



MOST WORSHIPFUL PAUL REVERE
GRAND MASTER
GRAND LODGE OF MASSACHUSETTS A.F. &
A.M.

1795 - 1797

by Dan Pushee KCT

INTRODUCTION

The poem, "The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere" was written in 1860 by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, 42 years after Revere's death. Longfellow's poem made Revere "a famous patriot"; however, he was also a man of varied talents, mason, artisan, businessman and family man. Paul Revere served as the Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts from December 12, 1794 to December 27, 1797.

FAMILY

Paul Revere was born in Boston, Massachusetts in late December 1734 and was the second of twelve children born to Apollos Rivoire, a French Huguenot immigrant who came to Massachusetts in 1715 and apprenticed with a Boston goldsmith, and Deborah Hitchborn a native Bostonian descended from New England seafarers and artisans. At age 12 he was apprenticed to his father as a silversmith and earned extra money as a bellringer at the Old North Church in Boston. At age 19, as the eldest son he became the supporter of the family when his father died in 1753. He married Sarah Orne in 1757. They had one son, Paul Jr (who was also an active Freemason), and seven daughters.

Sarah died in May of 1773 and in September he married Rachel Walker to help him care for his large family. Their union produced eight more children, four of them whom died before their father. Paul Revere died at age 83 on Sunday, May 10, 1818.

MASONIC

At age 25, Paul Revere was initiated in St. Andrew's Lodge on September 4, 1760. He was the first candidate received after their Charter dated 1756 was received from the Grand Lodge of Scotland. He was raised on January 27, 1761. The records of St. Andrew's Royal Arch Chapter, functioning as part of St. Andrew's Lodge, indicate that Paul Revere became a Royal Arch Mason and Knight Templar on December 11, 1769. Brother Revere was very active in his Lodge by his attendance and serving as Junior Deacon, Junior Warden, and Secretary before being installed at age 35 as Worshipful Master on November 30, 1770. At that time he was already serving as Senior Grand Deacon of the Massachusetts (Provincial) Grand Lodge. This was the beginning of his "very active masonic career" which he served nine (9) terms as Worshipful Master, 5 with St. Andrew's Lodge and 4 with Rising States Lodge and, with the exception of the Revolutionary war years, served continuously as a Grand Lodge Officer from 1769 to 1797.

GRAND MASTER PAUL REVERE

The culmination of Paul Revere's 34 years as a Freemason came in 1794 when he was elected as the second Grand Master of the newly-formed Grand Lodge of Massachusetts A.F. & A.M.

By 1784, ten years earlier, Revere had already risen as high as Deputy Grand Master, Massachusetts (Independent) Grand Lodge, with his appointment under John Warren. He again served as Deputy Grand Master under Moses M. Hayes in 1791-1792.

Revere at age 60 was finally chosen as Grand Master at the annual election of officers on December 8, 1794, a position he held through December 27, 1797. According to the Constitution of the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts at that time, the Grand Master was to be elected by a ballot at large with "every voter writing the candidate he thinks best qualified." The brother who had two-thirds of the votes cast was elected Grand Master. Ironically, Paul Revere was not the first choice of the assembled brethren for Grand Master in 1794. RW John Warren, brother of the late Most Worshipful Joseph Warren, the first Grand Master of the Provincial Grand Lodge of Massachusetts under Scotland who died at the Battle of Bunker Hill (Breeds Hill), was again chosen but he "declined accepting the Chair." The Grand Lodge then proceeded to another choice, when it appeared that the Rt. Worshipful Paul Revere was chosen; he not being present, a committee of three were appointed to wait on Brother Revere to know whether he would accept the appointment; which committee reported his acceptance.

Paul Revere's installation as Grand Master took place on December 12, 1794 at Concert Hall, where "the Most Worshipful John Cutler, then in Ample Form, installed the Grand Master and placed him in the chair of Solomon and invested him with his proper jewels." Duly installed, Revere appointed his Deputy, Deacons, Stewards, Grand Marshall and Sword Bearer, and invested them with their. According Grand Lodge minutes, "a

procession was then formed and the Brethren, in their proper order, paid their usual salutes and congratulations."

During the three years that Revere was Grand Master, the Grand Lodge held 12 quarterly communications on the second Mondays of December, March, June and September and 7 special communications. According to the "Proceedings", total attendance average 26; however, this information may not completely reflect the actual members present as indicated by additional comments in the "Proceedings". Paul Revere presided over every meeting held during his three years as Grand Master and the fraternity in Massachusetts expanded energetically under his direction.

Revere was the first to wear the tricorne hat as Grand Master. Later discarded, the tradition was revived by John T. Heard in December of 1856 and continues to this day.

The celebration of feast days also continued. On June 24, 1795 the Feast of St. John the Baptist was celebrated at Concert Hall with a Masonic procession to and from the Chapel Church.

Revere was the first Grand Master to appoint a Grand Chaplain. On December 12, 1796 Grand Lodge voted that "the Most Worshipful Grand Master be authorized at every annual meeting to nominate and appoint a Grand Chaplain whose duty it shall be to attend the Grand Lodge and perform such clerical duties as shall be assigned him."

Since the primary responsibility of the Grand Lodge was to charter new Lodges and to supervise the Lodges within its jurisdiction, the Grand Lodge under Revere devoted a significant amount of time to seeing that the Lodges were properly organized and legally conducted. As Grand Master, Paul Revere chartered twenty-three new Lodges within Massachusetts and Maine which established a record for more than 100 years.

While Grand Master, Paul Revere also continued the distribution of the volume of Constitutions. The book was originally compiled in 1792 as a result of the union between the Massachusetts Grand Lodge and St. John's Grand Lodge. The book of Constitutions was a compilation of masonic history, charges, addresses, constitutions, laws and songs entitled The Constitutions of the Ancient and Honorable Fraternity of Free and Accepted Masons. Paul Revere was one of the thirteen masons who served on the original committee under the direction of the Reverend Thaddeus Mason Harris. The Grand Lodge intended to send a copy of the book to every Lodge in the State, as well as presenting the volume to all new Lodges Chartered. According to Revere, the constitutions were "calculated with so much pains, for the benefit of the Craft, having upon all occasions, recourse to their Charges & regulations therein contained". Revere obviously had a sincere interest in the rules and regulations which were designed to keep the fraternity running smoothly, as he often served on committees to revise masonic rules and bylaws. He also wrote the "charges" which were used in the installation of officers while he was Grand Master.

During the years that Paul Revere presided as Grand Master, the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts was still in the initial stages of formation as indicated by the various

problems it encountered and the resolutions it passed at Quarterly Communications. At the September Quarterly it resolved "That when any Lodge is not presented in Grand Lodge and is in arrears, for a longer period than twelve months, it shall be considered as having relinquished its connection with the Grand Lodge, and not having a regular standing in the Commonwealth."

At the March 1797 Quarterly, a committee was appointed to write to the Lodge at Nantucket in regards to that resolution. Several months later, on August 27, Revere wrote a personal letter to Samuel Barrett at the Union Lodge in Nantucket informing him that "except your Lodge send their Charter to, and paid their dues to the Massachusetts Grand Lodge, you would not be received by them, or acknowledged as a regular, constituted Lodge." Revere informed him of the resolution passed in Grand Lodge on September 9, 1795 relating to this matter indicating that as Grand Master, he felt it was his "duty to represent to you your situation, as a Lodge, not doubting, you will take such steps as Free & Accepted Masons ought to". The Lodge replied in early September that they had raised a committee to look into the matter.

Paul Revere was so concerned not only with the proper conduct of the Lodges, but also with the quality of masonic candidates. While Grand Master, he wrote the ceremony for constituting a new Lodge, in which he instructed the officers to "carefully enquire into the Character of all Candidates and recommend none to the Master, who in your opinion, are unworthy of the privileges, & advantages of Masonry, Keeping the CYNIC, far from the Antient Fraternity, where Harmony is obstructed by the Superstitious, & Morose".

Ten years after he served as Grand Master, Paul Revere's concern about candidates was still clear. He wrote that "it is too much the practice of Lodges to admit the 'worthless and profane', to pollute our'hallowed Temple.' "Caution' and jealousy, with respect to Candidates, cannot be too much impressed on all Lodges."

In February 1797, Revere chaired a committee of three to draft a resolve against the improper admission of candidates, when it came to his attention that persons who were rejected in one Lodge would "afterwards apply to another Lodge within the jurisdiction and gain admittance." As Grand Master, Revere had the authority to prevent the "worthless and profane" from joining masonic Lodges within his jurisdiction. In June of 1797, Revere brought charges against Harmonic Lodge for directly violating his authority in this respect. According to the charges: the Lodge made "a number of persons masons, without handing their names to the Grand Master for his approbation; made a number of persons masons "all of them persons to whom the Grand Master had refused his approbation; on the same evening, they made "nine persons masons, some of whom had not stood the usual time on the books, and without having first obtained a dispensation from the Grand Master for that purpose; and "several times made a man an EA, FC, and a MM, the same evening, contrary to the usages of Masonry."

On June 28, 1797, Grand Lodge voted 15 to 9 to "vacate" the charter of Harmonic Lodge. Four men who had been made masons were "prohibited from visiting any Lodge."

This issues and problems relating to candidates appear to have contributed to the need for

the following resolution passed at the December 11, Quarterly Communication in 1797: "It is the opinion of this Grand Lodge that every Lodge under this Jurisdiction, before they proceed to ballot for any person to be made a Mason---it shall be their duty to make a strict enquiry, what town in the State such candidate belongs to; and if appears that he is a citizen of any town in this Commonwealth, where a regular Lodge is constituted, or if he lives within five miles of a constituted Lodge, other than the one to which he is proposed, it shall operate as an exclusion, without a recommendation of the Master and Wardens of the nearest Lodge where he belongs; for no person's character can be so well known as in the town or neighborhood where he belongs. And it shall be the duty of Masters of Lodges, when a character is rejected for the want of such a recommendation as a free Mason ought to have, to direct their respective secretaries to acquaint the Masters of the adjacent Lodges, with the name and circumstances of the person rejected and also the like information to the Grand Lodge."

Other matters dealing with communications and charters were passed at the September 13, 1797, Quarterly Communication:

"1st. The Grand Secretary, under the direction of the Most Worshipful Grand Master, after the choice of officers each year, shall transmit a list of the new officers chosen, or re-elected as also, an attested copy of all new general Regulations adopted, to the Grand Lodge of every State in the Union."

"2d. No charter of erection, or dispensation, shall be granted to any number of Masons residing out of this state, except when the Grand Lodge of the State in which the petitioners reside shall quiesce therein in writing."

"3d. The Grand Lodge will not hold communication or correspondence with, or admit as visitors, any Masons residing in this State who hold authority under, and acknowledge the supremacy of, any Foreign Grand Lodge or who do not by their representatives communicate and pay their dues to this Grand Lodge."

The Grand Lodge at the December Quarterly also passed the following resolution relating to voting:

"That it is the sense of this Grand Lodge, that the construction of the 2d Article, of the second section, of the Constitution, is and ought to be, that every Lodge, represented in Grand Lodge, shall have one vote, and no more, whether they have one or more representatives."

In reviewing the correspondence recorded in the "Proceedings, numerous letters were noted; however, the exchange of letters between Paul Revere and George Washington in early 1797 are of particular interest.

Ref: CORRESPONDENCE RECORDED IN THE MINUTES.

QUARTERLY COMMUNICATION - JUNE 12, 1797

From: The East, the West and the South, of the Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

TO THEIR MOST WORTHY GEORGE WASHINGTON:

Wishing ever to be foremost in testimonials of respect and admiration for those virtues and services with which you have so long adorned and benefited our common country; and not the least, to regret the cessation of them, in the public councils of the Union; your Brethren of the Grand Lodge embraces the earliest opportunity of greeting you in the calm retirement you have contemplated to yourself. Though as citizens they lose you in the active labors of political life, they hope as Masons, to find you in the pleasing sphere of Fraternal engagement.

From the cares of state and the fatigues of public business our institution opens a recess affording all the relief of tranquillity, the harmony of peace and the refreshment of pleasure. Of these may you partake in all their purity and satisfaction; and we will assure ourselves that your attachment to this social plan will increase; and that under the auspices of your encouragement, assistance and patronage, the Craft will attain its highest ornament, perfection, and praise. And it is our ardent prayer, that when your Light shall be no more visible in this earthly temple, you may be raised to the All Perfect Lodge above; be seated on the right of the Supreme Architect of the Universe, and there receive the refreshment your labors have merited.

In behalf of the Grand Lodge, we subscribe ourselves with the highest esteem,

Your affectionate Brethren

PAUL REVERE, Grand Master

ISIAH THOMAS, S. Grand Warden

JOSEPH LAUGHTON, J. Grand Warden

DANIEL OLIVER

BOSTON, 21st March, 1797

(ANSWER)

To the Grand Lodge of Ancient, Free and Accepted Masons of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

BROTHERS:

It was not until within these few days that I have been favor'd with your affectionate letter, dated Boston, 21st March. for the favorable sentiments you have been pleased to express on the occasion of my past services, and for the regrets with which they are accompanied for the cessation of my public functions, I pray you accept my best acknowledgments and gratitude.

No pleasure, except that which results from the consciousness of having to the utmost of my abilities discharged the trusts which have been reposed in me by my country, can equal the satisfaction I feel for the unequivocal proofs I continually receive of its approbation of my public conduct; and I beg you to be assured, that the evidence thereof, which is exhibited by the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts, is not among the least pleasing or grateful to my feelings.

In that retirement which declining years induced me to seek and which repose, to a mind long employed in public concerns, rendered necessary, my wishes that bounteous Providence will continue to bless and preserve our country in peace, and in the prosperity it has enjoyed, will be warm and sincere; and my attachment to the Society, of which we are members, will dispose me always to contribute my best endeavors to promote the honor and interest of the Craft.

For the prayer you offer in my behalf, I entreat you to accept the thanks of a grateful heart, with assurances of fraternal regard and best wishes for the honor, happiness and prosperity of the Craft, and of all the members of ye Grand Lodge of Massachusetts.

GEORGE WASHINGTON

The most memorable event during Revere's term as Grand Master, and a high point for Massachusetts Freemasonry, was the laying of the cornerstone of the new State House on Boston Common, July 4th. 1795. In the great tradition of the ancient stonemasons and master builders, the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts was invited by Governor Samuel Adams to assist in the ceremony, which was also conducted with a full masonic procession. The new State House was designed by Charles Bulfinch, erected by master builder Amos Lincoln, and before long had its dome sheathed with sheet copper rolled in Paul Revere's copper mill. The event was commemorated by an inscribed silver plate placed beneath the cornerstone.

The inscription read:

"This Corner-Stone intended for the use of the Legislature and Executive Branches of Government of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts was laid by His Excellency Samuel Adams, Esquire Governor of said Commonwealth assisted by the Most Worshipful Paul Revere, Grand Master; and Right Worshipful William Scollay, Deputy Grad Master; The Grand Wardens and Brethren of the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts on the 4th Day of July 1795, being the 20th Anniversary of American Independence".

The procession was lengthy and must have been an impressive one. After gathering at the Representative's Chamber, the participants proceeded to the Old South Meeting House to hear an oration, after which they proceeded to the new State House site in the masonic order listed in attachment number 6.

To this assembled crowd, Paul Revere delivered the following brief address:

"Worshipful Brethren, I congratulate you on this auspicious day:--when the Arts and Sciences are establishing themselves in our happy Country, a Country distinguished from the rest of the World, by being a Government of Laws.--Where Liberty has found a Safe and Secure abode,--and where her Sons are determined to support and protect her. Brethren, we are called this day by our Venerable + patriotic Governor, his Excellency Samuel Adams, to Assist him in laying the Corner Stone of a Building to be erected for the use of the Legislature and Executive branches of Government of this Commonwealth. May we my Brethren, so Square our Actions thro life as to shew to the World of Mankind, that we mean to live within the Compass of Good Citizens that we

wish to Stand upon a Level with them that when we part we may be admitted into that Temple where Reigns Silence & peace."

After the Operative masons prepared the cornerstone, it was laid into place by Governor Samuel Adams, assisted by Grand Master Paul Revere and the Deputy Grand Master. Beneath the stone, Revere had placed "a number of gold, silver and copper coins, and a silver plate" which bore the inscription. The ceremony was concluded to the roar of cannon and the cheering crowd.

On July 4, 1995, the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts under the direction of Most Worshipful David W. Lovering conducted a re-enactment of this event at the invitation of the Department of Tourism. The event was not attended by the current Governor or Lt. Governor.

The ceremony on Boston Common in 1795 was reminiscent of a similar event which took place only two years earlier in Washington. On September 18, 1793, George Washington, in a full masonic ceremony, laid the cornerstone for the National Capital Building.

Paul Revere's public life as a Freemason was coming to an end by late 1797. Revere had served as Grand Master for three years. It was the last major masonic office he would hold. As new officers were chosen on December 11, 1797, Revere "was then please to address the Grand Lodge in a fraternal manner in which his abilities in the masonic art were eminently displayed." Revere viewed this masonic election as a farewell. He knew that having served as Grand Master for three years, he was ineligible for re-election, according to the Constitution, but he could say with pride that there were "upwards of forty" Lodges within the jurisdiction, most of which were represented and paid dues. This nearly doubled the number of twenty-two Lodges which were in the jurisdiction after the two Grand Lodges united in 1792, each Grand Lodge having brought eleven Lodges to the union .

After three productive years, Paul Revere's address reveals his contentment with the past, as well as the issues which concerned him for the future of masonry. The Union Lodge at Nantucket still had not complied with the regulations, but he was confident that it would do so if his successor "provided a little attention."

Revere also encouraged a "free correspondence" between masonic Lodges in the United States and abroad. The Lodges of England and Nova Scotia had already extended a cordial correspondence with America, and Revere thought the same should be done with "Quebeck," as a means of "securing the friendship of that Body of Masons against those persons who may wish to make innovations in Masonry." With just a little attention to correspondence, Revere was certain "that we shall soon have the pleasure to Communicate with every Grand Lodge thro' the Globe."

Revere was also concerned with the "necessity of subordination among Masons," hoping that the Lodges would conduct themselves according to the old traditions. He encouraged "a careful attention to our Constitution; that you never suffer the antient land-marks to be

removed; that a Strict attention be paid to every Lodge under this jurisdiction" so that "they be not suffered to break thro, or, treat with neglect any of the regulations of the Grand Lodge.

Revere also recommended that "a Committee be raised to form regulations for the disposal of Charity, or any other thing that will add to the happiness of Masons." A committee was immediately appointed "to take into consideration the recommendations made by the Most Worshipful Grand Master" during his final address.

As Paul Revere left the highest masonic office in the State, he professed great hopes for the future. According to Revere, Freemasonry "is now in a more flourishing situation than it has been for Ages" and there is "no quarter of the Globe but acknowledges its Philanthropy". He felt it was "the greatest happiness" of his life.

"to have presided in the Grand Lodge at a time when Freemasonry has attained so great a height that its benign influence has spread its self to every part of the Globe + shines with more resplendent rays, than it hath since the days when King Solomon implored our immortal Grand Master to build the Temple."

Revere began his address with an apology, assuring his masonic brethren that he "endeavored to pay every attention to what I esteemed my duty," adding that "I have ever omitted to do one act that appeared to be for the good of the Craft" but "if I have done what I ought not to have done, you must impute it to my head & not to my heart."

Revere closed his address by extending to his fellow masons "my most sincere and hearty thanks for your candor, and assistance," since it was owing to your kind attention and assistance that I have been enabled to do the little good which has been done" He encouraged his brethren to "continue the same kindness to all my Successors in office".

On December 27, 1797, Revere installed the new Grand Master and officially ended his three year term. The Lodge voted that thanks be given "to our most Worshipful Master Paul Revere for his eminent service rendered this Grand Lodge while in the Chair of Solomon.

The "Masonic Years" of Paul Revere were the glorious age of masonry, prior to the anti-masonic crusade of the 1820's, when the Society grew unhindered and flourished in public processions and ceremonies, laid cornerstones and attracted men of influence in every community. He must have enjoyed the pomp and ceremony of the aged traditions, particularly when he filled the Chair of Solomon as Grand Master.

In 1796, fellow mason William Bentley noted simply that "Col. Revere enters into the Spirit of it, and enjoys it." Two hundred years later, these words should represent the concept that all of us should strive to accomplish in masonry today.

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