
the REVERE HOUSE *Gazette*

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Carved Ivory Denture, Attributed to Paul Revere, Now on Display in the Education and Visitor Center

BY EDITH J. STEBLECKI

In December 2016, the Paul Revere Memorial Association acquired a gift from H. Martin Deranian, D.D.S. of a small partial denture, likely eighteenth-century, that had been attributed to Paul Revere. Dr. Deranian, a dental historian who taught at the Tufts University School of Dental Medicine, was also a prominent dentist in Worcester, MA, where he practiced general dentistry from 1953 until his retirement in 2014. Dr. Deranian, an active member of numerous dental societies, as well as a collector and exhibitor of antique dental equipment, established a dental museum at Tufts Dental School.

In a short essay titled “Was this denture made by Paul Revere?” Dr. Deranian writes: “In 1987, I purchased several antique dental items from the estate of a dentist who had practiced in Springfield, Massachusetts. Amongst the items was a 1¾ inch long denture with a penned notation which reads: ‘Carved ivory upper partial – circa 1770. Attributed to Paul Revere.’” He noted that the piece was intended to replace the right cuspid and first bicuspid. The three wood pegs are possibly hickory (the wood pegs would swell due to the wearer’s saliva, which helped to hold the denture in place). Dr. Deranian also indicated that there was “no way of verifying the historical truth or accuracy of the notation,” except to acknowledge that the denture is consistent with prosthetic devices of the period. The penned notation attributing the denture to Revere was written on the back of the business card of George Durand Malkasian, D.M.D. of Springfield. Though Dr. Deranian never shared the name of the Springfield dentist from whom he acquired the denture, I now assume it was Dr. Malkasian, and that he wrote the small paper note with the Revere attribution in the twentieth century.

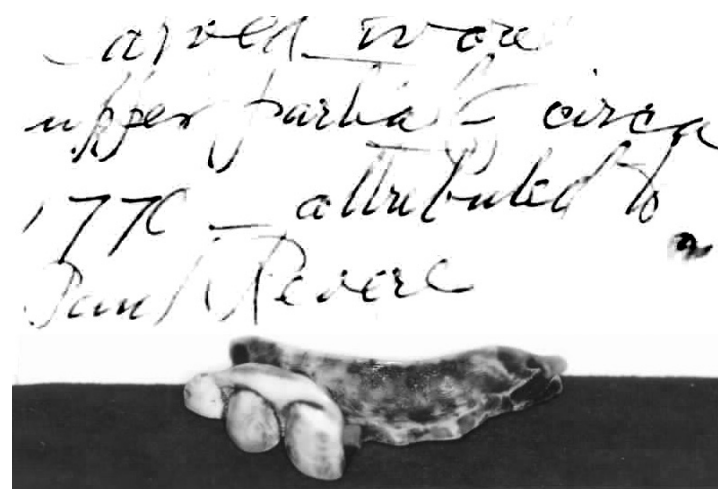
Dr. Deranian first approached the PRMA in 1999 saying,

Edith J. Steblecki is Curator and Assistant Director at the Paul Revere House.

“I wish to discuss with you the possibility of my donating this unique artifact to the Paul Revere House.” The PRMA decided to accept the donation at that time. Dr. Deranian died at age 94 in September 2016 after having signed and returned the gift form in July. His widow, Virginia, and family delivered the denture to us in December 2016.

We accepted his gift because it is an early dental device consistent with something Revere could have made, and it has an attribution to Revere. If visitors ask “did Revere really make this?” the answer is, he could have but we cannot say for sure. The denture itself has no markings of any kind and there are no surviving examples of Revere’s dental work with which to compare it.

When I contacted other dental museums and libraries to get information, those I spoke with agreed that the denture is likely eighteenth century or earlier, certainly pre-1840 (when porcelain teeth came into use).



Partial ivory denture attributed to Paul Revere. The card behind the denture reads: “Carved ivory upper partial – circa 1770 – attributed to Paul Revere.” This denture was donated to the Revere House in 2016. Collection Paul Revere Memorial Association.

From the Executive Director...

Because our collecting parameters are fairly narrow, such as, objects made or owned by the Revere family, materials that relate to Revere's legacy, home furnishings, and items that reflect the history of our properties, it is always a special moment when we are able to make an important addition to the collection. Some items come to us out of the blue and others, such as the gift described in this issue, play out over a number of years. Just the other day, the owner of a piece of Revere silver approached us via e-mail, and we are hopeful that this will turn into a donation at some point in the future. As a museum and tax-exempt organization, we are always honored when donors entrust us with treasured items that have passed down in their family, or are part of a collection they built for their own enjoyment. It is a sign of regard for the public service that we perform and trust that we will be wise caretakers who will share the gift with the public for years to come.

We also greatly appreciate those who make annual

contributions; support our efforts by facilitating grants from charitable groups, foundations and businesses; or choose to remember the Association in their wills. A bequest from our good friends Edward and Evelyn Stickney is currently being distributed to us and, though unrestricted, will allow us to repair the shelter that houses our Revere bell and eventually reorganize and rehouse their bell archives. Their legacy is now a part of our institutional legacy as a result of their hard work and generosity.

Artifacts, documents, and ephemera all serve to amplify and illustrate in tangible ways the stories we endeavor to tell; and funding from all sources supports our operations in significant ways. So, if you have an object you believe fits our collecting goals or would like to make a contribution, we are here to help you.



Nina Zannieri

When the denture was delivered to us we learned that it had been in a Skinner's "Science and Technology" auction in 2001 with other dental materials (but had not received a bid high enough to reach the seller's reserve). Listing the denture as "probably eighteenth century," Skinner's catalog description said "it is not possible to attribute a maker to an early denture such as this" but "a former owner attributed these to Paul Revere, who is known to have carved dentures, but without further evidence there is no way to prove this." It is not clear what source the auction house used for its assertion that Revere carved dentures.

Our primary information about Revere as a dentist derives from two advertisements in the *Boston Gazette* in 1768 and 1770. A copy of the 1770 advertisement is currently on display in the business exhibit in our Education and Visitor Center. The denture is displayed near this advertisement. There is nothing in these advertisements that is inconsistent with the idea of Revere making a small denture. He claims to have replaced missing teeth, which such a prosthetic device would accomplish. He learned from Dr. John Baker, a surgeon-dentist who was likely English-trained. Baker was itinerant and stayed in Boston about a year, then moved to New York and other cities. Beyond the assertions in his advertisements and some entries in his day books, we have no detailed record of what Revere's dental work consisted of. Revere does not explain how he fastened replacement teeth except that he used Baker's method (anyone who "had false teeth fixt by Mr. John Baker, Surgeon-Dentist, and they have got loose...

may have them fastened by the above, who learnt the Method of fixing them from Mr. Baker"). A 1768 advertisement placed by Baker in a New York newspaper says "He makes artificial teeth, and fixes them with pure gold, so that they will remain fast for many years, and may eat, drink and sleep with them in their mouths as natural one." Could this be the "Method" of Baker's that Revere claims to have mastered. Revere worked in both silver and gold. Revere's abilities as a silversmith overlapped in interesting ways with eighteenth-century dental practices and materials (gold wire, pumice, and wood).

The most famous story about Revere as a dentist is his identifying the body of Dr. Joseph Warren, months after he died at the Battle of Bunker Hill, by the tooth (or teeth) that

Continued on page 4



Partial denture, attributed to Paul Revere (bottom view). Note the wooden pegs used to hold the denture in place.

Did Paul Revere Design the Massachusetts State Seal?

BY PATRICK M. LEEHEY, RESEARCH DIRECTOR

Over the years, any number of objects have been attributed to Paul Revere. As a famous “maker” there is great value in being able to attach his name to items of all sorts. The assertion that Paul Revere designed the Massachusetts State Seal has been frequently made (and just as frequently disputed) however the case for Revere actually having done the work is fairly strong. All of the relevant documents can be found in E. H. Goss, *The Life of Colonel Paul Revere*, 1891, Vol. II, pp 424-430. On December 13, 1780, John Avery of the Massachusetts government signed his name to a report noting that Nathan Cushing had been appointed a “committee of one” to design and prepare a new state seal. Avery then noted that Cushing had reported back a detailed design for the seal (it is not clear if Cushing himself came up with the design, or someone else did):

Sapphire, an Indian dressed in his shirt, moggosins, belted proper – in his right hand a bow. *Topaz* – in his left an arrow, its point towards the base – of the second on the Dexter side of the Indian’s head, a Star. *Pearl* for one of the United States of America. – Crest, on a wreath a dexter arm clothed & ruffled proper, grasping a broad sword, the Pommel & hilt. *Topaz* – with this motto, – “Ense petit placidam sub Libertate quietam” and around the seal, “Sigillum reipublicae Massachusettensis.”

This design is very similar, although not exactly the same, as the modern state seal (see illustrations). The Avery document was dated December 13, 1780. Ten days later, on December 23, Paul Revere billed the state for “engraving a seal – £900/0/0.”

(A notation on the bill records that Revere was paid £15 for his work – the apparent gross discrepancy in the amounts billed for and received was due to the fact that Revere calculated his account in old, inflated currency, but was paid in “new” money). Because the Avery document was included in the Revere Family Papers, and because Revere billed the state for engraving the seal only ten days later, it seems reasonable to assume that Cushing, or some other official, gave the work to Revere, although there is no document stating this fact in so many words.

The Massachusetts Archives has many examples of the State seal, all more or less the same, used at different times



Massachusetts Colony Seal known to have been made and engraved by Paul Revere. This seal was in use from 1775 to 1780.

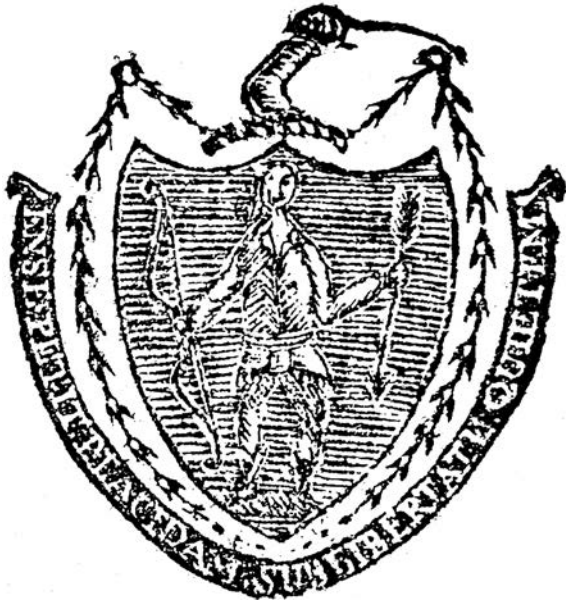
Interested in medical history?

SAVE THE DATE! SATURDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2018

“Picture of Health—Medical Histories at Boston’s House Museums”

The House Museum Alliance of Downtown Boston explores various aspects of medicine and health in the lives of Boston families spanning three centuries. Attend a special lecture at the Paul Revere House “Beyond the Ride: Paul Revere and Medicine” at 10:30 am; and special tours at the Nichols House at 12:00 am; Prescott House at 2:00 pm; and Gibson House at 3:00 pm. Pre-registration required. Purchase tickets online at Eventbrite www.eventbrite.com for all four historic house presentations (\$25.00; members \$20) or for two programs only: Revere & Nichols House OR Prescott & Gibson House (\$15.00; members \$12).

For more information, contact the Paul Revere House at 617-523-2338



Massachusetts State Seal from a document in the early 1780s. Because a document dated December 13, 1780, specifying what elements the seal should include was found in Paul Revere's papers, and because Revere is known to have billed the State for engraving a seal a few days later, it seems logical to conclude that Revere engraved the design for this seal. Whether Revere fabricated the seal as well is not known. Courtesy, Stephanie Dyson, Massachusetts State Archives.

over the past two centuries. The difficulty is figuring out which one of these might be the “original” state seal. Presumably, any document from just after 1780 would have a Revere-designed seal on it. Unfortunately, only a few documents with some sort of seal or device on them have turned up from the 1780s. Stephanie Dyson at the State Archives informed me in 1997 that the few seals or devices on documents from the early 1780s are round and resemble in many ways the Massachusetts Colony seal known to have been engraved by Revere and used from 1775 to 1780 (see illustration). Thus, she felt that these seals were the ones engraved by Revere. ❖



The Massachusetts State seal today, from a recent document.

Carved Ivory Denture *Continued from page 2*

Revere placed in Warren's mouth. This is considered one of the first recorded instances of forensic dentistry – identifying a body by dental work. Sources relaying this story after the fact differ whether it was one tooth fastened with a wire or two (if two, could it have been similar to our carved device?). There is an entry in one of Revere's books for pulling a tooth for Warren. Since Revere's advertisements do not mention pulling teeth (normally a surgeon-dentist would do that), Revere may have done this only under Warren's instruction. Revere's two advertisements do not mention pulling teeth, filling cavities, or making full dentures (such as the sets made for George Washington by various dentists, not Revere!).

We do not know if he did not do more because he lacked the skill (which seems unlikely given that he mastered other new tasks such as bell-making and copper-rolling when he wanted to) or because he did not have the time or money to invest in it. Since dentistry for him was a sideline business he may have stuck to simpler fixes. Dental historian Bernhard Wolf Weinberger, D.D.S., points out that Revere's advertisements do not claim he is a dentist (but that he carries on the business of dentistry) and that his work was more prosthetic than operative. ❖

One-Hundredth Anniversary Meeting of the New England Museum Association

2018 NEMA Conference



Museums on the Move

Stamford, Connecticut
November 7–9, 2018

nema

Anniversaries are a time for reminiscing and for looking ahead. We'll be doing both at the upcoming Centennial NEMA Conference. Our conference theme this year is *Museums on the Move*, investigating how museums have evolved since the very first NEMA conference and how they are positioning themselves for success in the century ahead. It's our field's chance to take stock – to reflect on where we've come from and where we are going, and to reset our GPS if necessary along the way. *For more information, contact NEMA at www.nemanet.org*



Fall Events

AT THE
PAUL REVERE HOUSE
& OUR NEW EDUCATION
AND VISITOR CENTER

19 NORTH SQUARE
BOSTON MA 02113
WWW.PAULREVEREHOUSE.ORG
617-523-2338

In the spirit of Back to School season, this fall we offer many opportunities for learning new things. From 18th century music to colonial craft traditions to chances to examine painstakingly reproduced clothing up close, our Paul Revere's Boston events on Saturday afternoons offer something for everyone. This year our annual fall lecture series at Old South Meeting House examines Boston's reaction to the Townshend Acts, upon their 250th anniversary. The free lectures will be held at the Old South Meeting House on Wednesdays in September. Our on-site Paul Revere's Boston events are included with admission to the museum: adults \$5.00; seniors and college students \$4.50; children ages 5–17 \$1.00. Members and North End residents are admitted free at all times. Through October 31 the Revere House is open daily 9:30 am–5:15 pm. Beginning on November 1, the museum is open daily 9:30 am–4:15 pm.

PAUL REVERE'S BOSTON

SEPTEMBER

1 Hammered Dulcimer, 1:00–3:00 pm. Award-winning musician Dave Neiman plays jigs, reels, and Baroque and Renaissance tunes that Paul Revere and his family may have enjoyed.

8 Patriot Fife and Drum, 1:00–3:00 pm. Enjoy a lively concert of music that accompanied colonists as they marched, danced, wooed their beloveds, and waged war. David Vose and Sue Walko provide fascinating insight into each selection they perform.

15 Meet Harriet, Daughter of Paul Revere, 1:00, 1:45, 2:30 pm. Diane Lent brings to life Harriet Revere, one of Paul Revere's 16 children. Join her in reminiscing about her father's dramatic life, the adventures of her many siblings, nieces, and nephews, and growing up in the historic North End.



Diane Lent as Harriet Revere

22 Tinsmithing Demonstration, 1:00–3:00 pm. Who made the ubiquitous lanterns, sconces, and other tin wares of the 18th century? A tinker! Larry Leonard produces and sells examples of his craft while describing the techniques, tools, and materials used since the Reveres' era.

29 Printing Demonstration, 1:00–3:00 pm. Did you know Paul Revere worked as an engraver? Using similar technology R. P. Hale produces copies of his own wood block image of the Revere House on a hand-cranked press. Prints (available for sale) are only made at the Revere House.

OCTOBER

6 Paper Marbling, 1:00–3:00 pm. See how colonial craftsmen created eye-catching marbled papers. Watch as R. P. Hale floats pigments in water, swirls the colors, then transfers the designs to paper. It may look like magic but Hale will explain the very real science behind this fascinating phenomenon.

13 The Clothes They Wore: Puritan Fashions and their Status Markers, 1:00–3:00 pm. Drop in to view a display in the Revere Room of the Visitor Center of three historically correct reproduction dresses, each reflecting a different decade of the Puritan era, hand crafted by Ruby-Grace Miller.

Co-sponsored by the Partnership of the Historic Bostons, Inc.

20 Beyond the Ride: Paul Revere and Medicine, 1:00, 1:45, 2:30 pm. Did you know that Paul Revere was a dentist? Learn about Revere's many unexpected connections to the medical field in this special lecture by Nina Rodwin, graduate student and historical interpreter at the Paul Revere House.

Please note: No program on October 27.

FALL LECTURE SERIES

Lowell Lecture Series presented by the Paul Revere Memorial Association at Old South Meeting House

Lead, Glass, Paper, Tea: The Townshend Acts, Colonial Unrest, and the Occupation of Boston, 1768

September 5 from 6:30–7:30 pm. **"A certain sloop called the Liberty": Charles Townsend, John Hancock and the Boston Madeira Party,** William Fowler, Jr., Distinguished Professor of History, Northeastern University.

September 12 from 6:30–7:30 pm. **Paul Revere's Sons of Liberty Bowl: An American Icon,** Gerald W. R. Ward, Senior Curator of American Decorative Arts and Sculpture, Emeritus, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

September 19 from 6:30–7:30 pm. **Liberty Teas and Nervous Collectors: The Townshend Acts in Boston,** actors from The Boston Tea Party Ships & Museum™

September 26 from 6:30–7:30 pm. **Tyranny Unmasked: The Townsend Acts in Britain, Ireland, and America,** Eliga Gould, Professor of History, University of New Hampshire.

All Lectures Presented at Old South Meeting House, 310 Washington Street, in downtown Boston. For more information contact the Paul Revere House, at (617) 523-2338. This series is made possible by a grant from the Lowell Institute.

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The PAUL REVERE MEMORIAL ASSOCIATION

19 NORTH SQUARE
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02113

Distinguish yourself as an active supporter of America's cultural heritage. Membership fees help preserve both the Revere and Hichborn Houses, and subsidize educational programs for schoolchildren. In appreciation for your support, you will receive the quarterly *Revere House Gazette*, a 10% discount on all purchases from the museum store, unlimited free admission to our historic buildings and programs, and much more.

Please Join the Friends of Paul Revere Today!

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE: _____

PLEASE CHECK ONE:

- \$20 INDIVIDUAL
- \$35 FAMILY
- \$50-99 SUPPORTING
- \$100-249 PATRON
- \$250-499 PATRIOT
- \$500 SILVER CIRCLE

My additional donation of \$_____ is enclosed to support the museum's educational programs.

I don't care to join at this time but would like to make a contribution of \$_____ to the museum.

**Please make check payable to the Paul Revere House and mail to:
Paul Revere House, 19 North Square, Boston, MA 02113.**