Crispus Attucks
(1723?–1770)

Crispus Attucks, "the first to defy; . . . the first to die" in the American Revolution, had been a slave in Framingham, Massachusetts. He escaped in 1750, but little else is known about his life before March 5, 1770. That night he was in Boston, on King Street. He was one of a large group of Americans who crowded around a troop of British soldiers, calling them "lobsters" and "bloody backs" because of their red uniforms. The Patriots threw snow and chunks of ice at the soldiers. Crispus Attucks stepped forward, holding a thick piece of wood. "Attack the main guard! Strike at the root!" Attucks called to the others. "Shoot if you dare!" he yelled at the soldiers.

The soldiers shot.

The Boston Gazette reported that Attucks was hit with two bullets and "killed instantly . . . most horribly." That night, in what was later called the Boston Massacre, Attucks and four others were the first to die in the struggle for American independence.