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Fact File & Note Pages

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Paul Revere (December 22, 1734 / January 1, 1735 – May 10, 1818) was an American silversmith and a patriot in the American Revolution.

He was glorified after his death for his role as a messenger in the [battles of Lexington and Concord](#), and Revere's name and his "midnight ride" are well-known in the United States as a patriotic symbol. In his lifetime, Revere was a prosperous and prominent Boston craftsman, who helped organize an intelligence and alarm system to keep watch on the British military.

Revere later served as an officer in the [Penobscot Expedition](#), one of the most disastrous campaigns of the [American Revolutionary War](#), a role for which he was later exonerated. After the war, he was early to recognize the potential for large-scale manufacturing of metal.

Early years

Revere was likely born in very late December, 1734, in Boston's North End, the son of a French Huguenot father and a Boston mother. Revere had numerous siblings with whom he appears to have been not particularly close. Revere's father, Apollos Rivoire, came to Boston at the age of 13 and was apprenticed to a silversmith. By the time he married Deborah Hichborn, a member of a long-standing Boston family that owned a small shipping wharf, Rivoire had anglicized his name to Paul Revere.

Apollos (now Paul) passed his silver trade to his son Paul. Upon Apollos' death in 1754, Paul was too young by law to officially be the master of the family silver shop; Deborah probably assumed control of the business, while Paul and one of his younger brothers did the silver work. Revere fought briefly in the [Seven Years War \(French and Indian War\)](#), serving as a second lieutenant in an artillery regiment that attempted to take the French fort at [Crown Point](#), in present day New York. Upon leaving the army, Revere returned to Boston and assumed control of the silver shop in his own name. He was a silversmith, and also a prominent [Freemason](#).



"The Bloody Massacre Perpetrated in King Street Boston on March 5th, 1770" by Paul Walker (1735–1818), engraving by Paul Revere, hand-coloured, 1770.

Revere's silver work quickly gained attention in Boston; at the same time, he was befriending numerous political agitators, including most closely Dr. [Joseph Warren](#). During the 1760s, Revere produced a number of political engravings and advertised as a dentist, and became increasingly involved in the actions of the [Sons of Liberty](#). In 1770, he purchased, with his wife [Sarah Orne](#), the house in North Square which is now open to the public.

One of his most famous engravings was done in the wake of the [Boston Massacre](#) in March of 1770. It is not known whether Revere was present during the Massacre, though his detailed map of the bodies, meant to be used in the trial of the [British soldiers](#) held responsible, suggests that he had first-hand knowledge. Sarah died in 1773, leaving behind six children, and Revere married [Rachel Walker](#), with whom he would have five more surviving children.

After the [Boston Tea Party](#) in 1773, at which Revere was also possibly present, Revere began work as a messenger for the Boston [Committee of Public Safety](#), often riding messages to New York and Philadelphia about the political unrest in the city. In 1774, Britain closed the port of Boston and began to quarter soldiers in great numbers all around Boston.

At this time, Revere's silver business was much less lucrative, and was largely in the hands of his son, Paul Revere, Jr. As 1775 began, revolution was in the air and Revere was more involved with the Sons of Liberty than ever.

The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere

The role for which he is most remembered today was as a night-time messenger on horseback just before the [battles of Lexington and Concord](#). His famous "Midnight Ride" occurred on the night of April 18/April 19, 1775, when he and [William Dawes](#) were instructed by Dr. [Joseph Warren](#) to ride from Boston to Lexington to warn [John Hancock](#) and [Samuel Adams](#) of the movements of the British Army, which was beginning a march from Boston to Lexington, ostensibly to arrest Hancock and Adams and seize the weapons stores in Concord.

The British army (the King's "regulars") had been stationed in Boston since the ports were closed in the wake of the [Boston Tea Party](#), and was under constant surveillance by Revere and other patriots as word began to spread that they were planning a move.

On the night of April 18, 1775, the army began its move across the [Charles River](#) toward Lexington, and the [Sons of Liberty](#) immediately went into action. At about 11 pm, Revere was sent by Dr. Warren across the Charles River to [Charlestown](#), on the opposite shore, where he could begin a ride to Lexington, while Dawes was sent the long way around, via the [Boston Neck](#) and the land route to Lexington.

In the days before April 18, Revere had instructed Robert Newman, the sexton of the [Old North Church](#), to send a signal by lantern to colonists in Charlestown as to the movements of the troops when the information became known; one lantern in the steeple would signal the army's choice of the land route, while two lanterns would signal the route "by water" across the Charles River. This was done to get the message through to Charlestown in the event that both Revere and Dawes were captured. Newman and Captain John Pulling momentarily held two lanterns in the Old North Church as Revere himself set out on his ride, to indicate that the British soldiers were in fact crossing the Charles River that night. Revere rode a horse lent to him by [John Larkin](#), Deacon of the Old North Church.



Paul Revere's ride.

Riding through present-day Somerville, Medford, and Arlington, Revere warned patriots along his route - many of whom set out on horseback to deliver warnings of their own. By the end of the night there were probably as many as 40 riders throughout Middlesex County carrying the news of the army's advancement.

Revere certainly did not shout the famous phrase later attributed to him ("The British are coming!"), largely because the mission depended on secrecy and the countryside was filled with British army patrols; also, most colonial residents at the time considered themselves British as they were all legally British subjects.

Revere's warning, according to eyewitness accounts of the ride and Revere's own descriptions, was "the regulars are coming out." Revere arrived in Lexington around midnight, with Dawes arriving about a half hour later. [Samuel Adams](#) and John Hancock were spending the night at the [Hancock-Clarke House](#) in Lexington, and they spent a great deal of time discussing plans of action upon receiving the news. Revere and Dawes, meanwhile, decided to ride on toward Concord, where the militia's arsenal was hidden. They were joined by [Samuel Prescott](#), a doctor who happened to be in Lexington "returning from a lady friend's house at the awkward hour of 1 a.m."

Revere, Dawes, and Prescott were detained by British troops in Lincoln at a roadblock on the way to nearby Concord. Prescott jumped his horse over a wall and escaped into the woods; Dawes also escaped, though soon after he fell off his horse and did not complete the ride. Revere was detained and questioned and then escorted at gunpoint by three British officers back toward Lexington.

As morning broke and they neared Lexington Meeting-house, shots were heard. The British officers became alarmed, confiscated Revere's horse, and rode toward the Meeting-house. Revere was horseless and walked through a cemetery and pastures until he came to Rev. Clarke's house where Hancock and Adams were staying.

As the battle on Lexington Green continued, Revere helped John Hancock and his family escape from Lexington with their possessions, including a trunk of Hancock's papers. The warning delivered by the three riders successfully allowed the militia to repel the British troops in Concord, who were harried by guerrilla fire along the road back to Boston. Prescott knew the countryside well even in the dark, and arrived at Concord in time to warn the people there. Maps showing the routes on which Revere, Dawes, and Prescott rode can be found at this web site:

Revere's role was not particularly noted during his life. In 1861, over 40 years after his death, the ride became the subject of "[Paul Revere's Ride](#)", a poem by [Henry Wadsworth Longfellow](#). The poem has become one of the best known in American history and was memorized by generations of schoolchildren. Its famous opening lines are:

*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*

Today, parts of the ride are posted with signs marked "Revere's Ride". The full ride used Main Street in Charlestown, Broadway and Main Street in Somerville, Main Street and High Street in Medford, to Arlington centre, and Massachusetts Avenue the rest of the way (an old alignment through Arlington Heights is called "Paul Revere Road").

Myths and Legends of the Midnight Ride



Paul Revere's house in Boston.

In his poem, Longfellow took many liberties with the events of the evening, most especially giving sole credit to Revere for the collective achievements of the three riders (as well as the other riders whose names do not survive to history).

Longfellow also depicts the lantern signal in the Old North Church as meant *for* Revere and not *from* him, as was actually the case. Other inaccuracies include claiming that Revere rode triumphantly into Concord instead of Lexington, and a general lengthening of the time frame of the night's events.

For a long time, though, historians of the American Revolution as well as textbook writers relied almost entirely on Longfellow's poem as historical evidence - creating substantial misconceptions in the minds of the American people. In re-examining the episode, some historians in the

20th century have attempted to demythologize Paul Revere almost to the point of marginalization. While it is true that Revere was not the only rider that night, that does not refute the fact that Revere was riding and successfully completed the first phase of his mission to warn Adams and Hancock. Other historians have since stressed his importance, including [David Hackett Fischer](#) in his book *Paul Revere's Ride* (1995), an important scholarly study of Revere's role in the opening of the Revolution.

Popular myths and urban legends have persisted, though, concerning Revere's ride, mainly due to the tendency in the past to take Longfellow's poem as truth. Other riders such as [Israel Bissell](#) and [Sybil Ludington](#) are often suggested as having completed much more impressive rides than Revere's; however, the circumstances behind the others' rides were entirely different (Bissell was a news-carrier riding from Boston to Philadelphia with news of the battle at Lexington; Revere had made similar rides with the news in the years preceding the war. The only evidence for Ludington's ride is an oral tradition.) Longfellow's poem was never designed to be history and there are few serious historians today who would maintain that Revere was anything like the lone-wolf rider portrayed in the poem.

War years

Revere's political involvement arose through his connections with members of local organizations and his business patrons. As a member of the Masonic Lodge of St. Andrew, he was friendly with activists like [James Otis](#) and Dr. [Joseph Warren](#). In the year before the Revolution, Revere gathered intelligence information by "watching the Movements of British Soldiers," as he wrote in an account of his ride. He was a courier for the Boston Committee of Correspondence and the Massachusetts Committee of Safety, riding express to the Continental Congress in Philadelphia. He also spread the word of the Boston Tea Party to New York and Philadelphia.

At 10 pm on the night of April 18, 1775, Revere received instructions from Dr. Joseph Warren to ride to Lexington to warn John Hancock and Samuel Adams of the British approach. The war erupted and Revere went on to serve as lieutenant colonel in the Massachusetts State Train of Artillery and commander of Castle Island in Boston Harbour.



This Paul Revere Statue in North End, Boston was made by [Cyrus Dallin](#) and unveiled on September 22, 1940

At the beginning of the war, when Boston was occupied by the British army and most supporters of independence were evacuated, Revere and his family lived across the river in Watertown. In 1775, Revere was sent by the Massachusetts Provincial Congress to Philadelphia to study the working of the only powder mill in the colonies. Upon his arrival in Philadelphia he met with [Robert Morris](#) and [John Dickinson](#) who provided him with the following letter to present to [Oswald Eve](#):

Sir Philada. Novr. 21st 1775 I am requested by some Honourable Members of the Congress to recommend the bearer hereof Mr. Paul Revere to you. He is just arrived from New England where it is discovered they can manufacture a good deal of Salt Petre in Consequence of which they desire to Erect a Powder Mill & Mr. Revere has been pitched upon to gain instruction & Knowledge in this branch.

A Powder Mill in New England cannot in the least degree affect your Manufacture nor be of any disadvantage to you. Therefore these Gentn & myself hope You will Chearfully & from Public Spirited Motives give Mr. Revere such information as will inable him to Conduct the bussiness on his return home. I shall be glad of any opportunity to approve myself. Sir Your very Obed Servt. Robt Morris P.S. Mr. Revere will desire to see the Construction of your Mill & I hope you will gratify him in that point. Sir, I heartily join with Mr. Morris in his Request; and am with great Respect, Your very hble Servt. John Dickinson.

Mr. Eve complied with the letter completely and allowed Revere to pass through the building to obtain sufficient information, which enabled him to set up a powder mill at Canton.

Upon returning to Boston in 1776, Revere was commissioned a Major of infantry in the Massachusetts militia in April of that year. In November he was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel of artillery, and was stationed at Castle William, defending Boston harbour, finally receiving command of this fort.

He served in an expedition to Rhode Island in 1778, and in the following year participated in the disastrous [Penobscot Expedition](#). Revere and his troops saw little action at this post, but they did participate in minor expeditions to Newport, Rhode Island and Worcester, Mass. Revere's rather undistinguished military career ended with the failed Penobscot expedition. After his return he was accused of having disobeyed the orders of one of his commanding officers, and dismissed from the militia. Revere returned to his businesses at this time. He later obtained a formal court-martial which exonerated him.

Revere's friend and compatriot [Dr. Joseph Warren](#) was killed during the [Battle of Bunker Hill](#) on June 17, 1775. As soldiers killed in battle were often buried in mass graves without ceremony, Warren's grave was unmarked. On March 17, 1776, after the British army left Boston, Warren's brothers and a few friends went to the battlefield and found a grave containing two bodies. After being buried for ten months, Warren's face would be unrecognizable, but Revere was able to identify Warren's body which was given a proper funeral and reburial in a marked grave. Revere was able to identify the body because before Warren died, Revere had placed a false tooth in Warren's mouth and recognized the wire he used for fastening it.

Later years



Paul Revere grave site in [Granary Burying Ground](#)

After the war, finding the silver trade difficult in the ensuing depression, Revere opened a hardware and home goods store and later became interested in metal work beyond gold and silver. By 1788 he had opened an iron and brass foundry in Boston's North End.

As a foundryman, he recognized a burgeoning market for church bells in the religious revival ([Second Great Awakening](#)) that followed the war and became one of the best-known metal casters of that instrument, working with sons Paul Jr. and Joseph Warren in the firm Paul Revere & Sons. This firm cast the first bell made in Boston and produced over 900 in total.

A substantial part of the foundry's business came from supplying shipyards with iron bolts and fittings for ship construction. Additionally, in 1801, Revere became a pioneer in the production of copper plating, opening North America's first copper mill, south of Boston in Canton. Copper from Revere's mill was used to cover the original wooden dome of the Massachusetts State House in 1802 and to produce sheeting for the hull of the [USS Constitution](#).

His business plans in the late 1780s were stymied by a shortage of adequate money in circulation. His plans rested on his entrepreneurial role as a manufacturer of cast iron, brass, and copper products. [Alexander Hamilton](#)'s national policies regarding banks and industrialization exactly matched his dreams, and he became an ardent Federalist committed to building a robust economy and a powerful nation. His copper and brass works eventually grew, through sale and corporate merger, into a large national corporation, Revere Copper and Brass, Inc.

Revere died on May 10, 1818, at the age of 83, at his home on Charter Street in Boston. He is buried in the [Old Granary Burying Ground](#) on Tremont Street.

Paul Revere appears on the \$5,000 [Series EE Savings Bond](#) issued by the United States Government. The copper works he founded in 1801 continues as Revere Copper Products, Inc. with manufacturing divisions in Rome, New York, and New Bedford, Massachusetts.

His original silverware, engravings, and other works are highly regarded today and can be found on display at prominent museums such as the Boston Museum of Fine Arts.

References & Further Reading

1. [^ The History Channel](#), *Mysteries of the Freemasons: America*, video documentary, August 1, 2006, written by Noah Nicholas and Molly Bedell
 2. [^](#) Cumming, William P.; Hugh F. Rankin (1975). *The Fate of a Nation: The American Revolution Through Contemporary Eyes*. New York: Phaidon Press. pp. 24. [ISBN 0-714-81644-2](#).
 3. [^ by water across the Charles River according to Revere's letter, not by sea.](#)
 4. [^ Paul Revere's Three Accounts of His Famous Ride](#), introduction by Edmund Morgan. Massachusetts Historical Society, 1961.
 5. [^](#) John M. Murrin, et al. *Liberty Equality Power: A History of the American People, Volume I: To 1877*, third edition (Florence, Kentucky: Wadsworth-Thomson Learning, 1996, 2002), 205.
 6. [^ "A Letter From Paul Revere"](#).
 7. [^ "The Midnight Ride"](#). Maps showing the routes on which Revere, Dawes, and Prescott rode can be found at this web site.
 8. [^](#) Letters of Delegates to Congress: Volume 2 September 1775 - December 1775 --Robert Morris and John Dickinson to Oswald Eve, located in the Library of Congress
 9. [^](#) Petition of Oswald Eve, 22 March 1776, Papers of the Continental Congress, No. 42, II, f. 378 (microfilm, M247, reel 53, National Archives). As per footnotes in *Patriot-improvers: Biographical Sketches of Members of the APS ...By Whitfield Jenks Bell*
 10. [^ Boston 1775: Sumner letter](#) Retrieved 2008-07-19
 11. [^ Charles Gettemy, "The True Story of Paul Revere, Chapter One: The Patriotic Engraver."](#) Accessed 2008-07-19
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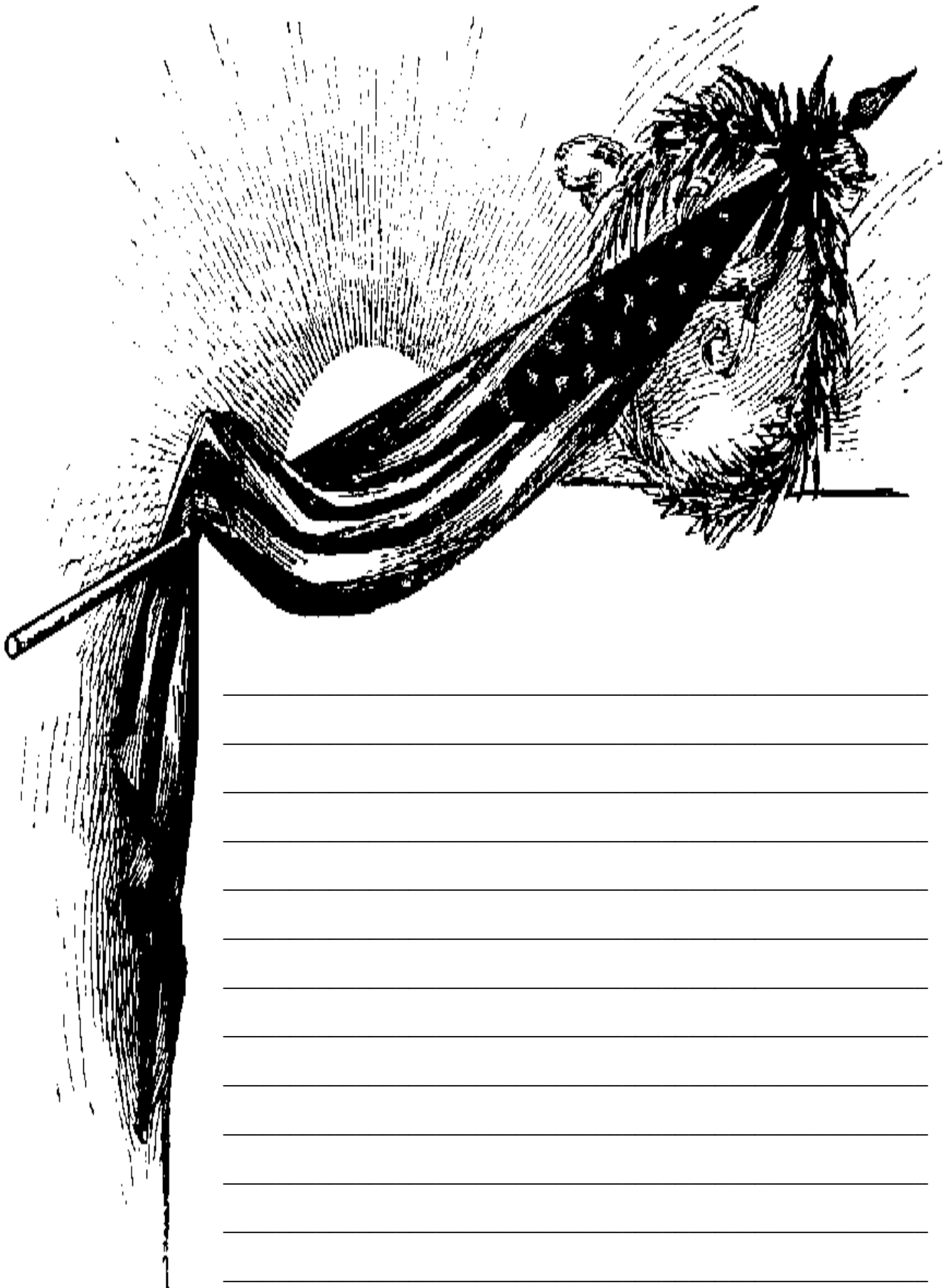
INFORMATION & GRAPHICS OBTAINED VIA WWW.WIKIPEDIA.ORG

Places and institutions named for Paul Revere



Paul Revere Village, Karlsruhe

- [Revere, Massachusetts](#), named 1871
- *Paul Revere Village* in [Karlsruhe](#), Germany, former [US Army](#) residence, 1951
- *Paul Revere Village*, a [townhouse condominium](#) in [Millbury, Massachusetts](#), founded 1984
- [Paul Revere Middle School, Los Angeles, California](#), opened 1955



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