

Revere House Radio

Season 2 Episode 5

Midnight Ride Q&A With Robert and Adrienne

00:00

Music.

Robert 00:17

Welcome into another episode of Revere House Radio. I'm Robert -

Adrienne 00:22

I'm Adrienne.

Robert 00:22

- and we're here for a special joint episode as we are celebrating Patriot's Day here in Boston. Exciting day. Exciting episode here, Adrienne.

Adrienne 00:30

Yeah, let's get into it! Some questions. But I know you have some announcements to make before we do that.

Robert 00:35

Absolutely. So we're going to focus on some of the questions you all sent in as we feel it out: questions from visitors and listeners. And we're going to cover some of the most frequently-asked questions associated with today and yesterday, I guess you could say, in 1775 for Paul Revere, famous Midnight Ride. But first, we do want to especially thank the Boston Cultural Council for their continued support and funding to help make programs like Revere House Radio and Revere Express possible and a major thank you to all of our listeners and to everyone, really, that has supported -- both in person at the Revere House -- our programming, and really Revere House Radio, which launched just about this time last year. So we're coming up on a year Adrian, and it's been a lot of fun. We brought a lot of, you know, different content over the past 12 months here.

Adrienne 01:29

Yeah! It's hard to believe it's been a whole year, but I really have enjoyed making this podcast, and I hope to continue to do so. So thanks all the listeners who, who keep us going and, and send us questions and content to address in future episodes.

Robert 01:44

Yeah, absolutely! So as we have this episode coming out this week, we just want to say, of course to, you know, stay tuned for -- especially on our social media accounts -- as we have, you know, new materials and certainly content over the last few days, and this week, that connects to the ride in 1775. Do keep an eye on our, our YouTube page as well that has some of the programming that we've been able to do recently. I think just this week into the program that we were able to do a couple of weeks ago, a joint program with the Cyrus Dallin Art Museum about Dallin's famous Paul Revere equestrian statue in the Paul Revere Mall in the North End. That's up on our YouTube page. So be sure to check that out if you're interested in, kind of, the history of that statue. But then that gets into a lot of, to some extent what we're talking about here today, Adrienne, right? The myth-making, the building of the story around Paul Revere -- but all of it, in some way or another, circling back to April 18 and 19th, 1775. So let's, let's get into, uh, to some of the questions that came in from everybody. Yeah, sounds good. So talking about that statue, right? That Cyrus Dallin statue, so famous for Revere riding on his horse. One common question we get is: "Who was the horse? What was the name of the horse? Where did the horse come from?" So what do you have to say to that? Yeah, it's a -- it's one of those funny questions too, where, you know, we've got some speculative answers, we have some information, but on the whole, actually, we don't know specifically what the name of the horse was -- to some extent, because Paul Revere...at that time, the Revere family did not own a horse, which is always a bit surprising. It was at least a borrowed horse from Richard Devens. There's some possibility that maybe it was a-- or, deacon John Larkin, I should say, not Devons, possibly a twice-borrowed horse? The, you know, the accounts are a little hazy, and some of the genealogy. But some of the names -- and Adrienne will say this, I think, five times fast towards the end of the episode -- some of the names that we see are first Scheherazade, possibly for the name of the horse, but the more likely one, if there is a name associated, is Brown Beauty for the horse's name. And that comes from some of the, you know, some of the genealogical reports from the Larkin family that I mentioned. All we have from Revere though, Adrienne, is, quote, "a very good horse," is what he called it.

Adrienne 04:16

Yeah! So, whatever the name -- however easy or difficult the name was to say -- apparently, was a good horse. So that's what matters, right?

Robert 04:25

The horse did the job, for sure. But, but I do think this point -- and this is something you know, that that you talk a lot about, Adrienne, right? --is that while Revere is so connected, literally, as we see through the the Cyrus Dallin statue, you know, to his equestrian abilities. It really wouldn't have made a whole lot of sense for a family like the Reveres to own a horse at the time in Boston.

Adrienne 04:50

Mm-hmm, yeah. I mean, the, the house itself is situated in a densely packed, densely settled neighborhood, so there's not a whole lot of space to actually keep and maintain and care for a large animal like a horse. And besides that, the actual town of Boston was quite small, so could easily be accessed on foot. Pretty much anywhere Revere needed to go or wanted to go, he could, he could get there by walking. So the horse really only becomes important if he leaves town and wants to travel longer distances. So yeah, to your earlier point, Robert, there are many, many years and especially in the North Square home, that he didn't need to own a horse.

Robert 05:29

Right. And we'll talk about some of the other, you know, things that Revere did. Of course, he made other rides, not just his famous one. But for those previous ones, it would have been a similar story. Revere isn't using his, his own horse, of course, he's making, you know, various trips of length with, you know, borrowed horses from, you know, from, from other individuals. But I think this, this general point about Revere making rides, connects to another visitor question -- or listener question -- that we had come in, Adrienne, about, kind of the, the...ride itself, but maybe more specifically about the length of time for some of the segments of the ride, right?

Adrienne 06:15

Yeah. So we think he left -- kind of started his journey, if you want to call it that -- about 10pm on April 18. Is that...would you agree with that, Robert?

Robert 06:26

Yeah. So, I mean, it seems like he'd left the house, or at least started the, you know, the saga for the night, as it were, somewhere around 10pm from the house, by his accounts. The ride itself -- once he was rowed across the harbor by a couple of Sons of Liberty -- once he actually started the ride on the horse, it seems like that the timestamp is somewhere around 11pm. From there, we kind of can, can piece it together for, for a few segments. And I think that's, you know, an important thing to keep in mind about the whole night that we're really talking about kind of distinct, you know, periods and segments. So it seems like he arrives at Lexington after some, you know, shenanigans along the way-- --somewhere just after midnight, right? So he's at...does finish his mission, reaches John Hancock and Samuel Adams at the Hancock Clark House somewhere around...you know, just after midnight, is there for a time, and (Revere's word) he and William Dawes, who arrived about a half hour later, "refreshed themselves" -- so maybe some food and drink -- decided to press on to the next town, at which point they were captured after a third rider joined them, Dr Samuel Prescott. Prescott evades...they're captured for a time by British patrol. Revere is, at least, held, maybe for an hour, maybe a little bit more, somewhere around, you know, 1am to after 2am. And then Revere...really we pick up again with him

somewhere around 4am, just before some of the, you know, first shots ring out at Lexington green. So there are a few different, you know, distinct segments and periods for this whole ride here, Adrienne, right?

Adrienne 07:11

Mhmm. Yeah. And, you know, the one sort of comment that we hear a lot, I think, which goes to this point, Robert, is, "Did he actually complete his ride?" And to your earlier point, he did successfully make it to the Hancock Clark house. So if you're counting that as sort of his primary goal, yes. However, trying to get on to Concord with Dawes and Prescott, doesn't ultimately make it there. So I think that that kind of plays into some mythology around Revere: "Is his ride real or true?" or "Did he actually do it or is it a legend?" So taking time to kind of explain those different [inaudible]-

Robert 08:39

Yes. Right.

Adrienne 08:57

-which you outlined, I think, is important.

Robert 08:59

Right. And I think that's something that...you know, even in the, the now increasingly longer, but relatively short time, you know, I've been at the the Paul Revere House -- over the last two-and-a-half years -- I feel like this is one of the points that I've actually become a little more militant on. Actually, he did, he did finish his ride. He finished his objective. So if we're talking about this as like an objective-driven evening, he did finish his objective. Everything else after Lexington was, was gravy, essentially, was adding on to it. And I think that's where we get into some of these problems, right? Is that the...you know, Longfellow's poem from 1860 -- what you know, really made Revere nationally famous -- has him cruising through Concord around, you know, around 2am or something like that. And we know that's just that...that's just not the case. And is one of those, you know, several aspects of Longfellow's poem that, that somewhat obscure what is otherwise actually still, I think, maybe even a better story than what Longfellow's putting out in his poem.

Adrienne 09:58

Yeah, truth is often better than fiction, right, when it comes to history?

Robert 10:02

Right.

Adrienne 10:03

But the...you know, there was a high risk of...of capture for Revere. Even starting out in the town of Boston, there was some anxiety that he wouldn't make it very far. So there were a couple backup plans to kind of fill in the gaps, should Revere get detained. You mentioned the other rider going out of Boston --William Dawes -- but there was another backup plan that brings in our good friends and neighbors, the Old North Church in the North End. Do you want to talk about that?

Robert 10:36

Yeah! So, I mean, I think one of the, you know, one of the aspects of Longfellow's poem that gets obscured a bit is -- or obscures the history -- is there's Revere as a solitary figure standing on the other side of the river in Charlestown, looking towards Old North Church, waiting for the signals, and sees two go up slowly. And that's just not the case. And in fact, it's not the case because Revere had done some advanced scouting missions. Specifically, he was out in Lexington last on April 16, a few days before his Midnight Ride. And from what he reflected on later -- we don't know exactly how this came in, if this is Revere having conversations with others, if this is Revere himself -- but basically coming up with the, you know, with the notion that this mission could not be entrusted just to one individual. There needed to be, you know, signals put in place for information to go from Boston and to be able to cross the river, even if Revere and Dawes couldn't get out. So that's where this signal system comes in with Old North Church. One lantern if the British soldiers would be leaving and marching out -- which they knew they were going to do one way or another -- one if they were taking the longer, physically longer but logistically easier, land route out of Boston neck and going going towards Lexington and Concord that way. Or two lanterns if they were taking the shorter, physically shorter but logistically more challenging, route across the Charles River. And of course, as we know, they were going the shorter route. So that's the two lanterns. So that's where the signal system comes in. It was put into motion by Revere to reach Sons of Liberty on the other side of the river, but it was not for Revere himself. And we do know that, in fact, obviously Revere was able to get out - - So was Dawes,. But the signal system was confirmed on the other side of the river, so it did work. Seems like it was a, you know, a handy, handy maneuver, for sure.

Adrienne 12:37

Yeah, a great idea. And I will take this moment just to encourage any listeners: if you haven't ever seen a map of Boston in the 18th century, I encourage you to just look it up on Google really quick. I think it's helpful to better understand the actions of that night if you understand the actual landscape of the town of Boston.

Robert 12:59

Definitely.

Adrienne 12:59

Personally, I think it's helpful to kind of see, you know, the lay of the land, so to speak...

Robert 13:06

Absolutely.

Adrienne 13:07

...where all this action was taking place.

Robert 13:09

And to...and to note that so much of that, or at least the...you know, kind of length of, of some of the water routes, and especially Boston neck, I mean, so much of that has has changed. And I think that's often a, you know, a surprising aspect for visitors, especially if you haven't been to Boston. You know, how much land, you know, was created over the 19th century, especially. And I have you know, been getting a few laughs here and there from visitors recently, Adrienne, but as I usually say: if you hit a grid system in Boston, if you hit a grid pattern in the North End, you know it's not old. That's all the new stuff. If it makes sense, it probably wasn't there during, during Revere's time. That usually gets a laugh about 50% of the time.

Adrienne 13:49

Yeah, haha, that's a good rule of thumb. Good rule of thumb.

Robert 13:51

Yeah. Now, as you were saying too -- and I think you're alluding to this a bit -- but Revere clearly by this point, as we've established here was not the only rider. And I think it's both important to note he was not the only rider that night, but certainly even in a broader sense, right. he wasn't the only rider for The Sons of Liberty or for New England by any stretch of the imagination.

Adrienne 14:18

Yeah. I mean, we have many, many people sort of joining the night into the morning of April 18 into 19th. But as you mentioned, he's riding all over New England for, you know, the Committee of Communication...is that what it's called?

Robert 14:38

Committees of Correspondence, yeah.

Adrienne 14:39

Committees of Correspondence, sorry. But you know another name that pops up a lot for people locally here, especially is Sybil Luddington down in Connecticut. And she wasn't the same time, and it wasn't the same date as Revere. But just goes to show that there were people doing these

types of important actions all over New England. And I think you have a few other names to mention, right?

Robert 15:03

Yeah! I mean, Sybil Luddington - We see her in 1777 as you mentioned; we have Wentworth Cheswell, who's a black man in New Hampshire, actually, making various rides for dispatches in 1774. So we have these, you know, different individuals and different time periods going both, you know, prior to the Midnight Ride. There's a lot of information, you know, is being conveyed for the Sons of Liberty, networks broadly construed, going up to, to '75 as Committees of Correspondence, again, developed about '72 and then we have, you know, Provincial Congress and Continental Congress, you know. We start to see all these, you know, various triangulations of information and in locations along the Atlantic seaboard. But then even, even after that, as you mentioned, Luddington going into '77. So we're thinking about, you know, as the revolution is progressing a bit, how these established, you know, systems continue to work after the fact, even, even as the revolution itself -- a little bit -- starts to move a little bit past, little bit past Boston, or rather, starts to go a little bit further, further south than Boston. But for Revere himself, I think it's...you know, going back to his ride a little bit, I think it's interesting to note that, you know, one of the questions we get is, number one, "was he paid for it?" Probably..? We don't have a receipt. He did put receipts in for a lot of those other rides that we're talking about. He could not have been doing this sort of work pro bono, necessarily, and all for his family that, you know, that was definitely even expanding in this time. So probably paid. We don't have the receipt for it. But I do think it gets into this question of the family at this moment, Adrienne, right? So we have Revere, kind of dropping off the page somewhere around 4:00, 4:30 am on the 19th. But do we have information, do we have speculation about what the rest of the family was doing, either that night or going into the next few days, with Rachel and the family back in Boston?

Adrienne 17:02

Yeah! I think it's a great point. And specifically thinking about Revere, he's an interesting figure because he is an artisan. He is, you know, somewhat middle class, working as a silversmith and engraver at this time. So he doesn't have the leisure -- or the ability -- to just take off of work and do these sort of volunteer tasks for the Sons of Liberty. He has his wife, Rachel, at this time. He has several children at this time to support. So he is a man who is participating in these actions, but, you know, putting himself at risk, both physically and also materially for his family. So, you know, Rachel Walker Revere, his wife at the time...we don't know a whole lot about what she was doing. I have to imagine that they had spent many an evening discussing contingency plans, I would assume, especially because Revere had been doing a lot of sort of practice rides, if you will, or kind of setting things in motion in advance. So this is not coming as a surprise to anyone, including Rachel and the kids. We do know at the time, he had a 15-year-old son, Paul Revere Jr. So there is speculation that Paul Jr has...was sort of pegged as, you know, "the man in charge"-

Robert 18:25

The designated..."Designated Survivor," if you will.

Adrienne 18:26

Yeah...yeah. Well, while the dad was out of town, right? So Rachel, we know from different letters and correspondence. We, we have a high degree of confidence that she was very capable and quite clever and fully able to kind of wheel and deal. She does some work to get Paul Revere some money eventually, and corresponds with him to meet up with him, actually, out of Boston. So we don't know exactly what the family's up to, other than maybe being anxious, for 24 hours afterwards. But eventually she does get permission to take herself and the children out of Boston, and they meet up with Paul in Watertown, Massachusetts. And that's where they, they live for the...about the next 11 months, approximately, while the town of Boston is under siege. We do have some evidence that Paul Revere Jr, that teenaged boy I mentioned, stays behind. Not 100% confirmed, but we think it's probably likely that he stayed behind in North Square. But yeah, I mean stressful times. I cannot imagine being the mother of several children and trying to coordinate with my husband, who is-

Robert 19:49

Right.

Adrienne 19:50

-off being a revolutionary, you know, before cell phones.

Robert 19:54

Yeah, for sure. And I think...first for listeners, if you haven't had a chance, I think a certain Adrienne did a podcast previously, actually, on some of the aspects that we do know and some of the speculative aspects about what Paul Revere Jr might have been doing in Boston at the time. So I would definitely plug that if you want to go back and listen to it. And I think, you know, an important point that you bring up here too, Adrienne, just to, you know, remind listeners, is that the Siege of Boston is really those British soldiers being in sieged, you know, ensconced in Boston. They're the ones that retreated back to Boston After the battle progressed. On this day, April 19, 1775 they're the ones going back into town. And really they're surrounded by the militia -- the colonial militia -- outside. So it's Rachel and the kids...otherwise would be supporters of the revolution, trapped inside of town with these British soldiers, these harried soldiers who have lost, you know, or at least in terms of the casualties, hundreds of their comrades; some dead, some some wounded coming back in. So you can just imagine how dramatic those sorts of events would have been as, you know, kind of night crept in on April 19, 1775,

Adrienne 21:11

Yeah, that's a really good point. I think a lot of the citizens, particularly the citizens that we might label today as quote, unquote, "Patriots" -- or, you know, members of the Sons of Liberty and their wives and children -- anticipating some...some lean times, I guess - - as the siege descends on Boston; firewood, food access, textile access, you know, those types of resources getting cut off. So-

Robert 21:31

Right. Right, right.

Adrienne 21:40

-we think that was the main motivator for Rachel to get the...get the family out.

Robert 21:43

Yeah. Yeah, absolutely. And kind of for our final question, I think that we had coming in -- talking about resources -- the last thing that we have for Paul Revere on the night of his ride, so we're thinking again, close to 4am 4:30am on April 19, is that he's moving a trunk of sensitive documents from John Hancock. He's removing this from the tavern outside Lexington Green somewhere into the woods. And this is one of those big counterfactuals or speculative questions Adrienne, but what the heck? What the heck is in the box? What's in the box? What's in the truck? Do we know?

Adrienne 22:18

I...If only we knew. If anybody has any information on the trunk or its contents, please reach out.

Robert 22:25

Haha, yeah, let us know. But it's, yeah, it's one of those amazing bits.

Adrienne 22:29

I mean - Yeah. I mean, I think what we...likely was inside -- and correct me if you disagree with this -- but you know, documents which at the time would be considered treasonous documents, so very sensitive. Really don't want any of those to fall into the wrong hands and get a lot of people in trouble. But ultimately, we're not really sure.

Robert 22:55

Yeah, yeah, anything really, you know, smacking of revolution, of war, of fighting, of course, as you say, was treasonous. Definitely would not have played well for Hancock and for others -- not that they were, you know, hiding by, by any stretch of the imagination. But we can only speculate, maybe it was something even bigger. Could be money, could be resources, could be anything. So, you know, I'm sure there have been treasure hunters over the years, you know, looking for it. As Adrienne said, let us know! Stay in touch! If you happen to...to have, you

know, some of the contents of that trunk, we would, we would certainly, you know, love, love to know about them, at least, as would several of our friends and, and partners along the way.

Adrienne 23:35

Yeah.

Robert 23:37

So I think those are, those are our questions from all of you. Thank you all so much for sending those in. We really appreciate your you know, your support, your continued engagement with the podcast here. We will continue to put out, of course, new, new content here on, on Revere House Radio, but we also have some expanded hours too, Adrienne, if anybody wants to physically come see us at the Revere House.

Adrienne 24:02

Yeah, as the weather's warming up and as we're able to, we are slowly opening up more and more. So we recently added Wednesdays, so we're currently operating Wednesdays through Sundays, 10 to 430. So we encourage folks to, to swing on by if you're able to. We're not doing timed tickets or reserved tickets or anything like that, so you can come on by at your convenience.

Robert 24:26

Yes, yeah. So times are opening, dates are opening. Safety measures stay absolutely intact. They will for the absolute foreseeable future. We're doing tours capped off and on small numbers, distanced the entire time, masks on. So you can be rest assured that we have, you know, followed safety protocols the entire time. We continue to do so to give both you and, you know, and the staff a safe experience visiting. Especially this time of year when we have it's...it's so nice to be able to have those, you know, kind of physical connections at sites, like the Revere House, to a lot of this history that we're, you know, we're talking about on the podcast format here.

Adrienne 25:02

Mmhmm, absolutely, and even though we're not doing our typical in person patriots week or (locally here in Boston) April vacation week programming -- which we typically do every April - - we are doing a lot of things digitally. So watch our socials, and you know, our website. Check up regularly. We're always posting new content, new blog posts, new podcast episodes, so keep an eye on all that stuff.

Robert 25:30

Absolutely. And another shout out and thank you to the Boston Cultural Council. Another thank you to all of you for listening over the past year. We'll continue to, to keep bringing you some,

some great programming. So thank you so much, and we'll sign off here. So I'm Robert, I'm Adrienne. Thanks for listening. Stay safe, and we'll talk to you soon.