

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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'One If By Land; Two If By Sea'

To come to Boston and not make a tour of the churches would be like journeying to Carmel and not going to the Mission. So we have become a Boston tourist and visited the churches. Of course Boston was originally an English colony, so most of the historic churches were founded by the Church of England, now known as the Episcopal church. At the present time when the 57th General Convention of that church in America is being held in Boston, there is a special inducement to visit these mother churches.

We realize that there are many of our readers who have either resided in Boston at some time or have visited as we are doing, but maybe we can recall some pleasant memories or create in others a desire to visit this cradle of American history.

We must and rightfully should, begin our tour with a visit to Christ Church – "The Old North Church" of Paul Revere fame. This church designed after the manner of Sir Christopher Wren, noted English designer, is the oldest church edifice in Boston. It is a substantial hand-made brick structure about 70 feet long, 51 feet wide and 42 feet high. Its walls are 2 ½ feet wide and 41 feet high, so the very fine curator told those of us who sat in the high walled pew of the historic church as he recited the church's history.

The steeple in which the lanterns were hung, ("One if by land and two if be sea") is 175 feet high in all. The signal lanterns of Paul Revere were displayed from the steeple of this church April 18, 1775, and warned the country of the march of British troops to Lexington and Concord.

Paul Revere first came to "Old North" at the age of 15 and assisted in organizing a guild to ring the bells. The peal of eight bells which were cast in Gloucester, England in 1744, (the first cast for the British empire in North America) are now played every Sunday morning.

The custodian showed us the seat owned by Paul Revere's oldest son and in which his father often sat, although he lived and attended services in another part of the city. It is still occupied by members of the Revere family.

Being interested in clocks because the Monterey History and Art Association are the proud custodians of several old and historic ones now on display at the Old Customs

House and the Stevenson House, we were thrilled to see a clock in the front of the gallery in this church which had been made by Richard Avery in 1726. The case was made by "Thomas Bennett, proprietor of Pew 56," so the guide informed us. It is still a good timekeeper. Captain Cyprian Southback, a maker of coast charts and "employed much at sea," gave us a belfry clock before 1735, although it was not put in place until 1749.

The "Vinegar" Bible and Prayer Book, both printed in 1717, were on display in an outer room. This odd title was due to a misprint. Other church equipment also was on display, all of it sent as a gift to the church by King George III in 1735. They were perfectly beautiful objects of art, I assure you.

Old North Church is in the very oldest part of Boston, and within a radius of one mile live 90,000 persons of Italian descent. In this crowded area there is evidently only one open place where children can come to play, where mothers can come to sun their babies and where the old people can just sit and think – and this spot is the small square at the rear of the Old North Church, through which tourists must pass to visit the historical edifice. Such crowded conditions are pitiful and it seems to us a shame that Boston does not remedy the matter. The public parks and historic shrines should be kept cleaner and in better condition. After all, Boston is merely the custodian of these shrines which belong to all American and not to the citizens and politicians of Boston alone.