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| Two privates in the British 29th Regiment of Worcestershire named Hugh, Hugh White and Hugh Montgomery, played central roles in the tragic events on the night of March 5, 1770.  This has been a cause for confusion: in one account of the Boston Massacre, Harry Hansen's *The Boston Massacre: An Episode of Dissent and Violence*, the two Hughs become one.  **Hugh White**  On March 5, 1770, Hugh White served as sentry on King Street.  Some time after eight o'clock, White entered into an exchange with a wig-maker's apprentice, Edward Garrick, who was demanding payment from a British officer.  The exchange escalated into violence, as White struck Garrick with his musket, knocking him to the ground.  Regardless of which version of the story is more accurate, it is undisputed that within minutes an unruly crowd of young men surrounded Montgomery and began hurling insults such as "Bloody lobster back!" at him.  When the crowd swelled and he began being pelted with pieces of ice, Montgomery hurried to the Custom House, banged on the door and shouted, "Turn out, Main Guard!"  The eight-man guard finally emerged and marched to his rescue through a swelling crowd.  **Hugh Montgomery**  Private Hugh Montgomery was one of the eight soldiers in the main guard commanded by Captain Preston to march to the Custom House in an attempt to save Hugh White.  After making their way to White, Montgomery and the other soldiers found themselves being surrounded by the mob.  They formed a sort of semi-circle.  Soon, after a confusion of snowballs, ice chunks, and coal rained down on the British soldiers, someone shouted "fire" and five Americans were fatally wounded.  Trial testimony never definitively answered the question of who shouted "fire" and who fired the fatal shots.  In 1949, however, with the long-delayed publication of notes of Thomas Hutchinson, it was revealed that Montgomery admitted to his lawyers that it was he who started the Boston Massacre.  Hit in the chest and knocked to the ground by a club wielded by one of the rioters, Montgomery responded, he said,  by shouting "Damn you, fire!"  Montgomery fired first, then the other soldiers followed.  Of the British soldiers tried in October 1770, the jury convicted only Montgomery and one other soldier, Matthew Killroy.  Both were found guilty of manslaughter.   Montgomery and Killroy pleaded "the privilege of clergy," a procedure that reduced their punishment from imprisonment to a branding on the right thumb. |

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| **John Adams**  http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/bostonmassacre/adams120.jpg |
| John Adams, in his old age, called his defense of British soldiers in 1770 "one of the most gallant, generous, manly, and disinterested actions of my whole life, and one of the best pieces of service I ever rendered my country."  That's quite a statement, coming as it does from perhaps the most underappreciated great man in American history.  The day after British soldiers mortally wounded five Americans on a cobbled square in Boston, thirty-four-year-old Adams was visited in his office near the stairs of the Town Office by a Boston merchant, James Forest.  "With tears streaming from his eyes" (according to the recollection of Adams), Forest asked Adams to defend the soldiers and their captain, Thomas Preston.  Adams understood that taking the case would not only subject him to criticism, but might jeopardize his legal practice or even risk the safety of himself and his family.  But Adams believed deeply that every person deserved a defense, and he took on the case without hesitation.  For his efforts, he would receive the modest sum of eighteen guineas.  The Preston case came to trial in the Queen Street courthouse in October.  Adams, and his young assistant, Josiah Quincy, defended Preston against a prosecution team comprised of Josiah's brother Samuel and Robert Paine.  Adams succeeded in casting grave doubt as to whether Preston ever gave orders to shoot, and the Boston jury acquitted the captain.  More detailed records exist for the Soldiers' trial, which commenced on December 3.  Adams presented evidence that blame for the tragedy lay both with the "mob" that gathered that March night and with England's highly unpopular policy of quartering troops in a city.  Adams told the jury: "Soldiers quartered in a populous town will always occasion two mobs where they prevent one."  He argued that the soldier who fired first acted only as one might expect anyone to act in such confused and potentially life-threatening conditions. "Do you expect that he should act like a stoic philosopher, lost in apathy?", Adams asked the jury. "Facts are stubborn things," he concluded, "and whatever may be our inclinations, or the dictums of our passions, they cannot alter the state of facts and evidence."  The jury acquitted six of the eight soldiers, while two (Montgomery and Killroy) were convicted of manslaughter and branded on their thumbs.  Initial reaction to Adams role in the case was hostile.  His law practice dropped by over half. |