Document B: Samuel Drowne (Modified)

On March 12, 1770, Boston residents held a town meeting, which was how local government decisions were made. At the meeting, the colonists appointed a committee to produce an account of what happened March 5th to send to officials in London because they wanted to influence the way the events of March 5th were portrayed. Drowne was one of 96 residents of Boston to give sworn testimony to justices of the peace about what happened between the British soldiers and residents of Boston. These accounts were taken by ship to London on April 1, 1770.

Samuel Drowne of Boston, of lawful age, testified that about nine o’clock of the evening of the fifth day of March he saw about 14 or 15 soldiers of the 29th regiment, some were armed with swords or bayonets, others with clubs or fire-shovels. They came upon the people of the town and abused some and violently assaulted others. Most of the townspeople did not even have a stick in their hands to defend themselves.

Most of the soldiers went to King Street. Drowne followed them, and saw them fighting with people there. Drowne thought that there were no more than a dozen people there. When the soldiers arrived, most of the people left. Some of them were first assaulted by the soldiers. Then the soldiers went towards the main guard house. At the same time, five soldiers and a corporal armed with guns came out of the guard house. By this time, there were two hundred people on King Street.

Drowne saw Captain Preston, whom he knew well, with a number of soldiers armed with guns near the Custom House. Drowne believed that most of the crowd left after seeing the armed soldiers. No more than twenty or thirty remained on King Street. Those who remained were mostly sailors and other persons who were poorly dressed.

Several of them dared the soldiers to fire. Drowne then heard Capt. Preston say to the soldiers, “Damn your bloods! Why don’t you fire?” The soldiers did not listen and Preston immediately said “Fire.” The soldiers fired randomly.

Source: Summary of the sworn testimony of Samuel Drowne, March 16, 1770.