

# *Liberty* DON TROIANI'S PAINTINGS OF THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR

## *Audio Tour* )))

### *Up close: The Boston Massacre*

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*T*he Boston Massacre was a defining moment in the years leading up to the Revolutionary War. In this scene, the viewer is among the crowd of Bostonians that has surrounded a small guard detail of soldiers from the British 29th Regiment of Foot. The soldiers' backs are to us, and the crowd has forced them back into a tight semicircle.

Don Troiani has captured many of the details noted by eyewitnesses. The night is cold, and thick snow is settled on the buildings in the background and under the feet of the crowd. A man in a dark, gold-trimmed suit has circled behind the soldiers, encouraging them to fire. To the left, Town House Watchman Benjamin Burdick confronts the soldiers waving a long Scottish broadsword. To the right, a Boston man leaps forward, attempting to strike British Captain Thomas Preston with a club. Without warning, several shots have rung out, and light from the soldiers' muskets illuminates the center of the scene. Five Bostonians were killed in the Boston Massacre, an event that galvanized people across the colonies into protests and political action.

On the wall to the left of Troiani's painting is Paul Revere's famous engraving of the Boston Massacre. Revere's engraving was a propaganda tool used to encourage American resentment towards the British soldiers stationed in the colonies. What messages does Troiani's painting convey about the Massacre? How do those messages compare with the bold statement that Revere's engraving made when it was published in 1770?