

PAUL REVERE

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

These opening lines of Longfellow's poem, and the thrilling story which follows, have fascinated us for many years. History has recorded the details of the famous ride, and the incidents connected with it; but Masons know little about Paul Revere that arouses enthusiasm. It is my purpose tonight to bring out the important facts regarding him and to show the setting which brings our patriot brother closer to us.

The forefathers of Paul Revere were Huguenots, that brave sect of French Protestants who for many years defied Rome and the King of France. The Huguenots maintained their identity and churches in spite of edicts and persecutions. In 1540, six of their villages were completely destroyed and the inhabitants driven out, ravaged and murdered at the behest of the King. On August 24, 1572, the Huguenots were the victims of one of the most despicable massacres that ever took place - the Massacre of St. Bartholomew - in which more than six thousand of them were sought out in Paris and murdered in a human hunt lasting three days. The waters of the seine ran red with blood; the bodies of the victims were so numerous that the current was unable to carry them away; and for many miles the banks of the river were covered with their remains. When the news of the massacre reached Rome a three day's celebration was ordered by the ecclesiastical authorities. King Charles of France, who, together with his mother, had been influenced by Church leaders to order the massacre, was congratulated on the service thus performed for the Holy Roman Church.

The persecutions to which the Huguenots were subjected caused more than four hundred thousand French to leave the country and settle elsewhere. Among those who fled was Simon de Revoire, who moved to the Island of Guernsey in the English Channel. Simon's brother Isaac, being a man with a large family, stayed on in a remote part of France, later sending one of his sons, Apollo de Revoire, to his Uncle Simon, at the age of thirteen. After a time his uncle sent the Nephew to Boston, where he was apprenticed to a Goldsmith. Here he learned the secrets of the trade, and after a visit to Guernsey, he returned to America with the intention of making this country his home. His first step was to change his name to one more easily pronounced by his English speaking neighbors, and he was henceforth known as Mr. Paul Revere.

Establishing himself in business as a gold and silversmith, Revere married Miss Deborah Hitchborn in 1729. Twelve children were born of this union. The Paul Revere we are discussing tonight was the third of these, born January 8, 1735.

We learn that Revere received his education at the famous old "North Grammar School" kept by Master John Tildon, who taught school in Boston for eighty years. He was especially famed for his skill in penmanship. Doubtless we have here the foundation for one of Revere's later activities - engraved lettering.

Young Paul Revere followed in his father's footsteps as a Gold and Silversmith. Specimens of his work are still treasured to this day in some old New England families, and give ample evidence of his artistic skill. Inspired by long experience in embellishing the articles manufactured by him, Revere undertook the art of engraving on copper, with marked success. Books of the 17th and 18th centuries show that this was a popular form of illustrating. Many of Revere's pictures were political caricatures and cartoons; and among the best of his works is an engraving depicting the Boston Massacre, which was extensively copied in Europe. He also designed bookplates, and in later years furnished the engravings from which Masonic certificates were made.

The outbreak of the French and Indian Wars in 1756 prompted him to enlist in the British Colonial service. Commissioned a second lieutenant of artillery by Governor Sterling, he participated in the expedition against Crown Point under the command of General John Winslow. Here he received the military training which enabled him to give excellent service in later years as major, lieutenant-colonel, and colonel of artillery in the armed forces of Massachusetts.

Upon his return from military service, Revere was married in 1757 to Miss Sarah Orne of Boston. Seven children were born of this union. After sixteen years of wedded life, the faithful wife died, leaving Revere a widower at 38 with a large family on his hands, a business to look after and political events engrossing his attention. To quote Revere, he found his household "In sore need of a Mother," and within a short time after the death of his first wife and infant child, he married Miss Rachel Walker, ten years his junior. Eight children were added to the six of his first marriage.