A successful monument should catch the attention of anyone walking by. It should drag people in, compel their curiosity. It should either memorialize the events of the past or the people involved in the historical event. An extraordinary monument can do both.

Boston is a city with a rich legacy, from the arrival and settlement of the Puritans, the Boston Massacre, the Boston Tea Party, Paul Revere’s ride, the Seige of Boston, and the Boston Busing Crisis. It’s produced Presidents, and it’s educated young men and women who would go on to change the world. Suffice to say, Boston has a lot of monuments. One of Boston’s most exceptional monuments is the Crispus Attucks monument commemorating the lives of those lost in the Boston Massacre.

The Boston Massacre occurred in Boston on March 5th of 1770. At this point, the United States was still thirteen colonies under British rule. Colonial angst was at an all-time high as a result of Britain’s policies and tax laws, particularly the Stamp Act and the Townshend Acts. Tensions between patriot colonists and loyalists had been steadily increasing, especially in the Massachusetts colony, where more than 2,000 British soldiers occupied its capital city of Boston, trying to enforce British law on the 16,000 colonists that inhabited the city.

In the weeks leading up to the Boston Massacre, colonists held protests against the rule of the British soldiers. A mob of colonists attacked the store of a well-known British loyalist, which resulted in the accidental death of an eleven-year-old boy, Christopher Seider. His death acted as ammunition in the fight against British rule, and days later a fight broke out between colonial workers and a group of British soldiers.

On March 5th, a British soldier, Hugh White was standing guard outside of the Custom House on King St. in Boston, where the money collected for taxes was kept. Church bells rang, which was normally a sign of bloodshed, causing colonists to come out into the streets to see what was going on. The colonists started berating White and eventually throw snowballs and rocks at him. White was quickly overtaken by the colonists, so he called for help. Captain Thomas Preston arrived with several soldiers in order to protect the Custom House.

Shouting was followed by violence, as the soldiers were pelted with more snowballs, and hit with sticks by the colonists. Though some pleaded with the soldiers not to retaliate, many of
the colonists dared Preston and his men to shoot them, and when someone in the crowd screamed “fire” one of the British soldiers fired his weapon. The first shot was followed by many others, and in the end, six people were injured and five people - Crispus Attucks, Samuel Gray, James Caldwell, Samuel Maverick and Patrick Carr- were dead.

There are many legacies of the Boston Massacre. Most importantly, it was a turning point in the colonies that set us on the path to independence by kickstarting the Revolutionary War. The news of British soldiers killing innocent colonists spread through the colonies and inspired a spirit of revolution and desire for independence. The five men who had been killed became martyrs of the cause, men who died in the pursuit of liberty.

A monument should catch the attention of the passerby, it should be awe-inspiring, with aspects of creativity and symbolism, while being easily understood and straightforward. It should be something that brings you in. Luckily, the Boston Massacre monument in the city is one that you have to stop and stare at for a moment.

Located in the Boston Commons, Robert Kraus’ bronze statue and stone pillar, called the Crispus Attucks Monument, depicts the “Spirit of the Revolution.” The monument which was erected in 1888 at the permission of the Massachusetts General Court, which was paid for by the people of Boston, stands at over twenty-five feet high and ten feet wide. Inspired by Eugene Delacroix’s painting Liberty Leading the People, the statue shows a revolutionary spirit-woman holding a broken chain in her right hand and an American flag in her left hand. The broken chain is indicative of the colonies breaking free from the reign of the British and the flag represents a new beginning, a new country. Under her right foot, the spirit is crushing a crown, which refers to the British monarchy, and at her left foot is the eagle, a representation of America, as it prepares for flight.

Underneath the statue is a depiction of the scene of the Boston Massacre, carved out bronze, with the figures in the picture popping out at you, almost leaving their frame. It gives the perspective of the colonists, depicting them as almost innocent and unarmed against the British soldiers who were armed, uniformed, and standing in a formation. The colonists contrastingly are all over the place, falling over one another, trying their best to fight back. John Adams’ quote “On that night the foundation of American independence was laid,” sits beside that of Daniel Webster which reads “From that moment we may date the severance of the British Empire.” The quotes are tiny in comparison to the massive date on the base of the statue, March 5th, 1770.

On the stone pillar behind the statue are the names of the five men who died during the Boston Massacre. By putting their names physically above the spirit, it elevates these men to the status of martyrs, remembering them as the first men who died in the fight for American
freedom. The back of the stone pillar is engraved, “Erected in 1888 by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in honor of those who fell at the Boston Massacre.”

The monument is representative of the Boston Massacre, but it’s able to be so successful and so impactful because it does so much more than that. It honors those who died to put this country on the path to freedom, it depicts the birth of a nation, free from the British and it shows the scene of that night. It’s simultaneously beautiful, intimidating, and awe-inspiring, which makes it so successful.

**Bibliography:**


