

April 19, 1775
Paul Revere, Christ Church Member, Makes His Famous
Midnight Ride to Warn American Troops of Enemy Attack

Another of America's great historic churches is Christ Church in Boston, Massachusetts, now called: "Old North Church." This magnificent colonial church was founded in 1723, the first service being held there on December 29, 1723. The tower of this handsome brick church is 197 feet tall. It was on April 18, 1775 that signal lanterns were displayed in the steeple of this church, and that at midnight on April 19, 1775, Paul Revere made his gallant ride on horseback to warn Americans of the march of British troops to Lexington and Concord. This son of the American Revolution was a vestryman at Old North Church. His "cry of alarm" saved the nation from enemy attack and defeat. Paul Revere's own account of his daring ride gives us a firsthand, inside view of these historic events, as follows:

"In the winter of 1775, I was one of upwards of 30 who formed ourselves into a committee for the purpose of watching the movements of the British troops...On Tuesday evening, the 18th, it was observed that a number of soldiers were marching towards the bottom of the common...The Sunday before, by desire of Dr. Warren, I had been to Lexington to Messrs. Hancock Adams. I returned at night through Charlestown; there I agreed with a Colonel Conant that if the British went out by water we would show two lanterns in the North Church steeple, and if by land, one, as a signal. I called upon a friend and desired him to make the signals. I then went home, took my boots and surtout and went to the north part of the town, where I had kept a boat; two friends rowed me across the Charles River. They landed me on the Charlestown side. When I got into town I met Colonel Conant and several others; they said they had seen our signals. I set off upon a very good horse procured of Deacon Larkin. It was then about eleven o'clock and very pleasant. After I had passed Charlestown Neck I saw two men on horseback under a tree. When I got near them I discovered they were British officers. One tried to get ahead of me, and the other to take me. I turned my horse very quick and galloped towards Charlestown Neck and then pushed for the Medford Road. The one who chased me endeavoring to cut me off got into a clay pond. I got clear of him and went through Medford over the bridge. In Medford I waked the Captain of the Minute Men and after that I alarmed almost every house till I got to Lexington."

So, it was that Paul Revere, member of Christ Church (Old North Church) in Boston, played an important historic role in saving the nation from sure peril and disaster. Christ Church in Boston is still a thriving congregation today, with services glorifying God and His Son, Jesus Christ. Its breathtakingly beautiful sanctuary has been preserved in its Original form for future generations.

(Excerpted from, *A Children's Companion Guide to America's History* © copyright 1993 by Catherine Millard.

PAUL REVERE'S RIDE
by
Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Listen, my children, and you shall hear
Of the midnight ride of Paul Revere,
On the eighteenth of April, in Seventy-five;
Hardly a man is now alive
Who remembers that famous day and year.

He said to his friend, "If the British march
By land or sea from the town to-night,
Hand a lantern aloft in the belfry arch
Of the North Church tower as a signal light,
One, if by land, and two, if by sea;
And I on the opposite shore will be,
Ready to ride and spread the alarm
Through every Middlesex village and farm,
For the country folk to be up and to arm."

Then he said, "Good night!" and with muffled oar
Silently rowed to the Charlestown shore,
Just as the moon rose over the bay,
Where winging wide at her moorings lay
The Somerset, British man-of-war;
A phantom ship, with each mast and spar
Across the moon like a prison bar,
And a huge black hulk, that was magnified
By its own reflection in the tide.

Meanwhile, his friend, through alley and street,
Wanders and watches with eager ears,
Till in the silence around him he hears
The muster of men at the barrack door,
The sound of arms, and the tramp of feet,
And the measured tread of the grenadiers,
Marching down to their boats on the shore.

Then he climbed the tower of the Old North Church,
By the wooden stairs, with stealthy tread,
To the belfry chamber overhead,
And startled the pigeons from their perch
On the somber rafters, that round him made
Masses and moving shapes of shade,
By the trembling ladder, steep and tall,

To the highest window in the wall,
Where he paused to listen and look down
A moment on the roofs of the town,
And the moonlight flowing over all....

For suddenly all his thoughts are bent
On a shadowy something far away,
Where the river widens to meet the bay,
A line of black that bends and floats
On the rising tide, like a bridge of boats.

Meanwhile, impatient to mount and ride,
Booted and spurred, with a heavy stride
On the opposite shore walked Paul Revere.
Now he patted his horse's side,
Now gazed at the landscape far and near,
Then, impetuous, stamped the earth,
And turned and tightened his saddle girth;
But mostly he watched with eager search
The belfry tower of the Old North Church....

And lo! as he looks, on the belfry's height
A glimmer, and then a gleam of light!
He springs to the saddle, and the bridle he turns,
But lingers and gazes, till full on his sight
A second lamp in the belfry burns!

A hurry of hoofs in a village street,
A shape in the moonlight, a bulk in the dark,
And beneath, from the pebbles, in passing, a spark
Struck out by a steed flying fearless and fleet:
That was all! And yet, through the gloom and the light,
The fate of a nation was riding that night;
And the spark struck out by that steed, in his flight,
Kindled the land into flame with its heat.

He has left the village and mounted the steep,
And beneath him, tranquil and broad and deep,
Is the Mystic, meeting the ocean tides;
And under the alders that skirt its edge,
Now soft on the sand, now loud on the ledge
Is heard the tramp of his steed as he rides.

It was twelve by the village clock,
When he crossed the bridge into Medford town.
He heard the crowing of the cock,

And the barking of the farmer's dog,
And felt the damp of the river fog,
That rises after the sun goes down.

It was one by the village clock,
When he galloped into Lexington.
He saw the gilded weathercock
Swim in the moonlight as he passed,
And the meeting-house windows, blank and bare,
Gazed at him with a spectral glare,
As if they already stood aghast
At the bloody work they would look upon.

It was two by the village clock,
When he came to the bridge in Concord town.
He heard the bleating of the flock,
And the twitter of birds among the trees,
And felt the breath of the morning breeze
Blowing over the meadows brown.
And one was safe and asleep in his bed
Who at the bridge would be first to fall,
Who that day would be lying dead,
Pierced by a British musket ball.

You know the rest. In the books you have read
How the British Regulars fired and fled,
How the farmers gave them ball for ball,
From behind each fence and farmyard wall,
Chasing the redcoats down the lane,
Then crossing the fields to emerge again
Under the trees at the turn of the road,
And only pausing to fire and load.

So through the night rode Paul Revere;
And so through the night went his cry of alarm
To every Middlesex village and farm,
A cry of defiance and not of fear,
A voice in the darkness, a knock at the door,
And a word that shall echo forevermore!
For, borne on the night-wind of the Past,
Through all our history, to the last,
In the hour of darkness and peril and need,
The people will waken and listen to hear
The hurrying hoof beats of that steed,
And the midnight message of Paul Revere.

