

● *March 5, 1770: Crispus Attucks, a fugitive from slavery who works as dockworker, becomes the first American to die for the cause of independence after being shot in a clash with British troops.*



African & Natick blood-born
known along paths up & down
Boston Harbor, escaped slave,

harpooner & rope maker,
he never dreamt a pursuit of happiness
or destiny, yet rallied

beside patriots who hurled a fury
of snowballs, craggy dirt-frozen
chunks of ice, & oyster shells

at the stout flank of redcoats,
as the 29th Regiment of Foot
aimed muskets, waiting for *fire!*

How often had he walked, gazing
down at gray timbers of the wharf,
as if to find a lost copper coin?

Wind deviled cold air as he stood
leaning on his hardwood stick,
& then two lead bullets

tore his chest, blood reddening snow
on King Street, March 5, 1770,
first to fall on captain's command.

Five colonists lay for calling hours
in Faneuil Hall before sharing a grave
at the Granary Burying Ground.

They had laid a foundering stone
for the Minutemen at Lexington
& Concord, first to defy & die,

& an echo of the future rose over
the courtroom as John Adams
defended the Brits, calling the dead

a "motley rabble of saucy boys,
negroes & mulattoes, Irish
teagues & outlandish jactars,"

who made soldiers fear for their lives,
& at day's end only two would pay
with the branding of their thumbs.