

## Season 4 Episode 4: Interview With Ryan Bauchman

**Tegan** 00:11

Welcome back to Revere House Radio. I'm your host, Tegan Kehoe, and for the final episode this season, we're moving past April 18 and 19th, 1775, into the next couple of decades. My guest today is Ryan Bachman, who was a research fellow with the Paul Revere House this past summer, studying Black residents of the North End neighborhood between 1780 and 1810. For those not familiar, the North End of Boston is the Paul Revere House's immediate neighborhood. Welcome to the show, Ryan.

**Ryan** 00:40

Thank you for having me. Tegan, it's good to be back.

**Tegan** 00:42

Can you tell the listeners a little bit about yourself and how you came to this research project?

**Ryan** 00:48

Sure. So I'm currently a professor of history at Laurel Ridge Community College in Middletown, Virginia. And about a year and a half ago, I finished my doctorate in history at the University of Delaware, where my work focused on the, kind of, material culture of the early American republic, with a special focus on the built environment. And before coming to work for Revere House, I had worked on a pair of mapping projects similar to the one that we're going to be talking about today, plotting out historical Black neighborhoods in Virginia and Delaware. And in the course of my dissertation research, I had found a lot of documents of the sort I had used to create those maps in Boston, but on a whole nother level in terms of detail. And so that kind of...that left me wanting to do something similar in Boston, just because there was this vast amount of resources that I wasn't used to using.

**Tegan** 01:49

Yeah.

**Ryan** 01:50

And when I saw the project at Revere House, I was excited to potentially develop the map that we'll be discussing today.

**Tegan** 01:59

That's great. Could you tell us a little bit about the online interactive map that you created as part of this project?

**Ryan** 02:07

Sure! So the map I created through the program StoryMaps -- which seems to be becoming a more and more popular, I guess, vehicle for exploring these types of projects -- it wound up including, I believe, 30 sites in the North End dealing with the neighborhood's Black history from approximately 1780 -- maybe it went a little bit earlier, which we can discuss a little bit later on, if you're interested in in that

kind of logistics -- up until mainly 1810, but with a little bit of some stories went over that threshold, just to better wrap them up rather than just kind of cutting them off at a kind of a hard date. And each site on the map is either a place where a Black North Ender lived or worked during this time period. And from visiting the different icons on the map, they have brief biographical info on these northern residents, and in many cases, tying them into larger historical events that are going on, either in Boston or on a larger scale in New England or the United States, or even internationally, in a few instances.

**Tegan** 03:18

That's great. So let's talk about the use of an interactive map as a tool for sharing this history. In your opinion, what are the advantages of talking about specifically where people lived or worked?

**Ryan** 03:28

So what really drew me to a map -- an interactive map -- as the kind of a means for exploring these stories, is that sometimes these types of histories can seem either distant or abstract. And tying them into places that people already are familiar with...it was my hope that that might make these a bit more immediate and kind of relevant to people in the community. Even though, as we'll discuss, a lot of these sites -- actually, all of these sites that on on the map -- whether they were workplaces or homes, are no longer standing. But I was my hope that grounding these stories in place might make them seem a bit more relevant and approachable for people in the North End.

**Tegan** 04:08

Yeah, that makes sense. Certainly, as a museum, the Paul Revere House would agree that grounding things in place is useful, because that's a lot of what a historic house museum does. So you mentioned that the various stories in the map connect with local and national and even international events. Can you give us a couple of examples of those stories and how they're connected in various localities?

**Ryan** 04:33

Sure. So one...I guess, thinking about internationally, right off the bat, a series of stories that I was surprised to find, and then really got excited going down various rabbit holes. Just the amount of North Enders during this period who are coming from, I guess, what formerly would have been called "the French West Indies." There are a lot of people coming to Boston from Martinique, for example, and what at the time, would have still been Saint Domingue, but soon would have been established as the independent nation of Haiti. So there is a lot of, kind of, international movement of people, of people who are...these tended to be free people of color from Saint Domingue who were fleeing the Haitian Revolution in the 1790s. And in some cases they are going to Philadelphia first, which is kind of the major destination for a lot of refugees coming from the French West Indies, and moving to Boston. And then, in some cases, it seems as though there are people coming directly from Saint Domingue and, to a lesser extent, Martinique, which is also experiencing its own kind of revolutionary turmoil at the time. People who are directly coming from those islands right to the North End and building a pretty vibrant community.

**Tegan** 05:50

That's great. And do you have a sense of what brought them to Boston? Were they looking for a place with less active conflict, with less violence? Or were they looking for economic opportunities as well? Or what made Boston appealing?

**Ryan 06:04**

That is a great question. It seems as though there is -- and this is an area where I'd be interested in doing even further research to clarify some of these migration patterns that I found in the...while making the map -- But it seems as though once there is a community that is settled in Boston -- and as you mentioned, I think a lot of the appeal of coming to Boston is getting away from the conflict Saint Domingue, coming to cities like Boston Philadelphia, where there's not this kind of revolutionary violence going on -- and it seems as though, once there is this kind of small community that's established in Boston, they may be encouraging other people to move to the North End, because there is an influx, especially of trades people who are coming in, specifically barbers And from tracing the tax records, a fair amount of them seem to be doing quite well in the North End after they've settled here. So there may be some aspect of people finding economic opportunity and success and encouraging other people to come to the area. There's also an interesting aspect of Boston's Catholic history that I really wasn't expecting to find while doing this project for the Revere House. There's a lot of networking going on with the early Catholic Church in Boston, which is really kind of in its infancy in this, at this point, post-Puritan but still not-really-welcoming-to-Catholics city. The diocese in Boston is helping refugees from Martinique and Saint Domingue, and setting them up with housing. So there's also this aspect of, I don't know if it would be correct to say "mutual aid," but kind of a charitable Catholic church that is actively helping people get on their feet once they've arrived in North America.

**Tegan 07:55**

Yeah, that's really interesting. So we're starting to hear about, kind of, what makes this time period really kind of special in terms of what's going on globally, what's going on in Boston. But can you tell us a bit more about how you chose 1780 to 1810, roughly, and how that became the focus of this research?

**Ryan 08:14**

Sure. So when I initially chose this time period, I was mainly interested in looking at this period when slavery in Massachusetts kind of gradually comes to an end. As I mentioned before, I think my earliest date on the map wound up being 1776. The first entry explores an enslaved woman who frees herself and goes to the Massachusetts countryside and is -- successfully frees herself. She's not recaptured by her enslavers. And she is an example of -- during this period, the late 1770s early 1780s -- enslaved people in Boston, and Massachusetts more generally, are freeing themselves, or, another way to put it, running away in higher numbers and actively weakening the institution of slavery in Massachusetts, which paves the way in the 1780s or the famous series of court cases that declare slavery unconstitutional in Massachusetts, and kind of bring about the legal end of slavery. And then, as far as the ending dates of around 1810 for most cases, I was interested in, kind of, book ending, I guess, the approximate span of time of a generation, to see how Black Bostonians are adjusting to life in this society where slavery is no longer legal, but at the same time they still do not have equal rights or equal opportunities. So kind of exploring how they're adjusting to life in Massachusetts during this era, and

doing things like setting up their own communities, their own churches, their own neighborhoods, their own institutions during this time period.

**Tegan** 09:53

Yeah, and from the Paul Revere House perspective, Paul Revere, who was a White man, and his family, who were White, lived in what's now the Paul Revere House until about 1800 and then moved just up the street. And so this time period, they're in the North End the whole time. They're going through their own changes. And after the revolution, Revere is really able to succeed in business and industry in a way that he hadn't been able to before the revolution, but he's having kind of a wildly different experience of that time period than many of his neighbors are. So it's really interesting for us to be able to hear some of the stories of what's going on for his neighbors. And so we've already heard a little bit about some of the stories, but could you share your top two or three favorite stories of individuals that you learned about during your research. Yeah, they're a stones throw away.

**Ryan** 10:43

One I thought was particularly interesting was the story of Anne Marie Flameaut, and she actually lived right up the street from the Revere House. I think right now the the restaurant Chao Roma is built on the site of her home. So I think less than a, less than a block away from the Revere House. Yeah, this was -- when I was making the map -- this was an exciting story, because it was just such a local site to the Revere House itself. And she's originally from Martinique. She's born -- the records are a little sketchy -- but she was probably born free and of both African and European ancestry. And in the 1790s as the French West Indies are experiencing political turmoil related to the revolution back in France and then the revolution going on in Saint Domingue, or Haiti, she and her grandmother leave Martinique, they flee to North America. It looks like they probably are among the refugees who originally settled in Philadelphia. She and her grandmother moved to Boston a little bit later on, and she moves to Boston. She marries several times, I believe she has...she is widowed twice. Two of her husbands pass away, and her third marriage is annulled, but she winds up running a boarding house on the site of approximate site of Chao Roma for around 30 years. And it's a boarding house that really is a center of kind of Boston's black Catholic community -- Boston's community of refugees who have come to the city from the West Indies, earlier on in the century. Anne Marie Flameaut really is this kind of pillar of the neighborhood for 30 years, running this boarding house. It was a three story building. The top two stories were set aside for borders. The bottom floor was rented out to businesses. So I guess she's... she would be more of, I guess, just kind of a general landlord, but she becomes this pretty successful landlord in the North End. And after owning that property for about 30 years -- or I should say, there's some confusion about when exactly the ownership transfers to her. This was a site that was technically owned by the Catholic Church, but it seems that they let her use it as an income generating property, and then eventually they sign it over to her. She pretty much immediately sells it, makes a huge profit and moves to another house on Anne street. But kind of this story of Anne Marie Flameaut, who is this refugee from Martinique who goes on to be a pretty successful landlord in the North End, that was one story that really stood out, especially because it is a site that is so close to the Revere House.

**Tegan** 13:30

Yeah, that's very cool. And you mentioned that really none of the buildings that you're looking at still stand. So that would be on the site of modern businesses, but not the same building.

**Ryan** 13:40

Right, that's exactly right. Another story that, I guess, had a cool material culture aspect to it that turned up from this was finding the tenement house where Salem Poor lived for a few years in the 1780s and just kind of looking at the history of the house itself. Like, in the tax records, it keeps decreasing in value, decreasing in value, decreasing in value, and then eventually it has, like a notation "torn down." So just him living in this kind of, I guess, literally deteriorating tenement house, which is kind of across from, I guess, St Stephen's church, is what it's called now, across from the mall. Just him, kind of, having to live in this, I guess, really poor condition house, really kind of hammering home how his life kind of falls apart after the American Revolution. And he's kind of briefly recognized as being like a hero at Bunker Hill, and then society kind of turns its back on him by the 1780s to the point where he's living in what was probably an unsafe, falling down, apartment building.

**Tegan** 14:56

Mhhmm. Yeah.

**Ryan** 14:58

Another story that really stood out was the story of a man named Job Riggins. And Riggins's home actually stood kind of...if we think about the Paul Revere Mall today, his home would have been almost exactly where the Paul Revere statue is today.

**Tegan** 15:14

Oh, wow.

**Ryan** 15:15

Yeah, that was a pretty cool coincidence. It would have been...I guess if you're looking towards Old North Church, it would have been kind of just to the left of where the Revere statue is today, approximately. And Riggins is born into slavery in Georgia in the 1750s. He's emancipated in Georgia in 1804 and he's an example of free people of color from outside the city of Boston who moved to the North End during this period. So he moves from Georgia, he gets a job working on the docks in the North End. And after several years of unloading ships, loading ships, he begins to buy up property and establish himself as a landlord. Really interesting thing about Job Riggins is he establishes himself as a community leader in the North End, and there is some indication that his status is similar to the "Black kings" or "Black governors" of New England in the colonial era. Yeah there are records that refer to him, for example, as "King Riggins." In some records, he is acting as a mediator within North End's Black community; so, settling disputes between people. For example, if a business owner has an unpaid bill, he would help mediate something like that. Also kind of mediating relationships between the North End's Black community and Boston's White authorities. So there's some indication that -- this is another area where there's, I think, some really interesting research yet to be done -- where there may have been this kind of elected community leader in the North End who is kind of a mediator between different parties and representing the community's interests on a larger scale. And it is interesting that when he dies, I believe in the 1830s, there are accounts that he does have this very kind of elaborate funeral, where this really elegant hearse is carrying him, uh, his remains through the North End down to a cemetery in a different neighborhood further south. But he does appear to be this pretty important

community leader that there's not too much written about, but I think there's a lot more still there to investigate with Joe Riggins.

**Tegan** 17:30

And you mentioned what's written about him. Can you tell us a bit about the sources that you used for this project? What's what's out there?

**Ryan** 17:38

Sure. So in terms of primary sources, most of the sources I found most helpful were a combination of tax records and historic maps. The City of Boston's tax records are really helpfully and unusually detailed. In many cases, you can trace not only where people who are landowners are living, but also people who own enough personal property to pay taxes are living. There's an early federal income tax in 1798 which is pretty detailed as well. And combining this early federal income tax with the Boston City taxes, along with historic maps, it was really interesting to see just how closely you could pinpoint where people were living. And in terms of secondary source records, there's a lot of exciting current research going on today on this type of topic, but there's also, I found, a pretty helpful older body of research as well. Boston...specifically an earlier book that was really helpful was George A. Levesque's *Black Boston*. This was a book that had some just general information on the City of Boston's Black history, as well as the North End. Along that same kind of vein was James Oliver and Lois E Horton's *Black Bostonians*. And some more current research that's going on today, there's a historian and journalist in Boston, Dart Adams, who's done some really interesting historical work on Boston's Black history in general. But he's also written on the North End, specifically looking at the Copp's Hill Burying Ground, and from there, expanding outward to investigate a little bit about just how the North End really was the historic center of Boston's Black community during the 18th and early 19th centuries.

**Tegan** 19:27

I'll link to all of these in the show notes. Do you have any recommendations of resources about Black history? Are there others, if people are interested in this time period, that you might recommend?

**Ryan** 19:39

One that really jumps out -- and it is still somewhat regionally specific -- is Joanne Pope Melish's *Disowning Slavery*. And this is a book that specifically looks at the era that I focused on in this project, expanded upon a bit, but looking more at New England more generally and looking at how slavery is coming to an end in most of the states during this region, during-- most of the states in the region during this time period. But also looking at the new laws that are being...new discriminatory laws that are being passed; the fact that the end of slavery does not mean the start of racial equality in the region; and the lasting impact of slavery, not only in Massachusetts, but also the other five states as well.

**Tegan** 20:36

So back to primary sources -- or I guess this would be kind of in between primary and secondary -- I remember that when you were researching, you told me a strange story you encountered several times in later 19th Century sources, about a whole street in the neighborhood burning down. Can you tell us about that story?

**Ryan 20:55**

Yeah, this was like you mentioned. This was one of the weirder discoveries in this project, because it is something that was repeated so often. And going back, I actually, I was able to find the origin of when this story first appeared. And it first appeared in a local history published in 1887 by a kind of local minister and antiquarian. And according to their history of the North End -- of the current site of the Paul Revere Mall, which at the time was known as "Robinson's Alley," or sometimes referred to as "Robertson's Alley." This was really -- in the late 1700s early 1800s -- this was, I think his book actually referred to it as the the "headquarters of Boston's Black community" at the time. This is where -- in the kind of early 1800s -- not only kind of the center of the North End's Black community, but also Boston's Black community tended to live kind of along the current site of the Paul Revere Mall. And according to this local history, after the war of 1812, the residents living in the area, around what at the time would have been Robinson's Alley, wanted to kind of show their patriotism, celebrate the American victory over the British, so they set up their own illumination where every house that actually lined the mall itself put lit candles in their windows. But then, according to this book published in 1887, once they had done that, the people who lived along the along the alley were curious about what people in other sections of the city were doing to celebrate so they left, went out into the North End and points beyond. They left the candles lit in the windows. And according to him, the entire street burned down. And this was and then -- from the book in 1887 -- this story is repeated in several other places. But from what I can find, this did not happen, at least not on that larger the scale. The tax records, for example, don't show any significant change in property valuations or people living along the street during this time period. So it seems as though there was no massive fire that destroyed the section of the city. There's also no contemporary newspaper accounts about all of these houses burning down. So it really is...it's a it's a strange mystery about why in 1887 this historian is telling this story.

**Tegan 23:58**

Yeah, who invented this fire? and when and how did this guy...yeah.

**Ryan 24:04**

Yeah, it's very strange. I wasn't able to find just from a little bit of digging anything similar that happened in other areas of the city. But the houses along Robinson's Alley definitely did not all burn to the ground one night in 1815. That's, I guess, a strange kind of myth that must have grown up by the 1880s.

**Tegan 24:29**

Yeah, and when you first told me about this, I remember we talked a little bit about...because we really don't know how this rumor started, it's hard to evaluate "Was racism at play?" The story sounds like the people who burned the alley down were being incredibly foolish, but we don't know anything about how this story started, other than it seems to have been a not-true story.

**Ryan 24:58**

Right, right...Yeah, I was hoping, when kind of looking into it, if there...if I had been able to find more on who started the who started the rumor, if there would have been a kernel of this being just kind of a almost racist folk tale about something that happened. Because, if...to believe the story, every single person living along the alley -- which would have been dozens of people at this point --all decided to

leave their candles lit in their window, and all left the alley at the same time to go look at other people's celebrations. So yeah, it's unclear. The historian -- I've got his name written here -- who first, kind of, writes about this was a man named Edward G Porter. And it's unclear where Porter...if he's the guy who's making up this story, or if he's heard it from some other resident of Boston at the time.

**Tegan 25:53**

Yeah! So I know that the Paul Revere Mall, as a city-run public plaza dates from the early 20th Century. And I don't actually know much about what it was immediately before then, but my understanding is that it was no longer a predominantly Black neighborhood at the time that it became the Paul Revere Mall. Is that your understanding as well?

**Ryan 26:19**

Yeah, that's what I've found from the kind of property records, as well as some secondary sources that kind of look at the history of immigration in the North End. By the time all of the buildings are raised along the...what's today the mall, and it's turned into...I believe at first, it was just supposed to be a kind of vaguely Cuban Prado, and then later on, it became named for Revere, if I remember correctly. But at the time that that project is being done, it's a predominantly Italian neighborhood. All of the records of people who are kind of having to leave their buildings, which were mostly tenements along the Mall at that point, they were mostly Italian or of Italian ancestry and born in the US.

**Tegan 27:17**

And so the North End has remained an Italian-American neighborhood since the late 19th Century. You mentioned that it was originally kind of conceived of as a Cuban Prado, which is a public square, and that is the name that many people in the North End call the Paul Revere Mall today, is "The Prado."

**Ryan 27:52**

Interesting! And it's funny, kind of, you mentioning the kind of class dynamics of the the mall itself. One of the...just kind of thinking about some of the the interesting stories that jumped out when doing the project was the fact that this was -- what is today the mall -- in the late 1700s, early 1800s, was kind of the center of as large a Black community as it was. There is historical research that out there -- including at the Revere House, previous interns have have done some research -- on the fact that this would -- at the time would have been -- again, Robinson's or Robertson's Alley, kind of turns into this pretty important, influential Black neighborhood by the early 1800s. But it is...it's interesting to see that...kind of the...trace the development of that neighborhood over time from the 1780s when the first Black residents are buying property along what, at the time, only had one other house standing in the area. And then as they're building, kind of moving to the area, building their own homes, other people, kind of -- other people of color in Boston -- flock to Robinson's Alley, and build their own homes. And for about a generation, it seems like it is what we might consider today to be a fairly middle-class neighborhood, this kind of first generation of people who are moving to the alley from elsewhere in the city and establishing themselves. In many cases, they are passing their homes on to their children. And there's almost a pattern of the children selling the homes and moving away. And in some cases, they're moving to West Boston, to the kind of newer Black neighborhood that is developing at this time on the..I guess it would be the north side of Beacon Hill, if my geography is correct. And as this kind of second generation is selling their property on Robinson's Alley, moving to West Boston, kind of absentee

landlords are moving in, buying up the houses, subdividing them into smaller apartments. In some cases they're building these little...the historical record refers to them as "10 foot buildings," which, in a lot of cases, these are kind of little almost stalls that trades people keep to use like workshops.

**Tegan** 30:49

Interesting!

**Ryan** 30:50

But as these -- yeah! -- as these absentee landlords are buying a property -- and these absentee landlords are overwhelmingly white Bostonians who are not from originally from the area around Robinson's alley -- and as they just turn it into, essentially, apartments, the buildings deteriorate. The tax valuations show that the kind of neighborhood goes from being a pretty middle class Black neighborhood in the early 1800s, to by the 1830s it's a pretty low income area. It's becoming...it's starting to become known for kind of unsanitary conditions. And then you mentioned kind of the history of immigration in the North End. In the 1840s it starts to become a mostly Irish section of the city, the kind of remaining Black residents of Robinson's Alley have mostly left by the 1840s. And they're pretty much all gone by the 1850s when it's again, a neighborhood of Irish tenants living in these very crowded tenement buildings and small apartment buildings that have just kind of been thrown up on the spot by these absentee landlords.

**Tegan** 32:05

And you mentioned that a lot of the Black population had moved to sort of the western part of Boston and Beacon Hill. So for Bostonians who are listening, that's kind of what's considered the "back" of Beacon Hill; as in behind the State House, not facing the Common. And it's neighborhoods that today are kind of Mass General Hospital through the West End and up towards City Hall Plaza. And the West End itself has its own fascinating history of having been a newcomer neighborhood, having been, at different times, middle class or very working class. Worth a podcast or five of its own. But that's just a little context for...because none of our geographical designations mean anything in Boston, because they're all topsy turvy. Or to provide that context.

**Ryan** 33:03

Oh, that's good for me too, as well.

**Tegan** 33:06

So we've touched on this a little bit. But can you tell me more about some of the challenges of doing this project? And if you can choose, what was the biggest challenge?

**Ryan** 33:17

Sure. So one challenge was the fact that, kind of, wanting to do a history of kind of Black North Enders during this period, and there not being any historical documents that were kind of left behind by these people themselves.

**Tegan** 33:36

Mhmm, ok.

**Ryan 33:36**

So a lack of historical documents that really their own voice is coming through. Instead, it's a lot of kind of legal...I guess you would say legal documents, like tax valuations; probate information, in some cases, which is really helpful, giving a sense of the personal property that a lot of these people owned; census data, which is just kind of sterile and essentially numbers at this point. But that was kind of one of the areas where....doing a project like this, one of the kind of difficult areas is wanting to get these people their own kind of voice, get their own voice out there as much as possible, and in the overwhelming majority of cases, that...just nothing survived from them themselves. There are a few cases where, for example, there's a woman named Chloe Spear who was a boarding housekeeper. She even -- and even this document is a little iffy -- it's an account of her life, but, but it's supposedly done with input from herself, but it's written by a white parishioner of her church. So there are..it does give some some interesting information about her early life, specifically in West Africa, before she is abducted and trafficked across the Atlantic to North America. But even that source, it's being written not by her, but by a kind of literate friend from the church. And then another, I guess, challenge for a project like this is something we've touched on a little bit already, the fact that the sites themselves are no longer there.

**Tegan 35:35**

Right.

**Ryan 35:36**

That was...at the at the start, I had held a hope that maybe there'd be some of the kind of handful of surviving structures in the North End that might have had some kind of connection to some of these people who are being covered in the project. Unfortunately, that turned out not to be the case. So that was...that would have made -- kind of an actual physical building would have made -- I think, have added something even more tangible to a project like this. But unfortunately that was not to be. I think a few survived until the late 19th Century, and then, from what I found, they were mostly torn down to make room for things like apartment buildings.

**Tegan 36:19**

Right, right. That's a challenge in historic preservation today, is that earlier generations of preservationists had their own agendas and had their own ideas about which structures were valuable, which stories were valuable. And there's a lot about Paul Revere that's valuable other than the fact that he was White and the people who saved this building were White and cared about that. But there weren't necessarily champions of these interesting, you know, Black landlords who had self emancipated from slavery. And there's a very interesting story there, but at the time that the buildings are being demolished for new developments, there isn't someone saying, "Wait, this is important." Or if they're saying it, they don't have enough power to actually make it happen.

**Ryan 37:15**

Right, right.

**Tegan 37:18**

So before we wrap up, can I ask, what's something that you wish more people knew or understood about this period in history?

**Ryan** 37:29

Sure. So something -- specifically thinking, I guess, along local lines, or in terms of local history, kind of radiating out from the Revere House -- is the fact that these types of stories covered in the map occurred almost everywhere in the North End during this period. That the kind of the lives that are being lived by this community during the late 18th and early 19th Centuries, their kind of stories are kind of...there are touch points for these all over the neighborhood. I think, looking at the map, once it was wrapped up, I was surprised to see that, I think, you couldn't go a block without finding a place where someone worked or lived, and just knowing that these stories are all there, just kind of under, I guess, layers of asphalt and concrete and brick. So there is just kind of the fact that all of these stories are out there. And the exciting thing is that there are so many that are just waiting to...for someone who can have the time to really delve in and give them a kind of a deeper look than even a map project like this was able to do.

**Tegan** 38:50

Yeah, absolutely. Well, thank you so much for joining me on the podcast today, Ryan,

**Ryan** 38:56

Thank you for having me!

**Tegan** 39:00

We just heard from Ryan Bachman, a former research fellow at the Paul Revere House. Now listeners follow me as we step into the Paul Revere House for our favorite questions.

**Derek** 39:15

So welcome everybody. Welcome back to our favorite questions segment. Today I am here with Colton. So tell me a little bit about yourself. How long have you been here?

**Colton** 39:24

So I've been here since the fall. I'm doing this kind of in conjunction with also being a teaching artist at other places. So being a theatrical, presentative person is what I love to do. I love doing it here.

**Derek** 39:36

I mean, yeah, I was gonna say that's very in line with what we do here. I mean, we're in front of a crowd talking to them about about history and Paul Revere.

**Colton** 39:44

Absolutely.

**Derek** 39:45

And so to start off our segment, what is your favorite question that people ask you pretty regularly here?

**Colton 39:52**

It's funny that I got this regularly, because you'd think something so easy would only ever come once at a blue moon. But I've been asked like, four times in the past month "What's your favorite question that people ask you?" That's kind of funny, I'd say. And my favorite answer to give them, of course, is always, you know, my favorite detail of whatever room I'm in.

**Derek 40:11**

Right. Oh, yeah.

**Colton 40:11**

And that way I can open the conversation up to talking more about the period and about Paul. People always say, "Well, what's your favorite thing to talk about?" and I always point them at an object or a part of the house. When I'm upstairs, I always point them at the nogging in the wall, the little open slat that we have, and that's something that people tend to not ever really look at longer than a few seconds.

**Derek 40:33**

Yeah, over there in the corner...anything that's about like, the physical like...

**Colton 40:37**

Yeah, the physical structure.

**Derek 40:38**

Yeah, that's really fun to talk about, because it's some of the coolest aspects of the house that I think are the most important to make sure that people walk away from it with, so they really know how old the house really is.

**Colton 40:39**

Yeah, and the exhibits that we have have little slides that talk about the history of some particular objects that are in the room. But most of them talk about the objects in the house, but not actually the physical house itself.

**Derek 41:01**

Right, yeah.

**Colton 41:02**

..the beams or the insulation in the wall.

**Derek 41:05**

Yeah, just how old it is, yeah. Okay, so what are some questions that you wish people would ask you more regularly?

**Colton 41:13**

I'd say, I think, honestly, just more about the house itself. Every single time someone asks me about the fireplace, or how much of the house is real from the original house, that it always makes it so much more easy to talk about any aspect of the house, to hear about it physically. I do also like talking about the objects. Over the winter season, talking about the holiday objects that we put out was also really great. But it's always when someone asks about, kind of like, the nature of the house -- "Who lived in here at this time? What might they have done in this room?" -- that are always the more fun questions to answer.

**Derek 41:50**

Yeah! I mean, it gives us a chance to interpret, you know, to kind of like, fill in the gaps for them and make them sort of feel...

**Colton 41:55**

Exactly! And why I love talking about the insulation in the wall upstairs is that, yeah, that's objectively something that I feel sounds like a boring thing to most people: wall insulation, but then you link it to the fact that Back Bay is mostly filled in. You dig down 100 feet, you'll find the same stuff in the walls, and then everyone in the room goes "ooh!", y'know?

**Derek 41:56**

Right, yeah, yeah! I think it's also just, it's kind of fun to get that reaction from people, because, you know, you can kind of get into the emotions of just sort of saying the same facts over and over again -- of just saying who the, you know, his wives were, what all the stuff that he owned was. But like being able to, like, kind of get into it with people, and get them to actually be like "Whoa, that's really interesting and cool. It's something I never would have thought of!"

**Colton 42:35**

People love hearing about Paul Revere and his wife and his family. But people are always more interested in imagining themselves in his shoes.

**Derek 42:44**

Absolutely.

**Colton 42:45**

Like just today, I was talking to people, and I said, "So this is where his wife would have been waiting when he was on his Midnight Ride."

**Derek 42:52**

Yeah.

**Colton 42:53**

And both of them just kind of went "Oh, we hadn't thought of that."

**Derek 42:57**

Yeah!

**Colton 42:58**

Then that's such a specific moment that they get to sit in for just a moment, and they realize that it's a lot more human, a lot more lived in, than people feel walking through museums normally. Oh yeah, absolutely. And another thing, I love pointing out that the knots in the beams in the floor upstairs--

**Derek 43:07**

Absolutely! And I feel like them having an understanding of truly how old the structure is, and how long some of these pieces of wood have just been in that space, and how many people have now come through the house, have lived in the house. It really puts everything into perspective of the...if the walls could talk, they would tell us a whole lot. Oh, yeah, absolutely. Yes

**Colton 43:31**

-- that show how many pairs of feet over the past few 100 years have worn away the bits in between the hard wood. Yeah, evidence of hundreds of people being through there. And people don't think about all that life coming through it. They just like to think of think about one historical figure, one event.

**Derek 43:45**

Right, yeah.

**Colton 43:46**

I think it's your job to open it up.

**Derek 43:47**

I think that's what's really fun about the house, is it's just a it's a pathway to think about so many other historical things, or just life in general. And then, to close out our little conversation, what is your favorite question, or one of your favorites that has ever been asked to you here at the museum?

**Colton 44:03**

I think my very favorite question...I can say it tends to be asked by a small child.

**Derek 44:08**

Yes, yeah!

**Colton 44:09**

It's always, "What's that on the table?" whenever they're pointing at a particular object. The big ones are the fruitcake and the first floor--

**Derek 44:17**

Always the food, yeah.

**Colton 44:18**

-- or the big, thick book on the table. "What is that?" is always the most fun question to answer, coming from, particularly a child, but it allows for it's just a raw curiosity.

**Derek 44:21**

Right. It is! "What is that?"

**Colton 44:31**

Yeah, what is that? And coming from an adult is great too. It is something I wish I heard more. Just "What's that? What's this? What's that?" People are afraid to ask questions sometimes, and it's so easy to when you just ask, "what's that?"

**Derek 44:44**

Yeah, yeah!

**Colton 44:44**

And then we get to talk to you about it. And that always tends to be the question that when someone reveals that they're a teacher or a parent, it always tends to be something that they're indicating to someone else to look like a friend or a child.

**Derek 44:45**

Yeah, absolutely, that's...I think my favorite question that kids ask -- a lot of people say that their favorite question comes from a kid -- is just, like, "Is the food real?" I always love that, because it's just so genuine, like, they just want it to be real. Oh yeah, yeah! \* laughs \* It looks nasty and old. It does look nasty at old but they want it to be real!

**Colton 45:15**

Yeah! Of course they do! It's more fun if it's real!

**Derek 45:17**

Right, yeah, which is really the most fun thing about the whole house is that it is real.

**Colton 45:21**

It is real! It is really lived in. Yeah, it's not a museum of it. It's the house.

**Derek 45:25**

Right, exactly, yeah. Well, thank you for talking with me, Colton. Thanks everybody for listening! We will see you guys next time. Adios.

**Tegan 45:37**

And that's going to do it for us for season four of Revere House Radio. I'm your host, Tegan Kehoe, and I am the Research and Adult Program Director here at the Paul Revere House. Our production team for this season includes Derek Hunter, Mehitabel Glenhaber, Cadee Stefani, and Adrian Turnbull-Riley. If you're listening online, we encourage you to subscribe in your favorite podcast app so you never miss an episode. Revere House Radio is a production of the Paul Revere Memorial Association, the nonprofit which operates the Paul Revere House Museum. You can find more information,

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