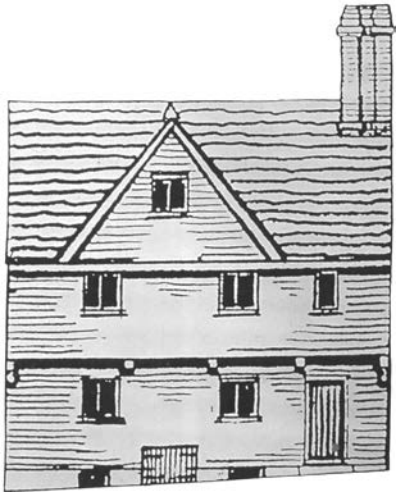
WELCOME TO THE PAUL REVERE HOUSE

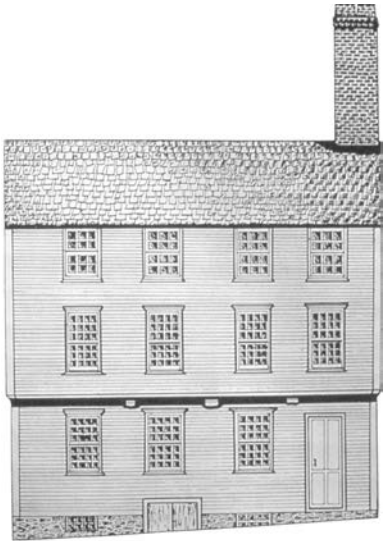
Built about 1680, the Paul Revere House is the only remaining example of 17th-century architecture in downtown Boston. Paul Revere purchased the house in 1770, 90 years after it was built, and sold it in 1800. At the time he moved here, Revere was a 35-year-old silversmith with a wife and growing family, and an established shop on Boston's waterfront.

Your visit will take you through four of the Revere House's original rooms. Illustrated text panels like this one will lead you through the house, and staff people are on duty to answer questions.

Restored in 1907–08 by architect Joseph Chandler, the Paul Revere House opened to the public as a museum on April 18, 1908. During the restoration, workmen removed most later additions, returning the house's exterior to approximately its original appearance. Inside, one room, the Hall, is furnished to reflect the era of the first owner, merchant Robert Howard. The other three rooms – the Kitchen, the Best Chamber, and the Back Bedchamber – reflect the Revere occupancy of the late 18th century.



The Paul Revere House as built c. 1680



The Paul Revere House as it looked when Paul lived here c. 1790

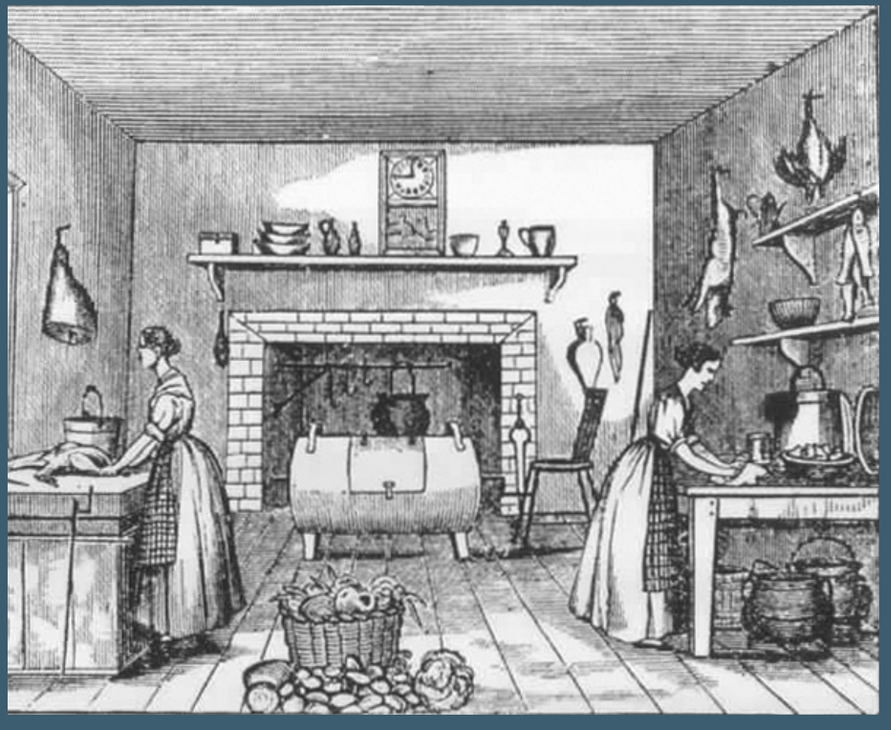
Funding for these labels has been provided by a grant from the Massachusetts Society of Colonial Wars and General Society of Colonial Wars.

THE KITCHEN

This is the kitchen used by the Revere family in the late 18th century. It is not, however, the earliest kitchen in the house. When this house was built in 1680, the kitchen was in the cellar.

Preparing meals in an 18th-century kitchen was a much different process than preparing meals today. The primary fuel was wood, and each house kept a large wood pile in the backyard. Cooking was done over an open fire, or wood coals, using heavy cast-iron pots and utensils such as you see here. Baking was done in an oven (located here to the left of the main fireplace) which was heated by building a fire inside the oven.

The average Colonial woman spent a large part of her day in the kitchen (only a few families could afford servants or slaves). For urban women such as Paul Revere's first wife Sarah and second wife Rachel, managing a household included such labor-intensive and time-consuming tasks as food preparation, cultivating a house garden, and raising poultry. Unlike farm wives, urban housekeepers did not have to tend livestock or prepare as many foods from scratch. Meats, vegetables, cheese, butter, and other necessary items such as soap could be purchased at markets and shops, or from itinerant vendors.



A typical early American kitchen. Note the foodstuffs hanging on the wall, the large roaster or "tin kitchen" in front of the fireplace, and the heavy iron kettles and other implements used in cooking. (Old Sturbridge Village B21529, Photo: Henry Peach)

THE HALL c. 1700

As the most versatile room in a Colonial house, the Hall might serve as a parlor, dining room, workshop, or business office all in the same day.

These English- and American-made pieces were chosen to reflect the era of the first owner of the house, a wealthy merchant named Robert Howard. Typical forms represented here include:

- the **press cupboard**
- the **daybed**
- the **gateleg table**
- the **upholstered chair**
- the **three-corner chair**

The **press cupboard** (back wall), used to store linens, was probably made in Essex County, Massachusetts, in 1699 (note date on lower front). While characteristic of 17th-century English furniture in its heavy proportions and carved and turned ornamentation, its painted and stained surfaces were likely much brighter originally. *Lent by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.*

Bare floors were the norm in Colonial America. The wealthy few who could afford imported Turkish **carpets** usually used them as table coverings. Floor carpets became more common in Revere's time. Our Turkish carpet, made in 1985, is similar to those made in the 17th century.

Both **maps,** taken from period atlases, show the northeast coast of North America. The color map is Dutch, 1635. The black and white map is English, 1676.

The reproduction **textiles** in this room follow the traditional custom of decorating "en suite" – color coordinating fabrics for a unified appearance.

THE PAUL REVERE HOUSE – A 300-YEAR HISTORY

Although Paul Revere is the best-known figure associated with this house, he and his family are by no means the only people to have lived here. In the 300 plus years since this house was built, several hundred persons of every social class have made this house their home.

The first owner of this house, wealthy merchant Robert Howard, moved here in 1681 with his wife Elizabeth, his daughter Sarah, and his slave Samuel. After her father's death in 1717, Sarah inherited the house.

In the 1740s and 50s, the structure was owned by the Knox family, North End artisans and mariners. When Andrew Knox defaulted on a mortgage in 1763, he lost the house to John Erving, a real estate speculator, although he remained as Erving's tenant. In 1770, following Knox's death, Erving sold the house to Paul Revere.

Although Revere owned the house until 1800, he and his family may not have lived here for most of the 1780s. After the Revere family left, the building became a boardinghouse, and the ground floor was used as shops (see illustration). Throughout the 19th century, numerous sailors and immigrant families made the Revere House their home.

In 1902, a Revere descendant purchased the house to ensure that it would not be demolished or moved. Within a few years money was raised, the house was restored, and in 1908 it opened to the public as a museum.

The Paul Revere House in the 1880s (from Porter, *Rambles in Old Boston,* 1887)

BOSTON IN THE 17TH AND 18TH CENTURIES

Between 1630 and the 1770s, Boston grew from a small village into an important seaport and commercial center with over 15,000 inhabitants. A once tightly-knit Puritan community became a cosmopolitan city, whose population included significant Scots-Irish, French, West African, and Native American minorities.

The North End was one of the oldest of Colonial Boston's several distinct neighborhoods, and was also the most thickly settled. Its residents were a mix of wealthy merchants, government officials, middle-class artisans, and transient mariners. The waterfront was crowded with taverns, shipyards, shops, and warehouses – all linked together by narrow, winding streets. North Square, with its markets, public wells, and watchhouse, was the social and economic center of the North End.

Detail from the John Bonner Map of Boston, 1722, showing the North Square area (highlighted in blue).

Courtesy Norman B. Leventhal Map Center, Boston Public Library.

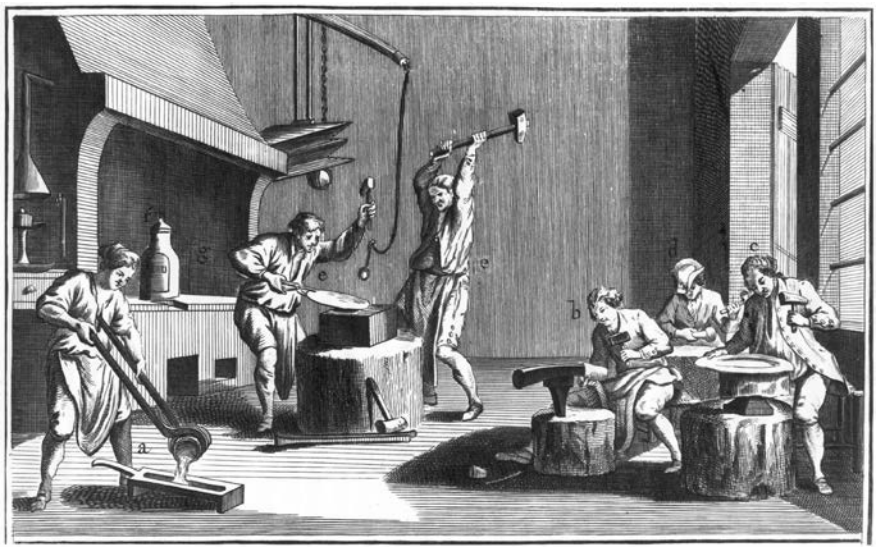
PAUL REVERE (1734–1818)

Paul Revere was born in a modest house somewhere in this neighborhood in late December 1734. In 1770, he bought this property and made it his home.

Paul Revere was one of 12 children. After attending the North Writing School, he apprenticed with his father as a goldsmith (as silversmiths were known at the time). When his father died in 1754, Paul, then 19, was too young to legally inherit the family silver shop (his mother held it until he became of age). Paul took over the shop in his own name in 1756, following military service during the French and Indian War.

Paul Revere's father, originally named Apollos Rivoire, was a descendent of Huguenots (French Protestants). At age 13, his family sent him to Boston, where he was apprenticed to goldsmith John Coney. In the 1720s, Apollos established his own shop near Dock Square, and changed his name to Paul Revere.

Paul Revere's mother, Deborah Hitchborn, descended from several New England artisan and land-owning families. Her parents, Thomas and Frances Pattishall Hitchborn, owned a small wharf on Boston's waterfront, where they repaired boats and handled light cargoes.



Goldsmith Shop interior, c. 1771, from Diderot's Encyclopedia.

Courtesy, Boston Public Library.

THE BEST CHAMBER c. 1795

This room reflects the later years of the Revere family occupancy. The Best Chamber served as both a master bedroom and an elegant parlor. The practice of utilizing rooms for many functions was especially common in middle-class homes, which often did not have separate parlors or sitting rooms.

According to family tradition, several pieces of furniture in this room belonged to the Reveres:

- the **bow front dresser**, to the left of the bed (mahogany veneer on pine, 1780-1800). *Lent by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.*

- the large **upholstered chair** (late 18th c.)

- the pair of black painted **Windsor chairs**, used in Revere's home on Charter St. (pine and hardwood, early 19th c.). *Gift of Mary C. Rogers, 1953.*

- the **ladies' work table** with the green sewing basket (mahogany, early 19th c.). *Gift of Rachel Revere Coolidge Kimball, 1991.*

The **fabric** on the bed and chairs is a reproduction of a late 18th-century French pattern ("Mirande") block printed on cotton cloth.

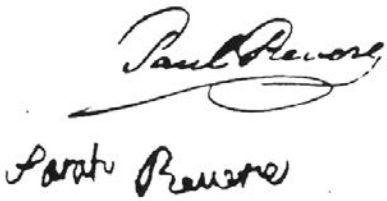
The **wallpaper** is a reproduction of a block-printed pattern manufactured in Boston between 1790 and 1810.

Side chairs (mahogany c. 1760-1780). *Lent by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.*

PAUL REVERE'S WIVES

SARAH ORNE REVERE (1736–1773)

Little is known about Paul Revere's first wife, Sarah Orne. A member of an artisan and seafaring family of Boston and Salem, Massachusetts, Sarah married Paul on August 17, 1757. She died at the age of 37 on May 3, 1773, shortly after the birth of their eighth child.



Signature of Sarah Revere, Paul Revere's first wife. The signature appears on a deed recording the sale of a small piece of property to one of the Revere's neighbors.

RACHEL WALKER REVERE (1745–1813)

On October 10, 1773, Paul Revere married Rachel Walker, whose family likely rented a house nearby. Rachel assumed responsibility for raising Sarah's surviving children and her and Paul's own eight, born between 1774 and 1787. Intelligent, kind, and capable, Rachel managed to secure a pass from British authorities soon after her husband's "Midnight Ride," allowing the family to leave Boston.

This miniature portrait shows Rachel Revere when she was in her late 30s. It was probably painted by Joseph Dunkerly, who rented all or part of the Revere's North Square house at one time. Paul Revere is thought to have made the gold frame for this miniature.

Courtesy Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Bequest of Mrs. Pauline Revere Thayer.

PAUL REVERE, GOLDSMITH

Paul Revere was the proprietor of a large shop with both apprentices and journeyman employees. His customers included members of wealthy Boston society, as well as his own neighbors, relatives, and political associates.

Goldsmiths produced items in both silver and gold. Only a few of Revere's gold pieces have survived, and today he is best known for his work in silver (examples are on display in our new education and visitor center). Revere silver ranges from the highly-decorated rococo style popular in the 1760s to the more restrained neoclassical style of the 1790s, but it all displays the elegant sense of proportion for which Revere's work is famous.

Like many goldsmiths, Revere supplemented his income by producing copperplate engravings such as trade cards, bookplates, mastheads, and illustrations for broadsides and magazines. Revere also practiced dentistry occasionally from 1768 to 1775. He cleaned teeth, wired in false teeth, and sold toothpaste, but he never made a set of dentures for George Washington – such a task was beyond his ability.

Paul Revere
by John Singleton Copley, 1768

At the time Copley painted this portrait, Paul Revere was 33 years old. He is shown in workingmen's clothes with engraving tools in front of him.

PAUL REVERE, REVOLUTIONARY

Paul Revere became a principal spokesman for middle class artisans, storekeepers, and laborers in revolutionary Boston.

As a goldsmith, working for wealthy customers, and as an active Freemason, Paul Revere knew many of the town's radical leaders. In the 1760s, he began engraving political cartoons satirizing British government actions. He also joined several of Boston's many underground political clubs, including the North Caucus. This caucus, composed mostly of artisans and shopkeepers from Revere's own neighborhood, met most often at the Green Dragon Tavern on Union Street. According to tradition, the Boston Tea Party was planned at North Caucus meetings at the Green Dragon Tavern in late November and December 1773.

In 1774 and 1775, Paul Revere frequently served as a paid courier for the Committee of Safety. On the night of April 18, 1775, Revere and William Dawes left Boston by separate routes to warn patriots in Lexington of British troop movements. Following his famous "Midnight Ride," Revere and his family were forced to remain outside Boston for nearly a year while the British occupied the city. During this time, Revere aided the Patriot cause by printing badly needed paper currency and by overseeing the acquisition of gunpowder and cannon for the Massachusetts militia.

From 1776 to 1779 Revere served as an officer in the Massachusetts militia. For most of this time he commanded the garrison on Castle Island, a fort in Boston harbor. He also took part in several local expeditions and on the ill-fated Penobscot expedition, an American military disaster. Accused of cowardice and insubordination, Revere was dismissed from the militia. In 1782, after seven attempts, Revere obtained the court-martial that finally cleared his name.

Paul Revere adapted his "Boston Massacre" engraving (1770) from the plate for a similar print by a Boston artist and engraver named Henry Pelham. Both Revere's and Pelham's prints show very inaccurate views of what actually happened and were obviously intended as political propaganda.

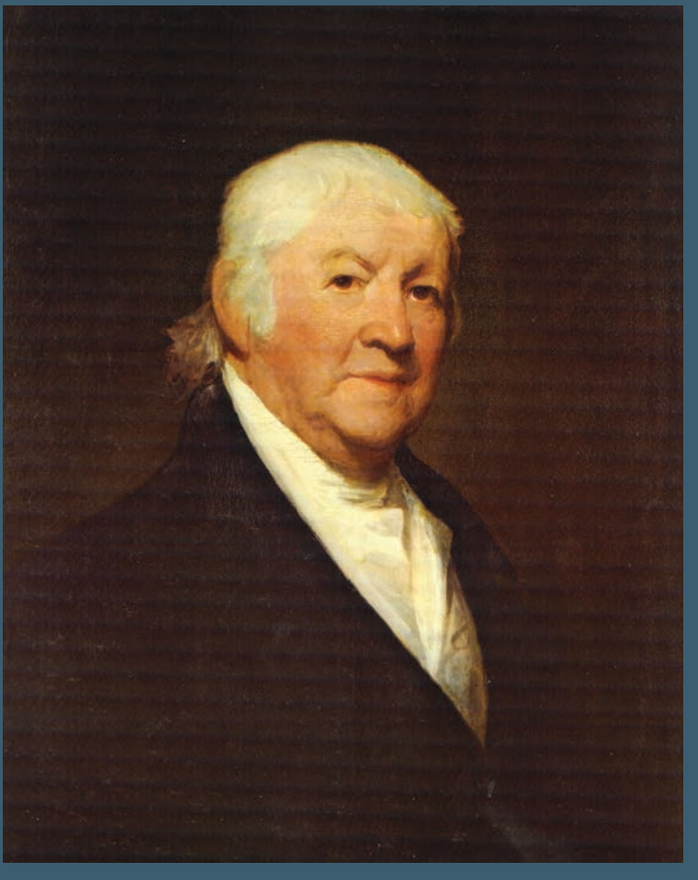
Courtesy Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Gift of Miss Margaret A. Revere, Miss Anna P. Revere, Mr. Paul Revere, and Mr. John Revere Chapin.

PAUL REVERE, THE BUSINESSMAN

After the Revolution, Paul Revere began a series of businesses that steadily increased his personal income. These ventures included a hardware store, a foundry, and a copper-rolling mill.

Revere operated a hardware store at a series of locations in Boston in the 1780s. He sold locally-made and imported goods as well as items made in the family goldsmith shop (by then under the supervision of his son, Paul, Jr.) In 1788 Revere opened a foundry on the North End waterfront, where he cast cannons and bells, and manufactured large quantities of copper and brass fittings for local shipyards. Revere established the first successful copper-rolling mill in North America, at Canton, Massachusetts, in 1801. Revere copper was used to plate the hull of "Old Ironsides" and to cover the dome of the new Massachusetts State House on Beacon Hill. Robert Fulton also used heavy gauge Revere sheets to construct the boilers for some of his steamboats.

Revere's Trade Card



Paul Revere
by Gilbert Stuart, 1813

Courtesy, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Gift of Joseph W., William B., and Edward H. R. Revere.

BACK BEDCHAMBER

This room was likely used by Revere's children. They might have shared the space with their grandmother Deborah Revere, or their aunt Elizabeth Revere, who were part of the large multigenerational household.

Over a period of 30 years the Revere family grew to include 16 children. Because 5 died in infancy and others left when they married, it appears that there were never more than 5 to 9 children living in the house at any one time. Most of the children probably slept on the third floor, though any of the rooms in the house could have been used for sleeping quarters as needed.

The following are Revere family pieces:

- The **sampler** (linen with cotton and silk thread) was made by Maria Revere Curtis, a great-granddaughter of Paul Revere. It is dated January 25, 1819, when Maria was 11 years old. *Gift of Miss Marian Cole, 1978.*

- the **rocking chair** (Windsor, early 19th c.) was used by Revere at his copper-rolling mill in Canton, Massachusetts. *Gift of Anna Revere, 1976.*

Note the following items:

- The wooden hinges of this **bed** (maple, late 18th c.) allow it to be folded against the headboard. Folding furniture gave families the flexibility to use their limited rooms for multiple purposes.

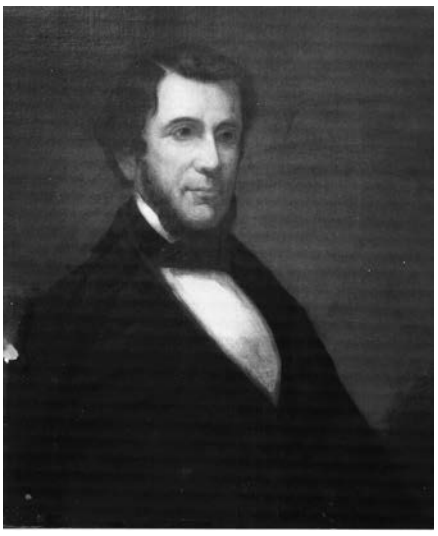
- The wooden **bed wrench** (on the table) was used to tighten the ropes supporting the mattresses on the bed.

THE REVERE CHILDREN

Of Revere's sixteen children, eleven survived to be adults. As Revere's fortunes improved, his younger children received more opportunities than their older siblings.

Paul Revere's oldest son, Paul, Jr., apprenticed with his father at the family goldsmith shop. His younger brothers Joshua and Joseph became involved in their father's hardware, foundry, and copper mill businesses. John Revere, Paul Revere's youngest son, graduated from Harvard and studied medicine at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland. He became a respected physician in Boston, Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New York.

Paul Revere's older daughters were educated at home and married Revere neighbors, business associates, and apprentices. Harriet and Maria, Revere's youngest daughters, attended boarding schools in the Boston area. After her parents died, Harriet, who never married, split time between her brother Joseph's and her brother John's families. Maria married a Boston businessman and diplomat and settled in Asia. In the 1840s, she arranged for the purchase of a Revere bell for a church near her home in Singapore.



Dr. John Revere
(artist unknown)
Courtesy, Archives of the School of Medicine, New York University.

PAUL REVERE, THE LEGEND

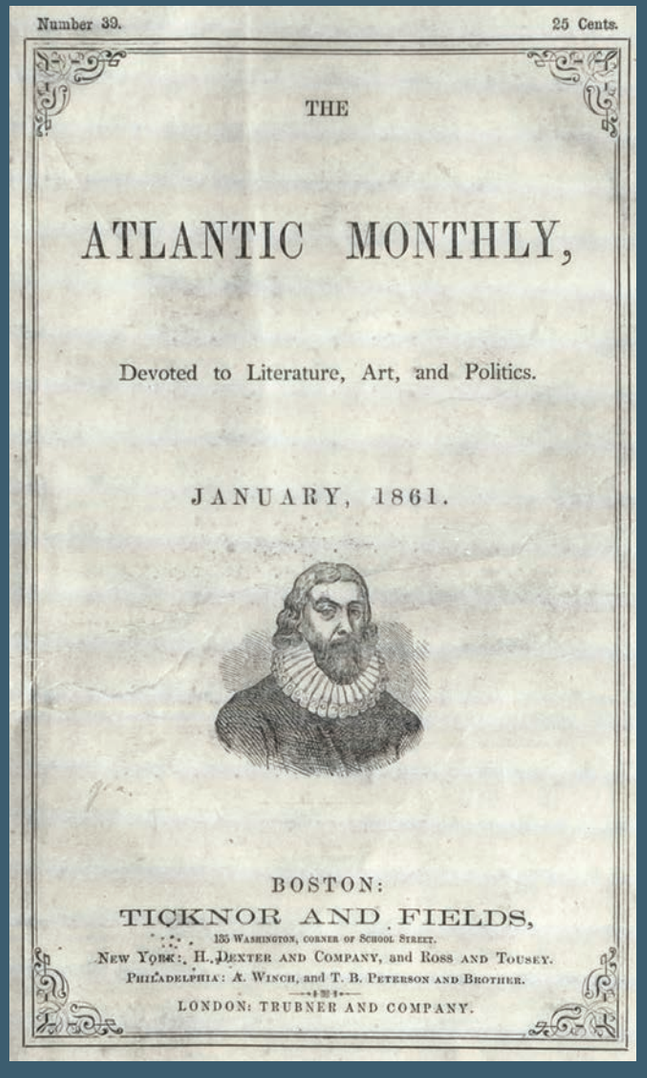
Paul Revere died on May 10, 1818, at his Charter Street home, and was buried along with his second wife Rachel in a tomb in the Granary Burying Ground near Boston Common.

Paul Revere received local recognition as history's heroic courier in the 1820s, but the nation first heard about Revere when Henry Wadsworth Longfellow published his now-famous poem, "Paul Revere's Ride," in the January, 1861, issue of *The Atlantic Monthly.*

By the 1890s, popular culture considered Paul Revere as one of the founders of the American Republic. Since that time, scholars have begun to view Revere's Revolutionary role as significant but essentially local in nature.

Throughout the 20th century, the importance of Paul Revere and his "Midnight Ride" has waxed and waned in popular memory, paralleling changes in the political climate. Advertisers and satirists have often capitalized on the popularity of the "Midnight Ride" story, using it as a tool to warn the public of real (or perceived) dangers, like global warming, or for alerting customers to the release of a new product or technology, like a new car design.

Lunch Box c. 1930.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Devoted to Literature, Art, and Politics.

JANUARY, 1861.

BOSTON:
TICKNOR AND FIELDS,
135 Washington, corner of School Street.
New York: H. Dexter and Company, and Ross and Tousey.
Philadelphia: A. Winch, and T. B. Peterson and Brother.
London: Trubner and Company.

"Listen, my children, and you shall hear
Of the midnight ride of Paul Revere"

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem "Paul Revere's Ride" first appeared on December 18, 1860, in the *Boston Evening Transcript,* as a preview for its national publication in the January 1861 issue of *The Atlantic Monthly.*

SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY HOLIDAY CELEBRATIONS

Though special days for prayer, fasting, and feasting were nothing new to early American settlers, most Boston Puritans disliked the "keeping" of Christmas and other religious holidays. Massachusetts levied a fine for observing Christmas in 1646, and even made the holiday illegal in 1659. As Samuel Sewall noted in his diary:

> *[New England settlers] came hither to avoid anniversary days, the keeping of them, such as the 25th of December. How displeasing it must be to God, the giver of our Time, to keep anniversary days to play the fool with ourselves and others.*

Days of public thanksgiving, on the other hand, were important holidays in colonial Massachusetts. The procedure for establishing an official Day of Thanksgiving involved writing a resolution and obtaining the Governor's signature. This process might take as long as a month. A fall thanksgiving (usually associated with the harvest) was a particularly important occasion, and a colony wide observance was held almost every year.

This room reflects how Robert Howard, a wealthy merchant and the first owner of the Paul Revere House, might have celebrated a thanksgiving in the early 1700s. The table is set for dessert, an important part of any colonial meal. For some Puritans, a fall thanksgiving may have served as a substitute for Christmas. Indeed, outside of New England this holiday was sometimes referred to as "The New England Christmas."

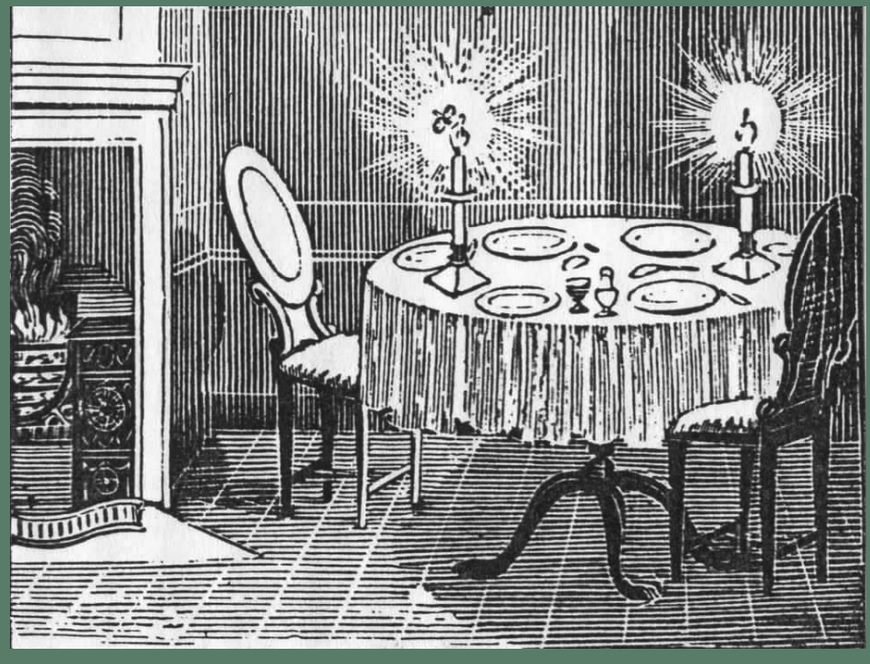
HOLIDAY CELEBRATIONS IN THE 1790s

A majority of New Englanders in the 17th and 18th centuries were Congregationalists. As descendants of Puritans, they would not be likely to celebrate Christmas. Their reasons were scriptural. Many simply completed a good day's work on December 25, and possibly recorded that fact in their diaries or almanacs.

A smaller minority of Anglicans generally observed Christmas in their Church services. Their term for observing the holiday was to "keep" Christmas.

By the 1790s, some Congregationalists, especially in urban areas, were beginning to "keep Christmas" in some manner. This might mean that they visited an Anglican church service or hosted a dinner or tea for friends at home.

To be honest, we don't know exactly what the Reveres did at Christmas. We know they entertained in December, but would they think of this as "keeping Christmas" or not?



THE BEST CHAMBER

We have decorated the Best Chamber to reflect how Paul Revere and his family might have "kept Christmas" in the 1790s. We can imagine Paul and his wife Rachel sitting at the card table with another couple, talking about the small New Year's gifts they might give to family and friends. The giving of gifts at New Year's was an old established custom accepted by the Puritans.

The Reveres may have served their guests pastries (fruit tarts), cookies, sweet meats such as marzipan, and fresh fruit, which was difficult to come by, especially in winter. Pineapples (perhaps borrowed) were particularly rare and expensive. The wine in the decanter and glasses might be Madeira, a very popular beverage in the Americas.