

PAUL REVERE (1735-1818), c. 1795

Attr. Giuseppe Ceracchi (1751-1801/02)

terra cotta

19 3/4 (h) (50.17)

Gift of Goodspeed's Book Shop, 1934

Hewes Number: 98

Ex. Coll.: Sold c. 1934 by an unnamed 'itinerant Italian shipyard worker' to the donor.¹

The silversmith and engraver Paul Revere, a leader among the craftsmen and mechanics of Revolutionary Boston, became a successful industrialist in the new republic. His prints and teapots were purchased by middle- and upper-class residents of the city and were cherished for their fine execution and the detail of their engraving. He designed and engraved the first issue of Continental paper money and produced the official seal of the colonies as well as the state seal of Massachusetts. Many of Revere's engravings, including a rare impression of 'The Obelisk' (1766) and his famous 'Boston Massacre' (1770), are preserved in the graphic arts collection of the American Antiquarian Society.²

Revere actively opposed many of England's taxation policies and participated in local politics well before the Revolutionary War. As the war approached, Revere devoted himself to the patriot cause. He participated in the Boston Tea Party and often rode as a courier, spreading news of the latest political developments from Boston to Philadelphia. In 1774 he was made the official courier to Congress for the Massachusetts Provincial Assembly, and on April 18, 1775, he rode to Lexington Green. Revere's role in raising the alarm about the plans of British troops to march to Concord was immortalized nearly a century later by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow in his popular poem, 'The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere.' Not until shortly after that poem's 1863 publication did Revere's name begin to appear in biographical dictionaries and accounts of the Revolution.³

After the war, Revere turned his understanding of metals to the production of cannons and the casting of church bells. He established an iron foundry in 1788, followed in 1800 by the construction of a mill for rolling sheet copper. After several mergers, this company continues to manufacture copper and copper-alloy products.

The sculptor Giuseppe Ceracchi was born on the island of Corsica and as a young man travelled around Europe studying his craft and producing portrait busts in London, Rome, and Paris. In 1791 he sailed for America, hoping to secure a commission to produce a marble monument depicting 'Liberty' for the American government. When production of such a monument proved too costly, Ceracchi financed his trip by producing busts of national leaders and heroes such as George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Benjamin Franklin.⁴ There is no record that Ceracchi ever produced a portrait of Paul Revere.⁵ Ceracchi left America in 1795 and lived in Paris until he was executed in 1802 for conspiring against Napoleon Bonaparte.

¹ Charles E. Goodspeed to Clifford K. Shipton, January 21, 1946, AAS Archives.

² Clarence S. Brigham, Paul Revere's Engravings (Worcester: American Antiquarian Society, 1954).

³ Among these works is Esther Forbes's biography, Paul Revere and the World He Lived In (Cambridge, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin, 1942), researched at AAS.

⁴ Wayne Craven, Sculpture in America (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1968), 53-54. For more on Ceracchi, see Giuseppe Ceracchi (Rome: Atremide Edizioni, 1989).

⁵ Shipton to Goodspeed, January 14, 1946, AAS Archives. The authenticity of the Revere relief was questioned in 1946 by Brigham.