asserts that Adams "... in fact, was born for the revolutionary epoch, he was trained and nurtured in it..." This description of Adams clearly testifies to the influence of Deacon Adams' early revolutionary feelings on his son.

The relationship between Otis and Adams dates primarily before 1770. As the recognized leader of the patriot movement prior to this date, Otis dominated Sam Adams in constitutional matters and legal areas. When Adams took office in 1765, he "... was recognized as James Otis's

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11 Ibid., p. 275.
According to biographer Cass Canfield, the phrase "taxation without representation" should be attributed to Otis.

Otis' inconsistent behavior contributed to his demise as the whig leader, but a knock on the head during a tavern brawl seemed to intensify his unpredictable behavior, and his presence at future political meetings became a mere formality.

By 1767, the passage of additional repressive acts by Parliament caused violent outbreaks as well as verbal remonstrances from the Massachusetts assembly. Adams became more outspoken and threatening to England until 1768, when British troops arrived to "encourage peace." Basing his arguments on natural law and the English constitution, Adams sent vehement protests to London, published articles in local newspapers defying the presence of the troops, and authored a circular letter addressed to all the other colonies. The latter tactic brought the King's rage down on Massachusetts, but no rescission happened as ordered by the king.

With this and other stresses, the Boston Massacre occurred on March 5, 1770. Adams spearheaded demands for the removal of all troops, and the execution of the soldiers involved, and established a tradition of commemorative addresses for the following six years as a political and emotional reminder of the event.

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13 Ibid., p. 11.

14 The Declaratory Act, Revenue Act, Townshend Acts.
The Committee of Correspondence, organized by Adams, founded a novel form of communication in 1772. "The business of the committee was to prepare a statement of colonial rights, list violations... communicate these to other towns, and invite similar statements from similar committees in return." The idea initially sustained little support. Boston tories assumed the rural areas would be largely devoted to King George and consequently uninterested in communicating with Boston radicals. But the events of 1773 changed the beliefs of rural Massachusetts' residents. "By 1774, the Boston Committee of Correspondence was in communication with more than three hundred towns in Massachusetts alone besides carrying on intercolonial correspondence... as far south as Charleston, South Carolina."

Sam Adams had a clear purpose in mind for these committees. In reference to them he said, "Whenever the friends of the Country shall be assured of each others Sentiments, that Spirit which is necessary will not be wanting." The "spirit" to which he referred was, of course, the revolution. Historian Harry Hansen maintains that the committees of correspondence led to the First Continental Congress.

Those events which made the committees so popular were the Tea Act, the Boston Tea Party, and the Boston Port Act, which isolated the

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16 Miller, Pioneer in Propaganda, p. 269.


city from all imports. This "spanking" of Boston for throwing the tea
overboard aroused sympathy not only in Massachusetts, but in all the
colonial states.

... they [the other colonies] concluded that Boston
was martyred because it stood foremost in defense of colonial
rights, and they took up collections and showered the
beleaguered city with provisions. 19

Two months after the Port Act became effective, acting in his position
as clerk, Adams forwarded to the various committees of correspondence a
plea to suspend "your trade with Great Britain ..." This request
established the need for intercolonial consultation. Writing from
Philadelphia on May 21, Adams instructed James Warren in Boston, "to
implore every Friend in Boston by everything dear and sacred to Men of
Sense and Virtue to avoid Blood and Tumult ... Nothing can ruin us
but Violence." Clearly Adams preferred legal means to violent means.

Through the committees of correspondence, the First Continental Congress
convened in the fall of 1774 with Sam Adams as a delegate from
Massachusetts.

The compromise the delegates ... adopted was a wholesale
denial of Parliament's authority with a voluntary declar-
ation of colonial willingness to submit to regulation of
trade. 22


20 Wells, The Life and Public Services of Samuel Adams, (vol. II)
p. 158.


22 Morgan, The Birth of the Republic, p. 66.
"The adoption of the very ideas of Samuel Adams... [in this compromise] point with silent eloquence to his ever active agency."

The advent of 1775 brought the war so many had feared and anticipated. With two battles having already been fought, the Second Continental Congress had an army without a leader or the funds to sustain it. Sam Adams' chief concern centered around the need for a formal declaration of freedom. For a full year he worked "underground," trying to muster the number of delegates needed to pass such a document. Finally, more than a year after the battles of Lexington and Concord, Samuel Adams joined fifty-six other representatives in signing the Declaration of Independence.

At the Battle of Bunker Hill, Adams lost one of his strongest and truest supporters, Joseph Warren. Wells said of Adams and Warren that "... the two had no separate purposes in public measure."

According to biographer Richard Frothingham,

"These great men went in perfect harmony together. They shared the same beliefs and purposes, the same hopes and resolves, the same enemies and friends in common, to the end."

Adams displayed his respect for Warren and offered some insight into his own character when, in 1777, he informed James Warren that he

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24 Ibid., p. 151.

had "moved in Congress that the Eldest son of our deceased Friend Genl
Warren might be adopted by the Continent and educated at the publick
expense."

For the duration of the war, Adams promoted two main interests:
first, a formal constitution and second, financial and legal support
for General Washington and his armies. In achieving the first goal
Adams used his regular tactics, working relentlessly "behind the scenes."

He was upon every committee, had a hand in the management
of every political meeting, private or public, and a voice
in all the measures that were proposed . . .

According to John Adams, "Mr. Samuel Adams . . . very rarely spoke much
in Congress . . .," and was seldom seen "in the center of the stage."
His behind-the-scenes work on the Articles of Confederation is unclear.
Biographer James Hosmer claims, "It is worthwhile to look . . . at the
Articles of Confederation, because in the framing of them Samuel Adams
was so largely concerned." Ralph Marlow, however, maintains that,

27 Miller, Pioneer in Propaganda, p. 342.
29 John Adams, A Biography in His Words, (New York: Harper & Row
30 Miller, Pioneer in Propaganda, p. 342. (Adams suffered from
palsy and thus had a shaky voice and an awkward speech delivery.)
31 James Hosmer, American Statesman-Samuel Adams, (Boston:
"although he [Adams] endeavored to secure the adoption of the Articles, there is no evidence that he threw himself into this work with that vigor which made him so conspicuous in 1774."

The lack of central control the Articles allotted Congress, a characteristic which Adams must have felt vital in controlling government, produced the main problem with the document. After all, the Revolutionary War was being fought to eliminate a central control; it would hardly have been likely for the new country to institute a government similar to Parliament. "It would be ridiculous indeed if we were to return to a State of Slavery in a few Weeks after we had thrown off the Yoke and asserted our Independence," declared Adams. The irony of the situation resulted when Adams realized he had tied his own hands in his second most important concern--support for the armies.

Before the Articles became legal in 1781, Congress had virtually no rules to guide itself. The overriding fear of one faction taking control prevented Congress from establishing or maintaining laws and regulations for the states as a whole entity. This resulted in no major fund for the maintenance of the army, without which Washington could not control his men. This "cause" to which Samuel Adams devoted considerable energy proved to be one of the few obstacles he could not hurdle with his verbiage or influence. General Washington entered every


battle not knowing how many men he had, when they had last eaten, nor if they had adequate munitions to defend themselves.

With the end of the war, Adams was again elected to the Massachusetts Legislature as a senator where he served until 1789, when he became lieutenant governor of the state. In three years he assumed the governorship upon the death of his long time friend, John Hancock. Adams held this position until 1797, when he retired from public life. Only a year earlier in 1796 his name had appeared fifth on the list for consideration of the presidency.

Thomas Hutchinson, archenemy of Adams and governor of Massachusetts during most of the later, riotous years, described Adams:

He was, for nearly 20 years, a writer against government in the publick newspapers; at first but an indifferent one: long practice caused him to arrive at great perfection, and to acquire a talent of artfully and fallaciously insinuating into the minds of his readers a prejudice against the character of all whom he attacked, beyond any other man I ever knew.  

When Governor Hutchinson was asked why Adams was not "bought off," he replied, "Such is the obstinancy and inflexible disposition of the man, that he never can be conciliated by any office or gift whatever." High praise coming from an enemy.

John Adams characterized his cousin in 1822 as a very "artful and

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designing man, but desperately poor, and wholly dependent on his popularity with the lowest vulgar for his living."

In 1765, John Adams gave the most thorough contemporary analysis of Samuel Adams.

Adams is zealous and keen in the Cause, is always for Softness, and Delicacy, and Prudence where they will do, but is staunch and stiff and strict and rigid and inflexible, in the Cause... Adams I believe has the most thorough Understanding of Liberty, and her Resources, in the Temper and Character of the People, tho not is the Law and Constitution, as well as the most habitual radical Love of it, of any... as well as the most correct, genteel and artful Pen. He is a Man of refined Policy, stedfast Integrity, exquisit Humanity, genteel Erudition, obliging, engaging Manners, real as well as professed Piety, and a universal good Character, unless it should be admitted that he is too attentive to the Public and not enough so, to himself and his family.37

Herbert S. Allan, biographer of John Hancock, described Adams with this simple phrase, "No more sincere patriot ever lived than Sam Adams." 38

In 1803, Samuel Adams died. With Boston flags at half-mast and shops closed, Judge James Sullivan simply yet poignantly eulogized his friend Samuel Adams with these words:

"... to give his history at full length would be to give a history of the American Revolution."

36 John Adams, A Biography in His Own Words, p. 155.


39 October 2, 1803.

CHAPTER III

THE POLITICAL IDEOLOGY OF SAMUEL ADAMS

The political ideology of Samuel Adams is important to know so that an overall understanding of his motivations and actions can be fully achieved. Elaborating more completely on those aspects of his life which affected him, will provide a more distinct picture.

To begin, the details concerning the childhood of Samuel Adams are vague and sparse. Much of what is recorded of his early life was gathered from those who knew him and had listened to his tales. Whether fact or fiction, these tales, as depicted by Adams himself, give a certain insight into his character. A description of the type of parents he had will also provide an understanding of the drive behind the man's ambition.

Adams' father, also a Samuel, known as Deacon Adams, was obviously the mold from which the son formed his own life. Deacon, a deeply religious man, ran a successful brewery business and spent most of his free time involved in politics by talking, debating, and running for office. The Caucus Club, which in later years would be Samuel's favorite tool of influence, was formed with Deacon Adams probably having been a charter member.

As a child, Samuel Adams must have listened to endless hours of political debating and theorizing when the Caucus met in his home.

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While Deacon Adams probably could not be labeled a revolutionary in the same category as his son, he had very definite views on England and Parliament. The senior Adams had many disagreements with the legislative branch of Great Britain, two primary ones being payment of governors' salaries, and the Land Bank controversy. Early in Samuel's life, his father made demands for the right of the colonists to control the salaries of governors as a form of regulation over their activities. The younger Adams echoed this argument even more effectively in later years. The Land Bank controversy, discussed in detail later, was the most shattering conflict Deacon Adams suffered from Great Britain. This problem also had an effect on Samuel Adams for several years following the death of his father.

The religious traits of the father were mirrored in the son, as was the intense interest—almost obsession—with politics. The one major difference between Samuel and his father was business sense, of which the former had none and the latter an abundance. This deficiency in Samuel harrassed him through much of his life.

Little is known of Samuel Adams' mother except that she had deep and strict religious qualities. Her puritan beliefs, transmitted to and absorbed by young Samuel later encouraged his parents to hope their son would become a minister. Because of this background he maintained religious standards throughout his life and was called the "last Puritan" by many people.

Adams' tales of his childhood pictured primarily the political meetings in his home, and the excursions he made to the waterfront docks and taverns. "Since he was an Adams he was not allowed to wander off
and enjoy the company of other children, but he was so lonely that he quietly disobeyed, and from early boyhood demonstrated his democratic tendencies by consort ing with the sons of longshoremen and other waterfront dwellers." The factual quality of this datum is certainly questionable. But somewhere Sam Adams did acquire an understanding from the lower class of Boston.

In 1736, fourteen year old Sam Adams headed for Harvard to study theology. In less than one year, he abandoned thoughts of the ministry and turned to law. By studying the works of John Locke, Adams became impressed with the ideology of the seventeenth century theorist. Locke maintained that the power of the people reigned supreme in all aspects of government and the rights of the people were necessarily subservient to no monarch, no government, no country, to nothing except God. All legislative, executive, and judicial branches derived their power directly from the people and when any of these branches abused this power, the people had the right and responsibility to overthrow that power.

Adams took to heart Locke's political theories and moral philosophy, accepting many of the great thinkers' principles without reservation. Government is a trust, and men in power who fail to act for the public good automatically forfeit that trust. The authority of the ruler is always conditional, never absolute, and the governed always retain many rights of their own. The ultimate authority lies with the people who are sovereign.

Another important factor affecting Sam Adams while at Harvard was the Great Awakening. Having previously been deeply religious, the

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3 Ibid., p. 7.
Great Awakening reinforced Adams' belief and his childhood teachings. Viewing firsthand the moral effects of religion on former "sinners" surely must have strengthened Adams' personal convictions.

While Adams was at Harvard his father suffered his first financial problems brought on by the elimination of the Land Bank. Deacon Adams had been one of the chief organizers of the Land Bank of 1740, which was a type of joint-stock-holding company designed to alleviate the lack of currency in the colonies by issuing paper money backed by real estate. Shortly after the conception of the Land Bank, Parliament passed a bill which outlawed the Bank and made its directors personally responsible for any debts incurred. Having been a chief stockholder and director, Deacon Adams lost much of his wealth in partial payment of these debts. When this occurred, Samuel gave up his previous social standing, and in order to help with the cost of his schooling, he waited on tables in the dining hall. This conceivably had an effect on Adams' lack of appreciation for England and Parliament in his later years.

To the Adams family, the question of the Land Bank was at the root of the struggle as to who would control the political life of the colony; the common people, or the wealthy gentry. Sam Adams could have decided then, that if he could manage it, it would not be the wealthy gentry.

There are two viewpoints about the effect of this controversy on Adams. Biographers Cass Canfield and Paul Lewis independently maintain

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4 Miller, Pioneer in Propaganda, p. 5.

5 Ibid., p.11.
that this ten year financial burden on Adams' shoulders must have been a deciding factor in his radicalism toward the mother country. Lewis goes so far as to say that had Adams not been constantly harassed by British lawmakers, he might not have been so vehement in his pursuit of liberty.

However, John C. Miller asserted, "... this harsh treatment is not a touchstone by which to explain his later career. He became a revolutionary leader in 1765 because he was a New England patriot ..." With both viewpoints in mind, it would seem logical to assume that while this financial drain did have an effect on Samuel Adams, perhaps giving support to his personal convictions, it was not the foundation nor even one of the sources of his work toward the revolution. Almost all of his writings show his need to demonstrate the rights and privileges of Americans in terms of the law. No personal bitterness can be found in the context of his writings, nor even read between the lines. His devotion was to the cause, not to personal revenge or vindication. An individual who had so little regard for food, clothing, money, and family does not fit the mold of a bitter, vengeful soul.

Adams' belief in Locke's theory (men in power who fail to act in the public good), found support in the Land Bank controversy. Here Adams could have personally witnessed and experienced tyranny at work. It is not surprising that his choice for a thesis topic was "Whether it be

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7 Miller, Pioneer in Propaganda, p. 24.
lawful to resist the Supreme Magistrate if the Commonwealth cannot be otherwise preserved." Adams maintained the affirmative as the only answer. It is unrealistic to assume that Adams spent his entire life in revenge for the financial loss he suffered from the Land Bank. But his thesis surely previewed what would come in the future from this deep thinker.

Upon finishing at Harvard with a degree in political science, Samuel was apprenticed to a Boston merchant, Thomas Cushing. Of Adams, Cushing said, "... though active enough in mind and body, he would never do for a merchant; that his whole soul was engrossed by politics, to which all other subjects were necessarily subservient." Forced to give up clerking after a year, Samuel was taken under Deacon's wing and made a partner in the brewery. With this type of work, Samuel had much more free time to pursue his political interests. Besides debating with friends on current issues of the day, young Adams and associates started a newspaper, The Independent Advertiser, which first appeared in January of 1768. The paper primarily included political essays from the editor-publishers, of which Adams was the leading source of input. Twenty-eight years prior to the signing of the Declaration of Independence, Samuel Adams already asserted his belief that, "There is no one thing which mankind are more passionately fond of, which they fight with more zeal for, which they possess with more anxious jealousy


9 Ibid., p. 12.
and fear of losing than liberty . . . " This theme prevailed throughout most of his later writings. While copies of The Advertiser were not preserved, the paper was published for almost two years.

In 1763 Adams finally became an officeholder. As tax collector, his job requirements were inherently obvious; yet with no business sense, Adams did not, or could not, fulfill the role of collector. After two years, when the back taxes had piled up, Adams was removed from the position following much controversy. The custom of that time made tax collectors personally responsible for payment of funds, which made Adams technically liable to "pay-up." Since he had become so popular with those who had not been forced to pay, however, the city of Boston voted for passage of a bill which freed tax collectors from personal responsibility. Lieutenant Governor Thomas Hutchinson never believed Adams innocent and accused him of fraud and embezzlement. But "... there is no evidence that Adams was guilty of misuse of public money. He was clearly guilty of neglect and incompetence, but that is a very different matter from embezzlement."

Perhaps this affair also contributed to Adams' dislike for England and his personal dislike for Thomas Hutchinson. But since he was legally freed from financial responsibility, and was a type of hero figure among the lower classes, he could not have suffered much character loss, and maybe even came out on top of the affair.

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The passage of the Stamp Act in 1765 gave Adams his first opportunity to exercise his political prowess. His most frequent complaint promoted the theme of "taxation without representation." In almost every article written in this period by Adams, as in most articles written prior to 1776, this topic prevailed as the number one issue. "If Taxes are laid upon us in any shape without having legal Representation where they are laid, are we not reduced from the Character of free Subjects to the miserable State of tributary Slaves?"

Although the plea was "taxation without representation is unconstitutional," Adams worked in a unique factor which added the quality of the impossible to the situation. He insisted that Americans could not be represented in Parliament. He theorized that if representatives were sent to England, they would no longer be in touch with the needs of the colonies, thus creating worse problems than no representation. If the colonies were technically represented, Parliament would have been free to tax at will and Americans would have had no recourse. This underlying current of thought evolved: "taxation by Parliament is unconstitutional."

When written pleas failed to remove the tax, other methods became necessary. Many authorities on Samuel Adams linked him with mob groups such as the Sons of Liberty and the Loyal Nine. No actual proof can be offered to support claims such as, "... Boston was controlled by a 'trained mob' and ... Sam Adams was its keeper." But someone did

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13 Miller, Pioneer in Propaganda, p. 53.
lead them, and Sam Adams had all the qualifications. Many of the uprisings prior to the revolution, including the riots brought on by the Stamp Act, were first fought verbally, then violently. In Boston these violent outbreaks were generally attributed to the North Boston lower class. It was common knowledge that Samuel Adams frequented the gathering places of North Boston and was respected and trusted there. As a result, when adding his personal convictions, his connections with the North side, and his belief that the people ruled, Sam Adams obviously emerged as the leader of the Boston mobs, providing support for Adams' political belief that the people were supreme and it was their responsibility to overthrow tyranny.

Adams was not merely a political thinker of words, but a man of political ways and means. These ways and means oftentimes meant boycotts of English products, destruction of English property, and intimidation of men who represented the will or law of England. He practiced these methods rigorously during the enactment of the Stamp Act. Whether or not he was already determined at this time to work for independence is unknown. Some insist Adams made no moves but those directed toward total independence from as early as 1740. But no proofs were found to substantiate this claim. His attitudes seemed to have waivered with the times. One thing seemed certain, by manipulating people and events he made the best possible use of the Stamp Act. In a letter dated December, 1766, Adams remarked, "What a Blessing to us has the Stamp Act eventually proved, which was established to enslave & ruin us."

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This quote could be interpreted a variety of ways, many of which might be contradictory. The only characteristic clearly established about Adams was his ability to lead people.

Trying to ascertain when Adams first began to covet liberty can possibly be determined from a chronological analysis of his writings. In 1765, during the tribulation of the Stamp Act, Adams said, "It is neither their [the colonists'] Interest nor have they ever shown the least Disposition to be independent of Great Britain." Two years later, he continued to maintain this stand on independence: "... we cannot justly be suspected of the most distant thought of an independency on Great Britain." This line of thought continued in his writings until 1769, when he wrote, "One winter more trifled away... in fruitless Endeavors to enslave a people, who are more than ever resolved to be free..."

An argument here could be that these words by Adams did not necessarily represent his personal views. Most of the excerpts on such issues came from writings which were part of his job as clerk for the Massachusetts House of Representatives and possible reflections of their views. Biographer Jahn Galvin said, "Adams... demonstrated no... conservatism and mentioned loyalty... only when it was tactically...

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16 Ibid., p. 135.
17 Ibid., p. 146.
productive to do so—and then as an afterthought." If this is an accurate statement, it is curious that most of these "afterthoughts" appeared in the first two or three paragraphs of Adams' essays and not in the conclusions. He obviously was eager to stress loyalty before making attacks on legislative procedures, at least prior to 1768.

Adams' allegiance to England seems to have persisted about one year longer than his loyalty to King George. His assaults on the monarch developed first indirectly and later, very directly. Prior to 1767, he made no such attacks, proclaiming the King to be a great sovereign who deserved the loyalty of all the people. But in 1767 Adams wrote that,

The law and reason teaches, that, the King can do no wrong; and that neither King nor Parliament are otherwise inclined than to justice, equity and truth. But the law does not presume that the King may not be deceived, nor that Parliament may not be misinformed.

This indirect attack was mild compared with what followed. With time, Adams grew more forceful and implicative as to the ability of the people to deal with a King. In 1769, for example, he wrote that "We know that Kings, even English Kings, have lost their crown and their heads for assuming such a right [to tax without the consent of the people]."

It seems apparent from a close study of his writings that Adams

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19 Cushing, The Writings of Samuel Adams, vol. 1., p. 140.
20 Ibid., p. 288.
grew gradually into thoughts of independence and separation from England. As late as 1768 he still hoped for England to change its methods of treatment in order to resume friendly relations with the colonies. Clinton Rossiter, a twentieth century political theorist, said "There is no reason to believe that until the Coercive Acts of 1774 or even later that American writers were not sincere in their wish, which Samuel Adams expressed for them, to be 'restored to their original standing.'"

Possibly Sam Adams has been the victim of overzealous historians anxious to offer another revolutionary hero in the category with Patrick Henry and Paul Revere. In so doing, Adams has been similarly described for 200 years as a revolutionary extrodinaire. While indeed an extraordinary individual, it is difficult to prove the assertions which depict Sam Adams plotting the overthrow of English rule as early as 1750. Such claims included no totally supportive data though they attribute interesting qualities to the man. After a study of his available writings it seems apparent that they were indeed inferences.

A concept upon which these conclusions has been based was that Adams totally devoted himself to the cause and little else. As mentioned earlier, Adams held firm religious views. In 1768 he penned several articles on the threat of popery (Catholicism), suggesting that this loomed a far more dangerous threat to the civil rights of men than the Stamp Act. Some writers propose this to be another technique employed


by Adams to inflame the people against England, but this is also an inference. Assuming the claims about his religious convictions accurate, it seems somewhat unlikely that Adams would use his religion to win converts to the revolutionary movement. Rather, he would try to win them to Puritanism. If religious conversion was his intent, his devotion did not lay entirely in the political cause.

Immediately following this period troops arrived in Boston and Adams did become totally absorbed in his work for the cause. A theme which filled his writings during this period involved the violation of civil liberties brought on by the presence of a standing army in Boston. He also associated the army with freedom. "It is a very improbable supposition that any people can long remain free, with a strong military power in the very heart of the country." He even predicted that violence would erupt from the presence of the army.

Adams united the rights of the colonists to be free with the job of the soldiers, and arrived at the obvious conclusion: the army would ultimately destroy the city of Boston.

This [different laws governing soldiers] may in time make them [the soldiers] look upon themselves as a body of men different from the rest of the people, and as they only have the sword in their hands, they may sooner or later begin to look upon themselves as the lords and not the servants of the people...

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25 Ibid., pp. 252-253.
His political belief that standing armies in times of peace violated the law was extensively developed in his writings. This was also the view set forward by John Locke. Adams remained faithful to Locke's theories at least until 1770.

The ability to understand the feelings and needs of the people provided Sam Adams with his strongest political skill. He had the unique insight to take the occurrences of the time and relate to every American colonist that each one stood to lose his rights if he did not join forces with Adams and his compatriots. He best achieved this end through the manipulation of English-made laws, policies, and such subjects as taxation, representation, and natural rights. Adams' belief that the people must overthrow a tyrant dates back to his college days, as did many of his beliefs. While he may have waivered in his desire for independence, apparently he never waivered in his stand for the assertion of English rights in America. Samuel Adams was a protagonist of unexcelled stature for the cause of revolution.
The events leading to the Boston Massacre of March 5, 1770 can be analyzed in two ways. First, a broad overview of general events throughout all the colonies, and secondly, a closer look at events specifically occurring in Boston.

A general, overall look at Colonial America can give a better understanding of the later occurrences in Boston. The beginnings of dissent can be traced to the conclusion of the French and Indian War in 1763. Prior to this time, high commerce and ready money held the economy stable because of war. With the end of the war, however, a recession materialized in all the colonies. England, having a large war debt, decided to tax the colonies using the revenue to pay these debts. They began this process by enforcing already existing laws such as the Navigation Acts, which especially affected smuggling and illicit trade with forbidden countries. During the war, smuggling had been all but openly encouraged, so naturally this change of attitude offended those who had smuggled freely for the war cause but following the war were not allowed to do so for their own private gains.

To encourage enforcement of these acts, crews of the ships capturing vessels with illegal goods were to be given a share in the prize money. This promoted violation of laws by the crews of naval vessels anxious to obtain wealth, causing resentment and contempt in colonial traders, primarily in New England.
In 1764, the passage of the Sugar Act lit the flame of discontent which burned for over twelve years. This act placed duties on sugar, foreign molasses, foreign rum (except British rum which could enter tax free), certain wines, coffee, indigo, and silks. More importantly, however, the act almost totally freed custom officials from civil suits brought against them by defendants. Fines were to be divided between the informant, the governor, and the British treasury. Defendants, tried in admiralty courts functioning without juries, denied Americans their basic rights as Englishmen.

The cry of "taxation without representation" originated from this act along with the realization for the necessity of unity among the colonies. Yet even with vigorous opposition, the Sugar Act remained unrepealed. The irony of the situation lay in the lack of money raised from the act. Citizens were too poor (partly because of the recession) to pay the duties and consequently went without the commodity.

The act, however, remained unchanged until the Declaration of Independence, and provided the major although relatively insignificant, source of revenue for Britain from the colonies. Boston, incidently, was one of the six major ports which paid seventy percent of the duties from the Sugar Act.

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2 Ibid., p. 496.
The next major controversy came on the heels of the Sugar Act in 1764. The Currency Act. Basically this law made illegal all paper money and required debts and bills to be paid in hard money. The chief source of hard money had been the rum and molasses trade which the Sugar Act had just eliminated. Obviously, Parliament wanted to keep the inflation rate from getting out of hand, and to prohibit Americans from paying their English creditors in depreciated paper money. Farmers and residents of rural areas were not as affected since their form of "money" had been the barter system. Those in the city however, found it almost impossible to pay for the necessities of life which only increased their discontent.

In order for Americans to shoulder partial cost of their own protection and administration, another act became necessary. In 1765, the Stamp Act placed taxes on "... newspapers, pamphlets, legal paper, mortgages..." The controversy arose out of the-infringement of charter rights to levy internal taxes and of-course, "taxation without representation."

Written and spoken protests grew in urgency and violence. In Virginia the Henry Resolves led the way in the form of written protests. Speeches in opposition to the act rang out in all colonies. In Boston, mob action physically forced Oliver, a customs official, to resign in fear of his life. Similar outbreaks ensued throughout the colonies.

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3 Barch and Lefler, Colonial America, p. 499.

4 Ibid., p. 503.
providing the first tangible issue the colonies unitedly revolted against.

**The Stamp Act Congress**

This united effort, the Stamp Act Congress, with representatives from every colony, sent a Declaration of Rights and Grievances to the Parliament and the King detailing the reasons the act should be repealed, yet affirming their loyalty to England. This proved to be a somewhat futile venture; but the significance of the Congress lay in the fact that it became the first workable united colonial effort.

Throughout the colonies...

...levies on imports, although they were not especially burdensome, irritated the citizens of the colonies, and especially of Boston, to the point of open defiance. Incident after incident excited the citizenry and enraged the officers of the Crown. Even the manual laborers of Boston, who were not at all learned in Provincial Law, understood that the real issue was whether a distant Parliament had the right to rule their lives, or if the colonists had the same rights free Englishmen enjoyed at home.

Finally the one option a consumer always has, the boycott, became the manipulative factor. Refusal to use the stamps brought all business to an end. Courts could not operate, newspapers could not be printed, bills could not be collected, legislatures could not convene, ships could not be unloaded, and goods could not be exported. In England, exports to the colonies almost completely stopped, causing mass unemployment. After two months, the colonies began operating again without stamps. On March 1, 1766, the Stamp Act came to its end.

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Before the repeal of the Stamp Act, however, Parliament passed the Quartering Act. This measure established the right of England to station troops in America, at the cost of the colonists. The troops supposedly were to protect the colonists from attacks by Indians. For some reason the colonists failed to recognize this when the troops made camp within the city limits of New York. Instead, the citizens saw this measure as a method of forcing submission to the Sugar and Stamp Acts. The New York Legislature, still loyalists, complied with this move and the soldiers began to live among the citizens of New York, setting precedent for other colonies.

The same day of the Stamp Act repeal, Parliament signed the Declaratory Act pointing out the subordination of the colonies to England in all aspects of governmental control and asserting that Parliament had the right to declare null and void any statutes, bills, or laws stemming from the colonies. The implications of this measure remained unseen in the joy of the Stamp Act repeal and not until June, 1767, did the Declaratory Act's full meaning become visible.

On this date, the Duty or Revenue Act was passed for the purpose of raising money in the colonies to pay the salaries of judges, governors, and other officials. Prior to this, colonial legislatures had used salary fluctuation to control the actions of officials, a form of containment vital to the amicable functions of government. Without this control, judges could harshly arbitrate cases involving people whose views differed

Barck and Lefler, Colonial America, p. 507.
from England, governors could veto desired legislation or dismiss assembly meetings and with the Declaratory Act, colonists could do nothing legally.

In an attempt to have these acts revoked, Samuel Adams authored the Massachusetts Circular Letter in January, 1768, which pointed out their unfairness and the necessity for repeal. The letter was circulated to the other colonial assemblies for signatures before being sent to Parliament and the King.

Under direction from the King, Parliament ordered Massachusetts to rescind the letter. When they refused, the English government responded by re-establishing treason laws and by sending two regiments of troops to Boston to "... protect the men who collect customs duties for the owner of Boston, the King of England." and to remind "... the inhabitants that the Home Government considered them a rebellious, traitorous, and riotous lot, who required armed soldiers to teach them obedience to law...".

On June 10, 1768, Parliament realized that the move to send troops (not yet arrived) to Boston was a wise decision. The Liberty, a ship owned by John Hancock, landed and promptly unloaded its cargo of wine without payment of duties. Wine duty, taxable under the Sugar Act, had to be paid prior to unloading. Having just received word from England to more strictly enforce duty laws, the-customs-officials, discovering...


8 Smith, The Infamous Boston Massacre, p. 1.
this disregard for law, ordered the ship seized until payment was made.

Troops from the British warship Romney, stationed in Boston Harbor as a visual reminder of the King's power over the people, boarded and towed the Liberty from its dock.

The capture of the Liberty set off a chain reaction of one mob uprising after another eventually causing all but one of the customs officials to seek protection of the troops aboard the Romney. Ten days later the customs officials issued a request for troops to be sent to Boston.

Meanwhile, under orders from the town meeting, John Adams compiled a set of Instructions for the Massachusetts legislature, concluding with, "...every such Person, who shall solicit or promote the importation of Troops at this time, is an Enemy to this town and Province, and a disturber of the peace and good order of both."

Four months later, two regiments of British regulars arrived in Boston. "In addition to the two regiments there were a detachment of the 59th regiment and a train of artillery with two cannon, in all about 700 men."

From this point in time until the day of the Massacre, the events in Boston can best characterize the cause of the riot on March 5.

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10 Ibid., p. 80.

11 September, 1768.

to the arrival of the troops, most Bostonians did not consider themselves individually persecuted. The city's leaders reacted to Britain's tyranny as though it threatened colonial rights in general. Now, however, with the troops present, Boston had her own private war with tyranny. "To the people of Boston the coming of the troops was outrageous. They had been fighting for years against infringement by Britain of their right to tax themselves, so that they regarded the troops as insufferable coercion.

The first major conflict accompanied the arrival of the troops in the city-limits, for they had no place to stay. One of the regiments established temporary lodgings in the legislative house, while another pitched tents on the common.

According to the provincial charter, troops in time of peace could not be quartered on the town while barracks were available elsewhere. There were barracks standing empty at Castle William, an island in Boston Harbor, and the town fathers felt that this was where the troops should go. But the Customs Commissioners, who had asked for the troops in the first place, wanted them on the streets of Boston to prevent disorders.

With no lodgings available, and winter rapidly approaching, scores of British regulars began deserting. The exact number is unknown, but it has been estimated that seventy to one hundred men in the service of the King headed west. Finally, the end of October brought shelter for the soldiers in warehouses surrounding the Custom House, and for several officers, rented rooms at exorbitant rates from local citizens.

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14 Smith, The Infamous Boston Massacre, p. 12.
With this conflict under control, the soldiers had other problems with which to deal. Only a small minority of Bostonian women would date or attend social functions with redcoats. Businessmen refused the customary procedure of giving part-time work to soldiers. In general, the local people refused even to be in the same tavern or store with the soldiers. This total disregard for tolerance (or common decency) built a foundation for animosity between the citizens and the redcoated enforcers of the law.

Within three months of the arrival of the troops, Boston merchants made a formal protest to England.

The merchants of the town, formed into a Trade Association, voted a 'nonimportation agreement' to refrain from accepting or ordering from England any goods except necessities... Any merchants reluctant to subscribe to this agreement were visited by a committee that earnestly pleaded with them not to betray the cause. Eventually all but three of the merchants in town had subscribed...

Becoming effective January 1, 1769, this "association" remained active until the departure of the troops over a year later although it was not as effective as the boycott of 1765.

Local newspapers reported several incidents of abuse by the soldiers. Lieutenant Governor Thomas Hutchinson said that, "A story of a fictitious quarrel incensed the lower part of the people and brought on a real quarrel." James Bowdin, a patriot spokesman revealed that

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15 Smith, The Infamous Boston Massacre, p. 16.

"The soldiers frequently wounded the citizens of Boston with their 17 cutlasses and bayonets," and disclosed that some soldiers, "when they left their barracks and strolled about the town, frequently carried large clubs, for the purpose, no doubt, of assaulting the people, though with a pretense for their own safety." He conceded, however, that the minds-of-the-people were greatly irritated and that some individuals were abusive in their language-towards-the-military." Thomas Hutchinson offered another viewpoint of these incidents:

While the general and the officers under him were endeavoring to avoid, as far as possible, every occasion of disturbance between the inhabitants and the troops, great pains were taken by particular persons to render the troops as odious as possible, and to inflame the minds of the people against them.

Apparently neither side was faultless in the disturbances. Soldiers stationed on the streets represented threats, real-or-imagined, to any unescorted female. Other segments of society believed themselves threatened in other ways:

18 Ibid., p. 6.
19 Ibid., p. 5.
jobless manual workers, and even some who were working, the sailors who had no ship were often hungry, were wretchedly clothed, and found that hard cash was scarce, so much of the town's coin being taken up in taxes and duties, which had to be paid in specie... apprentices and the slaves, who fed at their master's tables, found that when bread and butter grew scarce, they were the ones who lacked them first of all. So the presence of a living enemy, an object on which a man could work off his anger and still not lose the good opinion of the better folk, provided a splendid target for all the discontented of the town. 21

The soldiers, however, were "only following their orders." Forced to reside in a country several thousand miles from their families, treated as though they had leprosy, and deprived of female companionship, the soldiers responded in a typically human way; arrogance and superiority.

The combination of these hostile feelings from both sides began to culminate with the new year, 1770. On February 22, a number of boys reportedly harassed Ebenezer Richardson, a known informant for the customs collectors. Richardson rallied against the boys who—throw snowballs, oyster shells, and other trash, prompting him to take refuge in his home. He returned with a revolver only to discover that he had neglected to load the weapon. The boys found this to be extremely humorous and evidence of the man's ignorance. They began throwing anything they could find at Richardson's home following his second retreat; but he reappeared with a loaded weapon, and fired from an upstairs window wounding one boy and killing another.

The "murder" of a child by a known informant served to embitter the citizenry. The Richardson affair was blamed on the Customs Commissioners who had hired him, and the troops who represented his

21 Smith, The Infamous Boston Massacre, p. 21.

22 The dead child was eleven year old Christopher Snider.
Protection. Thomas Hutchinson, in his history of Massachusetts, made no mention of the affair. He must have realized the ominous effect it had on the city. Richardson, as the town must have seen it, murdered a child for acting as he had seen the Bostonian adults act since the time he was a small child. An unforgivable act in the town's view, and unforgettable by the local press.

This tragedy took place just eleven days before the Massacre of March 5, and set the precedent for the next week and a half. On March 2, a disturbance broke out at Samuel Gray's Ropewalk when Gray insulted a redcoat looking for work. The soldier was knocked down by a worker and abused before escaping to find help, then returned with a group of eight or nine cronies who proceeded to take on the workers. Forced to retreat, the soldiers returned once more, now numbering forty, yet again were routed by the citizens. British officers prevented the soldiers from returning a third time and a local justice of the peace restrained the workers from pursuing their attackers.

The story of the clash at Gray's Ropewalk grew as it passed from mouth to mouth, until the citizens refused to allow their women and children on the streets. From March 2, until the evening of March 5, many smaller incidents similar to the one at Gray's took place all over the town. Tensions were building. In the early evening of March 5, a British soldier on guard duty at Murray's Barracks, Hugh White, hit a boy with his musket for publicly lying about an officer. The boy's cries

23 Smith, The Infamous Boston Massacre, p. 27.

brought citizens who, seeing the injured boy turned on White. In fear for his life, White called out the main guard. The citizens and guards snarled at each other as the crowd grew bigger and more boisterous. Captain John Goldfinch, hoping to avert bloodshed, ordered the troops to withdraw to their barracks.

Leaving White on guard again, the soldiers went inside. The crowd, however, did not disperse and renewed their heckling of White, and started this time by throwing snowballs and trash and verbally assaulting him.

The people were taunting the sentry, and not merely calling names; they were picking up pieces of ice and tossing them at him. The crowd was getting larger. About twenty or so, many of whom appeared to be sailors, approached from Cornhill. They were led by a tall mulatto, who was carrying a large cord of wood stick. They were shouting and whistling and seven or eight were carrying sticks over their heads.26

White again called for the main guard which produced seven guards led by Captain Thomas Preston. About this same time, a large group approached from Dock Square led by a man on horseback wearing a white wig and red cloak, and obviously giving orders which incited the group.

"The taunts were sarcastic. 'Cowards, you need guns to face unarmed men? Put your guns down and we're your men!' " About this time someone began ringing the fire alarm (church bells) bringing many Bostonians with buckets and sacks. Within a short time the crowd had grown from a few boys to an enormous size. Those who had answered the


26 Ibid., p. 37.
fire alarm either stood as bystanders or took part in the heckling while the fire alarms continued to sound across Boston.

Theodore Bliss . . . worked his way to the scant neutral ground between the mob and the bayonets. 'Are your men loaded?' he asked Preston. 'Yes,' the officer answered. 'Are they loaded with ball?' Preston did not reply. 'Are they going to fire?' 'They cannot fire without my orders . . .'

Another citizen approached Preston:

"I hope you don't intend the soldiers shall fire on the inhabitants?' 'By no means, by no means. My giving the word to fire, under these circumstances, would prove me no officer.'"

The mob believed the soldiers would never fire; and—convinced of it, "screamed for blood. 'You dare not come out. Your scoundrels! You bloody backs! You lobsters!'" A couple of brief brawls between a soldier and a citizen infuriated the crowd. A shot sounded; from where, no one could say. It is possible that someone yelled "fire," but no one would blame Preston. ("... the witnesses who described the firing unanimously recollected that the muskets banged almost at will."

When it was over, five men had been killed or mortally wounded, two maimed for life, and the entire town of Boston stunned and outraged.

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28 Smith, The Infamous Boston Massacre, p. 50.

"The erratic firing by the soldiers resulted from the break in human endurance that comes when men not responsible for their situation are goaded into desperate response to their tormentors." 30

The Boston Massacre of March 5, 1770, ended the occupation of Boston by troops and the lives of five men, one of whom was black; but it did not end the tyranny and taxation which had originally caused the scene. The Massacre ended the symptom, but the American Revolution ended the cause.

CHAPTER V

PART I

THE CASE OF SAMUEL ADAMS: GUILTY OR INNOCENT?

A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

In answering the initial question in this study; did Samuel Adams plan and/or cause the Boston Massacre--an analysis of his actions, verbal messages, and the descriptions about him can best help resolve this inquiry through a logical approach to determine those things which Adams must have done to be considered guilty of this accusation.

The evidence from the five questions listed in the introduction were weighed and analyzed individually, based on information from September 1768, immediately prior to the arrival of British troops, to March 5, 1770, the day of the Massacre. All evidence was investigated from two viewpoints, positive and negative.

Did Samuel Adams, through written or spoken messages, encourage the citizens of Boston to defend themselves with weapons? Historian Hiller Zobel, in reference to Adams' role in the Massacre, maintains that,

... it is not reasonable to assume that Adams, however dedicated he was to the principle of removing the troops, would attempt to do so by a general engagement. Such a clash, besides producing an enormous bloodletting, would also constitute high treason and outright rebellion, neither of which Boston or the rest of America was yet prepared to accept. 1

If this assumption is accurate, then it follows that Adams would have

discouraged the use of arms by the citizens because he preferred other means of persuasion. The other means would of course, have been the law.

Adams wrote in a newspaper article December, 1768, "The law, which when rightly used, is the curb and terror of the haughtiest tyrant ..." and when this approach is employed, "... the orderly and peaceable inhabitants will be restored to the rights, privileges and immunities of free subjects--" Clearly Adams encouraged the use of legal means as a form of protest. Supporting this theory, William Tudor described Adams' methods as "... all legitimate ..."

There is one factor which must be realized in this analysis of Adams. Zobel pointed out "... it is not reasonable to assume ..." that Adams was eager for violence, while Adams himself and Tudor depict the legality of approaches by the patriot. There remains a qualifier which cannot justifiably be omitted. Tudor, in his description of Adams, went on to say that while his measures were "legitimate," any extremity could cause an "... irregularity, a vigor beyond the law ..." In this particular case, Tudor referred to Adams' involvement in the Boston Tea Party. Can it be said therefore, that a "vigor beyond the law" such

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4 Ibid.
as tossing "... three hundred and forty-two chests of the finest tea
..." into the Boston Harbor is similar to staging the massacre of
five men? Perhaps not, but the clearest insight can be obtained by
examining what Adams had to say concerning the adornment of arms.

Immediately prior to the arrival of the troops, Adams was elected
to a committee whose responsibility included defining a position for the
citizens to maintain when the troops cast anchor. "The position was
taken, that the people had a right to oppose with arms a military
force sent to compel them to submit to unconstitutional acts ..." Either Adams concurred with this decision, or his opposing opinion
carried little significance in Boston, an unlikely notion.

Biographer Richard Frothingham cites a quotation allegedly from
Adams around the close of 1768 which makes reference to the troops.
"Before the king and parliament shall dragoon us, and we become slaves,
we shall take up arms, and spend our last drop of blood." Curiously,
Frothingham does not document this quotation, yet he does so for a
previous utterance by Josiah Quincy and a following quotation by Andrew
Elliott, all three on the same page.

Whether Sam Adams spoke those words or not is relatively insig-
nificant. The following passage, written early in 1769, substantiates

5. John C. Miller, Pioneer in Propaganda, (Boston: Little, Brown

6. Richard Frothingham, The Life and Times of Joseph Warren,

7. Ibid., p. 74-75.
a similar mood of Adams on "measures for redress":

To vindicate these rights, says Mr. Blackstone, when actually violated or attack'd, the subjects of England are entitled first to the regular administration and free course of justice in the courts of law—next to the right of petitioning the King and Parliament for redress of grievances—and lastly, to the right of having and using arms for self-preservation and defense.8

Obviously Adams was expressing that the right to bear arms was highly necessary, but only to be employed when all other means of protest had failed to accomplish the desired end. The answer to the first question—did Adams encourage the citizens of Boston to defend themselves with weapons seemed affirmative.

The second area for consideration concerns Adams' characterization of the troops. Did he present the soldiers as a true threat to the lives and liberty of the citizens of Boston?

Adams followed his usual form of combating the illegality of an act before resorting to other means. "The Gazette carried a long series of his articles, all of which laid emphasis upon the 'unconstitutional' character of the order which placed the troops in Boston." One example of this appeared in December, 1768, when he wrote: "The raising and keeping a standing army within the Kingdom, in a time of peace unless it be with the consent of Parliament, is against the Law." Adams, while


stressing the illegality of this act, also suggested that the liberties of the people were at stake. He warned that all would be made slaves if the soldiers were allowed to continue their patrolling. Early in 1769 he continued this attack in the Gazette:

It seems to be a prevailing opinion with some folks, that there cannot be a collection of persons in this town, even upon the most necessary occasions, but there must needs be danger of a mob; and then forsooth the military must make their appearance of their own mere motion, ready cock'd & prim'd, to prevent it.12

Before he gave up on legal means of rectification, he began establishing an image of the soldiers which could have and probably did create fear in the residents of Boston. One such image appeared on December 12, 1768, a little more than two months after the arrival of the troops.

... how easy would it be for the soldiers, if they alone should have the sword in their hands, to use it wantonly, and even to a great annoyance and terror of the citizens, if not to their destruction.13

This theme prevailed in most of Adams' writings from this period. Whether his intent was to enrage the city or frighten the local government into removal of the troops is not known. Possibly his intent was to achieve both ends. The motif that the troops might harm the citizens appeared in newspaper articles penned by Adams, and in official documents from the House of Representatives also authored by Samuel Adams. His


12 Ibid., p. 309.

13 Ibid., p. 266.
characterization of the troops seems to have been apparent: They were
dangerous to both the liberties and the lives of Bostonians.

The third question concerning the guilt of Adams cannot be easily
answered. By March 1770, had all legal means of redress concerning the
troops been exercised and had they all failed? First, the "legal means"
need to be listed, described, and then analyzed for success or failure.
Four obvious legal steps were taken to first prevent the encampment of
the troops in Boston, and then to have them removed: first, a denial
of local quarters for the soldiers; second, grievances to the King;
third, petitions to the Governor; and fourth, a non-importation agreement.

The first legal means of protest devised by the whig leaders
centered around proper quartering for the troops. Local citizens refused
to provide any housing whatsoever because the popular belief claimed the
act quartering soldiers in private residences to be unconstitutional.
According to Sam Adams, October, 1768, troops could not be quartered in
town when barracks remained available elsewhere.

Such Barracks are provided by this government at a very
considerable expense, & are now empty; therefore the inhabi-
tants of this town are in justice as well as by law secure
from the inconvenience of having troops quarter'd among them
in any case whatever, at least till those Barracks are full—15

This tactic failed and the troops were eventually housed within the city
limits.

14
More detailed discussion on this can be found in chapter four.

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The second form of redress revealed itself in pleas to the King and Parliament for removal of the troops. Through these appeals which cited the British constitution, the King became thoroughly informed of Bostonian grievances. Yet because royal representatives had requested the protection of the troops in the first place, the King ignored the complaints from the Massachusetts Legislature. This approach also failed.

A third attempt at legally removing the troops manifested itself in attacks on the power of the governor. After repeatedly insisting that Governor Bernard had the ability to remove the troops (a privilege Bernard denied), Adams, in his role as clerk, composed a message to the Governor in June 1769. Adams defined the position of the Whigs by explaining the unconstitutional nature of the presence of the troops and the possible repercussions of their actions. "An absolute power," declared Adams, "which had the sword constantly in its hand, may exercise a vigorous severity whenever it pleases."

When this strategy failed, Adams produced inflammatory information against Governor Bernard, hoping to turn the entire Boston population against the top royal official. Using the Gazette, Adams quoted from letters supposedly written by Bernard to picture the Governor as plotting against the welfare of Massachusetts. Thomas Hutchinson, believing the letters to have been fake, described this event in his History of Massachusetts:

They [the writers and publishers of the Gazette] charge him [Bernard] with want candour, with indecent illiberal, and most abusive treatment of them [the letters] . . .

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with a design to represent things in the worst light, with unmanly dissimulation, and with untruth. 17

While this scheme was hardly ethical, it cannot be proven illegal and simply provided Adams another form of ammunition in his "cause."

The last type of legal redress, and perhaps the most potent, was revealed in the form of a non-importation agreement. This highly legal and extremely effective method of complaint had undertones which reeked of illegality. Many merchants literally complied with this agreement out of fear for their lives and property. In January, 1770, Adams appealed to the citizens to "encourage" compliance to this understanding:

If this agreement of the merchants is of that consequence to all Americans which our brethren in all the other governments, and in Great Britain itself think it to be—If the fate of Unborn Millions is suspended upon it, verily it behooves, not the merchants Only, but every individual of Every class in City and Country to aid and support them and Peremptorily to Insist upon its being Strictly adhered to. 18

Effective immediately before the arrival of the troops, this technique also proved to be of no consequence. The non-importation agreement which had so effectively caused the repeal of the Stamp Act in 1765, failed to elicit the necessary supportive dissent in England. There now remained no legal avenues open to the patriots.

Whether Adams pointed this out to the public or not, it remained obvious that the troops would stay. Through all these schemes, the fever of the city had been rising. It is unclear if this was Adams'...
intention or if he, just as everyone else, felt surprise at the failure of the non-importation agreement to bring about the expected end. Perhaps he had cushioned himself in case of such a failure. John Adams mused in reference to this period:

Endeavours had been systematically pursued for many Months, by certain busy Characters, to excite Quarrells, Rencounters and Combats single or compound in the night between the Inhabitants of the lower Class and the Soldiers, and at all risques to inkindle an immortal hatred between them.19

Was Samuel Adams one of the "busy characters"? Perhaps this question can never be answered; however, the fourth question of this study is closely tied into his role as a "busy character." By an examination of the larger question, the smaller might be answered.

Did Samuel Adams control those groups present at the scene of the Massacre? It is necessary first to review who participated in the events of March 5. There were predominately the ropewalk workers from Samuel Gray's business, young boys, children from the lower classes, and sailors, all of whom partook in the riotous behavior. All other individuals were mainly bystanders.

According to Paul Lewis, the rope-makers were "... ardent Sons of Liberty and Sam Adams's followers." Miller described the ropewalk workers as "aggressive" and "riotous," and Samuel Gray as "... one of


of the hardest brawlers . . . in Boston." If Gray and his associates were indeed Sons of Liberty, and assuming they took orders from Adams, then obviously this portion of the rioters can be classified under his jurisdiction. Assuming the rope-makers obeyed Adams, is it likely that he "ordered" them to subject their lives to British bullets?

The second distinctive group present that evening was several boys, ranging in age from seven to seventeen. Presumably there were no young Hancocks or Adams' present. These young men were the sons of the wharf workers, the lower class, the same families whose fathers, most likely, Sam Adams had associated with as a child and continued to mingle with as an adult. Accepting again that Adams, through association, influenced this group, is it logical that he directed children to intimidate the soldiers to the point of bloodshed.

The last, most vocal group, the sailors, followed a large "mulatto," Crispus Attucks, "... a veteran of a score of riots . . ." about whom, "... it was common knowledge . . . that it was chiefly his violent assaults upon the troops that had caused bloodshed." Attucks and his naval associates are generally described as the most obnoxious individuals of the mob. This particular group had been led in by a "... mysterious figure in a red coat and white wig." Conspicuous

1 Miller, Pioneer in Propaganda, pp. 176 and 178.

22 For further reference to this, see chapter three.


astride a horse, this specter-like figure offered a harangue to Attucks and his group before they descended upon the soldiers. John Cary suggested that this points to a planned effort on the part of the mob. Herbert Allan implied that the man on horseback was William Molineux, assistant to Samuel Adams. If these implications are accepted, Attucks can be linked directly to Sam Adams with Molineux as the go-between instigator.

Conversely, William Wells interpreted the role of the red-cloaked man quite differently.

Whoever he was, the influence of this mysterious personage was exerted to disperse the people and restore the peace, and not to excite the populace as has been represented... his remarks... were followed by a space of silence.25

Surely a harangue does not provoke "spaces of silence". It is interesting that during the Richardson affair, Molineux stepped in to prevent the lynching of Richardson. If Wells' interpretation is accurate, and if Molineux was the "mysterious personage," then it seems unlikely that he encouraged the intimidation of the soldiers to the point of bloodshed. It appears more reasonable to assume that Attucks simply took matter into his own hands.

A definite answer to question four, therefore, was not reached.


26 More detailed discussion on this can be found in chapter four.

A middle ground interpretation points to a qualified response: Sam Adams certainly influenced many of those present on King Street, March 5, 1770, but to what extent the influence was felt is unclear.

If Adams did indeed plan the Massacre, he must have been relatively certain that troops would fire on the mob. Various quotations already cited point to Adams' concern over possible abuse from the soldiers; but only rarely did he actually say or imply that the troops would murder the inhabitants. The citizens at the scene assumed the soldiers would never fire, and if this represented a common belief, it cannot be known what Adams felt. Hutchinson recognized the potential threat of the soldiers firing when he described them as "... such bad fellows in that regiment, that it seems impossible to restrain them from firing upon insult or provocation given them."

John Miller suggests that if Adams had doubts that the soldiers would fire, he guaranteed this by posting broadsides and notices a few days before the day of the Massacre which read,

This is to Inform ye Rebellious People in Boston that ye Soliers in ye 14th and 29th Regiments are determined to joine together and defend themselves against all who shall Oppose them.

Sign'd ye Soljers of ye 14th and 29th Regiments

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28 Discussed in chapter four.


Miller could not prove his accusation, but he does point out that the notices were not used by the prosecution at the trial of the soldiers.

John Adams spoke in reference to the Massacre and offered some credibility to Miller's theory. "I suspected that this [the Massacre] was the Explosion which had been wrought up by designing Men, who knew what they were aiming at . . . ."

Once again, an answer to this question would require a decision based on uncertainties. Knowing those involved, surely Adams would not have sent them into "battle" virtually unarmed; however, he has been characterized as "... deliberate, methodical, and unyielding." While "the purity of his motives was unquestioned . . . the unscrupulousness of his motives was notorious . . . he could justify dishonorable means by the glorious end--liberty."

By weighing both the positive and negative viewpoints on the various questions posed in this study, apparently Adams felt relatively certain that the troops would fire, and he even took steps to secure this possibility. Realizing also that all legal means of redress had failed, and knowing that he had the support of the general population who were armed and angry at the threat the soldiers presented, it appears

31 John Adams, *Biography in His Own Words*, p. 117.


that "... by fanning Bostonians' hatred of the British troops, Adams set the stage for the Boston Massacre."
Perhaps a clearer view of Samuel Adams' role in the Boston Massacre can be achieved by examination of this event in another perspective. Adams' role as a change agent should outline through a communicative analysis of intra-groups and inter-groups the progression of events and help to clarify the impact of his influence.

In defining the concept of change agent, the notion of change must be clear. Gordon Lippitt defines change as:

\[\ldots\] some perceptible difference in a situation, a circumstance, a person, a group, or an organization between some original time and some later time. The experiences during that time period need to be planned so that either the speed of change is increased or the nature of change can be more effectively coped with by those involved.\(^3\)

Lippitt continued his explanation of the process of change with more specific application. In the case of Adams, Lippitt's definition of homeostatic change directly applies:

Homeostatic change is a conscious effort that results in an immediately noticeable and measurable effect. This kind of change occurs as a response to some specific 'triggering' and is referred to as reactive, implying that it is essentially automatic and instinctive. Homeostasis is the tendency shown by an organism or social system to seek a new balance whenever an existing state of balance has been disturbed. Homeostatic change is a reaction to any external stimuli that affects the existing balance or equilibrium.\(^36\)

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\(^36\) Ibid., p. 38.
Lippitt goes on to say that homeostatic change involves, "... inner-directed and outer-directed aspects of the planning and implementation... there is a definite achievement goal." With the concept of change clarified as it applies to Samuel Adams and his role in the Boston Massacre, an understanding of the conception of "change agent" is necessary. Lippitt said, "A person planning change... needs to recruit, select and develop those who work with him; to plan programs; to set up a process of coordination and communication... to make possible change effort that is meaningful and lasting." A change agent might find it necessary to manipulate those he is working with. "Manipulation, here, means the act of arranging conditions so that change in a certain direction may or will take place." The third aspect of the change agent role which is especially applicable in Adams' situation is that of confrontation. An effective change agent, "... confronts people and situations... he does not just react to a situation. He acts."

Lastly, "... most change agents approach each problem with predetermined diagnostic orientation." That is to say, they have

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38 Ibid., p. 60.
39 Ibid., p. 66.
40 Ibid., p. 67.
41 Ibid., p. 52.
analyzed the situation and the best method of "attack." In order to arrive at this analysis, a change agent must "... be able to assess realistically his own motivations for giving help." Adams had two goals in mind; first, the removal of the troops, and second, ultimate independence from England.

These four change agent characteristics—responsibility, manipulation, confrontation, and motivation—as applied to Adams, should make lucid his role in the intra-group process.

As shown in Figure 1., Adams had three major intra-group roles: first, he was in the radical group, second, he served in the Massachusetts Legislature, and third, he associated with the patriot leaders.

First, Adams' involvement in the Sons of Liberty and the Loyal Nine suggest that he perceived his role as a change agent to direct their action "... toward a particular state of affairs that will lead to a major goal on the part of an individual, group, or organization."

The evidence supporting this can be easily seen in the various actions taken by these groups. Adams, as their leader and as a change agent, encouraged these actions in order to reach a goal—the removal of the troops.

Within the group of legislators, Adams as the change agent in

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Lippitt, Visualizing Change, p. 62.

Ibid., pp. 62-63.

Discussed primarily in chapters four and five.
ORGANIZATIONAL MODEL OF THE INTRA-GROUP RELATIONSHIPS
OF SAMUEL ADAMS DURING THE BOSTON MASSACRE

Figure 1
this system maintained a stable position, the clerk, which according to Lippitt, "... becomes a powerful determinant of behavior within the organization." Through this powerful position, Adams was able to control or eliminate negative input thus making his change more acceptable within this group.

Adams' third intra-group involvement was with the leaders of the patriot movement. Adams' association with these individuals first involved "winning" them over to his own point of view. "Circulation of ideas to the elite builds on the simple idea of influencing change by getting to the people with the power on influence." Once obtaining this support "... a strategic role is necessary for ideas to be implemented ..." Adam's use of these "people with power" asserted itself in their representations of belief in the cause. By association, or through speeches and articles, these influential persons offered the needed support for the change agent and his ultimate goals.

Through Adam's part in intra-groups, he affected the associations between groups, or inter-groups relationships. Reflecting on the five questions asked at the beginning of this chapter, a look at the workings of the inter-group process might help clarify the progression of events.

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45 Lippitt, Visualizing Change, pp. 46-47.

46 These relationships are discussed in chapter two.

47 Lippitt, Visualizing Change, p. 55.

48 Ibid., p. 51.
SYMBOLS FOR MODELS

**RECTANGLE**

- Represents an entity; represents relative value

**CIRCLE**

- Represents commonality; i.e., shared functions, attitudes, skills, values, environment

**TRIANGLE**

- Represents focus of focal point; i.e., convergence of change factors

___ or _____________

**SOLID LINE:** Represents direct connection; i.e., authority, influence, fusion

VVVVVVVVVVVV

**Non-concurency:** i.e., direct or passive resistance, disagreement, rebellion

+++++++++++  

**Concurrence:** i.e., direct or passive agreement, assistance, support

First, as can been seen in Figure 2., there were six predominant groups involved: the soldiers, the English government, the citizens of Boston, the radical groups, the patriot leaders, and the Massachusetts Legislature. (The radical groups and the citizens groups overlap.)

The first question asked in this study pertained to Adams' involvement in arming the citizens. This issue can be analyzed in two inter-group relationships. Through various articles in newspapers written by patriot leaders, including Adams, citizens were advised to arm themselves against the soldiers. The radical groups influenced the citizens by setting the example of carrying weapons and by making apparent the necessity of doing so. Figure 3 depicts the flow of influence between groups on this question.

![Diagram](image-url)
The second question, the threat of the troops, included five of the six groups. Adams, as a leader, presented the soldiers through the media as a true threat to the citizens. He also characterized them in this manner to the government and to the soldiers themselves. The radical groups supported this move through its influence (word of mouth) with the citizens. Figure 4 pictures this analysis.
The third question, the failure of legal means leading to violence, involves two groups: the legislature and the English Government. The Massachusetts Assembly made four attempts at legal redress before employing or encouraging violence. This was an entirely one directional process as can be seen in Figure 5.

The fourth question concerned the control of the factions present at the Massacre. Three groups directly interacted in this analysis: the radicals, the leaders, and the citizens. The radical group, a segment of the society rather than a separate entity (there was an interdependent relationship between the two), was highly influenced by the leaders, who, led by Adams, advocated violence. This is depicted in Figure 6.
The last area of inquiry considered the likelihood of the troops firing upon the citizens. Five groups participated in this analysis, but the analysis follows a cause and effect relationship. First, the leaders through the media, had made the troops out as highly dangerous. The radical groups implemented this image by provoking violent situations. The citizens played along by refusing to accommodate the soldiers in any manner whatsoever. The soldiers, angry at this abusive treatment, evoked behavior similar to the radical groups. And lastly, the government officials even recognized the possibility of the troops firing upon the citizenry. Figure 7 pictures this analysis.
Violence

SOLDIERS

CITIZENS

RADICAL GROUPS

NEGATIVE BEHAVIOR; REFUSED TO ASSOCIATE

PHYSICAL ABUSE

LEADERS

ENGLISH GOVERNMENT

CREATED BRAWLS

RECOGNIZED THE POTENTIAL OF DANGER

USED THE MEDIA TO MAKE THE TROOPS OUT AS A THREAT

Figure 7.
Samuel Adams' influence on each of the five questions has been depicted throughout these models. Clearly each diagram seemed to lead directly or indirectly to violence with the change agent, Samuel Adams, present in all situations influencing the Massacre.

The case of Samuel Adams, accused of conspiracy to cause the Boston Massacre, has been presented. He was a leader of men, deeply religious, oblivious to wealth, dedicated to a cause—freedom. These were the characteristics of Samuel Adams offered throughout this research.

The author of this study reluctantly found Adams guilty of conspiracy, a verdict based on two perspectives, historical and communicative. Yet the initial question has remained unanswered in part. While it appears that Adams did indeed influence the events leading to the Massacre, causing them to be more pronounced, it remains uncertain that he pointedly ordered bloodshed.

In order to establish or prove premeditation it would be necessary to establish both causal relation and prior planning. Did Samuel Adams plan the Massacre directly, or did his actions indirectly cause the event? As stated above, the evidence offered support to causation but not to premeditation.

With these thoughts in mind, consider the findings from chapter three which did not offer support for the concept of a violent man. Consider next, the conclusions of the last chapter. The individuals present at the scene of the Massacre were considered guilty of instigating the riot. Lastly, the fourth chapter provided evidence which seemed to make apparent that what occurred was uncontrolled and uncontrollable mob action.
If Samuel Adams is to be found guilty of anything, it should be his failure to foresee bloodshed. He must be found innocent, however, of a premeditated plan to cause murder. His unyielding dedication to American independence warrants the characterization of Adams as the "father of the Revolution."


