



OLD SOUTH  
MEETING  
HOUSE

THE  
OLD  
TOWN  
HALL

Winter/  
Spring  
2012

VOLUME  
TWENTY-FIVE  
ISSUE ONE

# The Sanctuary of Freedom: Old South Meeting House



Photographs courtesy of Julie Sterling Williams, Julie Sterling Photography, www.juliesterlingphoto.com

*ON A BEAUTIFUL FALL AFTERNOON ON OCTOBER 16, 2011, OVER TWO thousand people of all ages gathered in front of Old South Meeting House to witness the historic raising of our 1801 Paul Revere bell to our steeple.*

It was a glorious day! William “Buzz” Constable, President of the Board of Managers, welcomed the audience to the celebration and The Honorable Mayor Thomas Menino made an inspiring speech about the importance of Old South Meeting House to the heritage

of our neighborhood and our nation. The crisp, fall air was filled with patriotic and moving music by the Boston Landmarks Orchestra Brass Ensemble, Boston Children’s Chorus, Old South Church Choir and the Back Bay Ringers. And, then, the big

moment! The skilled crew from Northland Restoration carefully used a crane to pluck the 876 pound bell from its frame and expertly lifted it over 150 feet to its new home in the belfry as the performers joined together to sing “The Battle Hymn of the Republic.”

*In response to requests, here is an edited version of the keynote address delivered by James W. Crawford (Secretary and member of the board of the Old South Association/ Old South Meeting House, and Senior Minister Emeritus, Old South Church) at the Bell Raising Celebration:*



*The Rev. James W. Crawford delivered the keynote address (reprinted here).*

**W**e gather this afternoon to celebrate the raising of a bell—not just any old bell, but a bell cast by Paul Revere. We raise it to the tower of this lovely brick meeting house, which has been the arena for explosive, world changing events. During the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, this edifice served as the largest meeting space in our fair city, and thousands of Bostonians and citizens from neighboring towns and villages poured into its great hall. We know it today and claim this

*(continued on page 6)*

# The Sanctuary of Freedom: Old South Meeting House

(continued from page 1)



Ceremony participants included the Back Bay Brass, Boston Children's Chorus, Boston Landmarks Orchestra Brass Ensemble, and the Old South Church Choir.

handsome, stately structure of the Old South Meeting House as *"The Sanctuary of Freedom."* Surely a home fit for a bell cast by Paul Revere.

What makes this place so perfect a seat for this cherished bell? Why, finally, here, a bell from Paul Revere's foundry?

### Three vignettes:

1: On a freezing January day in 1706, at this site—in a meeting house built of cedar—the pastor cracked the ice in a baptismal font to baptize a new-born boy, a boy born right there on Milk Street—the tenth son of his parents, Abiah and Josiah Franklin. They named him "Benjamin"—Benjamin Franklin. Justice Holmes called him *"A citizen of Boston who lived awhile in*

*Philadelphia."* Others in the British Parliament called him *"the most dangerous man in America," "Old Traitor," Old Doubleface," "the living emblem of iniquity in Gray hairs."* This baby boy baptized on this site in 1706 signed the Declaration of Independence and the United States Constitution. The legacy of *"the most dangerous man in America"* thrives in this *Sanctuary of Freedom.*

2: Or, can you see worshipping in the balconies of this very meeting house a Black African teenager? Her name: Phillis Wheatley. Stolen as a child from her African home, a prodigy, the first Black American poet; Phillis Wheatley wondered why the American Revolution for freedom failed to include her, insisting through her poetry

*"that in every human heart God has implanted a Principle which we call love of freedom; it is impatient of oppression and pants for deliverance, and by leave of our modern oppressors I will assert that the same principle lives in (we who are cast as slaves.)"* Phillis Wheatley's yearning for freedom echoes down the ages in this *Sanctuary of Freedom.*

3: And who among us dares forget that insane night of December 16<sup>th</sup> 1773? Three ships loaded with tea at Griffin's Wharf, thousands at a town meeting apprehensively waiting in the great room of the Old South Meeting House for the command from Governor Hutchinson to ship the tea back to England; the meeting refusing to pay the tea-tax because no elected Massachusetts citizen sits in that British Parliament exacting the despised tax—remember *"no taxation without representation?"* And as the night drags on, one attendee wonders aloud how the *"tea might mix with salt water,"* another speculates on the *"harbor as Teapot."* The advancing darkness shrouds a stalemate between the Governor and the town meeting. A harsh voice crashes in amid the anxious throng: Samuel Adams, the *"father of the American Revolution,"* that

*"Grand Incendiary".* Samuel Adams bellows, *"This meeting can do nothing more to save the country."* And with that, a gang of so-called *"Mohawks,"* including Paul Revere, dash to Griffin's Wharf and dump 342 chests of tea into the harbor. Sometime later John Adams calls the Boston Tea Party nothing short of *"magnificent,"* insisting it displayed a *"dignity, a majesty, a sublimity . . . This destruction of the tea is so bold, so daring, so firm, intrepid and inflexible and it must have so important consequences, and so lasting that I cannot but consider it as an epocha in History."* We see this climactic event churning, bubbling up, bursting and overflowing beyond this *Sanctuary of Freedom's* walls into colonial hearts and minds.

One of Boston's great orators proclaims *"There is to this edifice not only a natural body, but also a spiritual body—the immortal soul of independence."* And today after 136 years we confirm these natural and spiritual bodies with a tangible, spectacular, 876 pound bronze symbol. By way of Congregational and Baptist Meeting Houses in Westborough Massachusetts, we raise a bell to the glorious tower of Old South Meeting House; we connect this bell



Mayor Thomas Menino thanked the Storrow family for this bell *"that will benefit generations of Boston visitors and residents for generations to come."*

Photographs courtesy of Julie Sterling Williams, Julie Sterling Photography, www.juliesterlingphoto.com



Thousands of visitors stopped to ring the bell and wish it well before it was lifted to the steeple.

to the oldest American tower clock still operating in its original location; we raise a bell forged and cast by Paul Revere in 1801.

Yes, friends, a bell cast by Paul Revere, one of those fiery Sons of Liberty; Paul Revere, an etcher of political engravings inciting dissidents to the cause of independence and freedom; Paul Revere, a regular courier to New York and Philadelphia for the Boston Committee of Public Safety bearing news of Boston's suffocation under siege by General Gage; Paul Revere, who scampered to Griffin's Wharf and did make a teapot of Boston Harbor. Today we raise a bell fashioned by Paul Revere, who, on that dark night of April 18, 1775, sighted the two lanterns in the North Church,

rowed across the river to Charlestown, and in the early morning of April 19, alerted the citizenry from Charlestown to Lincoln that Redcoats marched, harboring as their goal to capture the colonial arms-cache in Concord. And, later that very morning, in a confrontation on Lexington Green between the Minute Men Revere aroused and British Redcoats, there exploded the "shot heard 'round the world."

We rejoice today because we again, after so many silent years, will hear sounds from this Revere bell, sounds again reverberating across our city. Wouldn't Paul Revere love it? From that majestic tower, with Paul Revere's enthusiastic approval, let peace, let freedom ring!



The 1801 Revere bell rose over 120 feet to its home in the belfry.

# Become a member of Old South Meeting House!

Your membership will help support the education programs and preservation of this unique landmark.

### Members receive many benefits, including:

- Free admission to Old South Meeting House
- Free admission to "Middays at the Meeting House," lecture and concert series
- A 10% discount on all purchases in the Museum Shop
- Invitations to special members-only events
- Our monthly email newsletter with additional discounts and offers

### Membership levels (choose one):

- Individual (\$35)
- Family (\$60)
- Friend (\$100)
- Contributor (\$250)\*
- Donor (\$500)\*
- Patron (\$1000)\*

\*All new members at this level receive a complimentary gift.

- Enclosed is my check made payable to Old South Association.
- Please Charge my VISA/MC/Amex

CARD NUMBER

EXPIRATION DATE

NAME AS SHOWN ON CARD - PLEASE PRINT

SIGNATURE

NAME OF MEMBER(S)

ADDRESS

CITY

STATE

ZIP

EMAIL

Membership (see above) \$

Additional donation\*\* \$

Total amount enclosed \$

### Please return completed form to:

Old South Meeting House, Membership Office  
310 Washington Street, Boston MA 02108  
Or Fax to: (617) 482-9621

Or Join Online at [www.osmh.org](http://www.osmh.org)

\*\*Donations are tax-deductible to the full extent allowed by law.

Questions? Please call the membership office at (617) 482-6439 ext. 10.

**Thank you for your support!**