

**THE SIGNAL BOYS OF
'75: A TALE OF BOSTON
DURING THE SIEGE**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649704583

The Signal Boys of '75: A Tale of Boston During the Siege by James Otis

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
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JAMES OTIS

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THE
SIGNAL BOYS OF '75

A TALE OF
BOSTON DURING THE SIEGE

BY
JAMES OTIS

AUTHOR OF "JENNY WREN'S BOARDING-HOUSE," "JERRY'S FAMILY,"
"THE BOYS' REVOLT," "THE BOYS OF 1745," ETC.



Illustrated

BOSTON
ESTES AND LAURIAT
1897

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THE SIGNAL BOYS OF '75

A Tale of Boston During the Siege

CHAPTER I.

THE MESSAGE.

ON a certain July night in the year 1775, a boy crouched in an attitude of expectancy at the foot of West Hill, on the outskirts of Boston town, gazing over the water in the direction of the Cambridge shore.

The elevation of the land prevented him from seeing the lights of the town only a short distance away, and on that side of the water-front was neither boat nor vessel to be seen.

The lad was alone as if on an uninhabited island, but yet afraid of being seen, as might have been told from his movements when the night wind sighed more loudly than usual through the foliage, or a fish leaped in the water, for at these sounds he never failed to make his way

M. V. P. I.

further into the shadow, and once, when the noise of pattering feet caused by some belated animal was heard, he glided noiselessly into the thicket to hide himself.

Then, when all was quiet, he ventured out again, still gazing in the direction of the American camp, where General Washington of Virginia had but just begun his work of shaping raw recruits into a disciplined army.

One by one the hours passed until the watcher on the shore cast anxious glances towards the eastern sky, as if fearing to see signs of coming dawn, and the blackness of night had already taken on a gray tinge when a faint sound as of water rippling in the distance caused him to make his way once more out of the thicket.

Then a dark smudge in the distance appeared, assuming more definite shape each instant as it approached the shore, until the watcher made it out to be a boat, rowed by a lad of about his own age.

"You have come at last, Amos Richardson," he whispered, in a tone of deepest relief. "It was in my mind that some ill fortune had befallen you."

"Had I thought you might be waiting for me, Jim Gray, I would have made more haste. Why are you here?"

"To make certain you returned in due season, and prevent you from showing yourself near about Province House by daylight."

"And why may I not go there?" Amos asked as he stepped from the boat and stood in the faint light of the new day, a sturdier lad than when he aided in placing

the warning symbol in front of Master Theophilus Lillie's shop on Hanover Street, and as much more manly in appearance as might be expected of a boy who had grown older by five years.

"One of Lord Percy's officers stopped Hardy Baker near by the Town House yesterday morning, and asked concerning you."

"To what purpose?"

"We know not; but it is said among those friendly towards us, that our doings last week in the steeples have been made known; that our rightful names are set down as Signal Boys, and his lordship has it in charge to prevent us from continuing such work."

"If he has our names it matters little whether we present ourselves in this particular part of the town or that, for should it please General Gage to send one or all to the Bridewell, the task of finding us would not be difficult."

"Unless it so be we passed over to Cambridge, and there remained. Hardy Baker believes such a course is the safest."

"Hardy Baker as a Signal Boy is much the same lad as when apprenticed to Master Piemont the barber; ever timorous and having little relish for dangers which menace his own precious body."

"Then you are not minded to enter the army?"

"We can better serve the Cause here, sending out our signals when it be necessary, than there, where we could do no more than practise at being a soldier. Is it to