
Title of Object

Templeman Tea Service

Photo of Object (optional)



Object Information

Artist: Paul Revere

Culture: American

Date of Object: 1792

Country: United States

Accession Number: 60.22.1-8

File Created: 10/6/2016

Material/Medium: Coin silver and some wood

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Sculpture

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Tour Topics

Group 2, Highlights 1600-1850, Ceremonies, Celebrations, Artisans in America, New Countries, New Art, Classical Influences, American Revolution in Art and Society, How was it made?, Food and Drink, Artist/Patron, entertainment, status, Craft, Neoclassical

Questions and Activities (list 3 to 4 sample questions here):

- 1) Here is a painting of the Samels family by Johann Eckstein in 1788. Why might the painter or the family have chosen to include their tea set? What might this indicate about the importance of tea?
- 2) Take a close look at the caddy piece. Does anyone notice something curious about it? (lock)
- 3) What about this tea set reminds you of classical art? Why might this style be celebrated by the new country? Notice the neoclassical elements in Mia's *Portrait of George Washington* by Thomas Sully (32.12).
- 4) Here is a picture of another of Paul Revere's silver pieces, the Sons of Liberty Bowl (1767). It is considered one of America's most important historical pieces and marks one of the first acts of civil disobedience leading to the American Revolution. Later Revere was part of another act of protest – the Boston Tea Party. Why is tea such a focus in America's early history?

Key Points (Form: subject matter, medium and techniques of manufacture, style, etc.)

1) Classical elements – fluted pattern is like fluted classical columns, helmet-shape cream jug is shape of Roman helmet; shape of sugar is a classical urn; swags and tassels. Paul Revere moved away from Rococo style in his earlier work and embraced the neoclassical style that was popular in England and America. America also looked to the classical world to form the democratic republic. This political pride seen in architecture, painting, and sculpture. The Templemans’ initials, JMT, are engraved in fancy script on the spoon handles and on the stands and sugar urn. “Including the buyer’s initials added beauty, made the owner proud, and also served as insurance. If the item was stolen, finding the owner would be easier. Revere signed his work by stamping (pressing) REVERE, his maker’s mark, into the metal.” (Teaching the Arts)

2) This is one of the earliest examples of a matched tea service, and it is the most complete Revere tea service known. (Matched services didn’t start appearing until the 1790s.) Revere only made 6 matching ones although made 50 teapots. It would take about 10 days to make a teapot. MANY steps starting with the melting of coins. It bears Revere’s mark. Coin silver is less pure than sterling; thinner and lighter in weight. Fluting would add structural strength. Rules against colonists’ buying bullion so used coin silver. The many steps of making silver piece and the apprentice system.

Key Points (Context: use, history, cultural information, artist bio, etc.)

3) Tea as a social custom. Tea was very expensive. Boycotting tea during American Revolution. Stamp Act (direct tax) and Townshend Act (A series of measures for indirect taxes introduced into the English Parliament by Chancellor of the Exchequer Charles Townshend in 1767, the Townshend Acts imposed duties on glass, lead, paints, paper and tea imported into the colonies. Townshend hoped the acts would defray imperial expenses in the colonies, but many Americans viewed the taxation as an abuse of power, resulting in the passage of agreements to limit imports from Britain. In 1770, Parliament repealed all the Townshend duties except the tax on tea, leading to a temporary truce between the two sides in the years before the American Revolution.).

4) Boston Tea Party. Revere’s role in American Revolution as a spy and protestor. Revere’s Liberty Bowl (MFA 49.45), considered one of America’s most important historical pieces, honored ninety-two members of the Massachusetts House of Representatives who refused to rescind a letter sent throughout the colonies protesting the Townshend Acts (1767), which taxed tea, paper, glass, and other commodities imported from England. This act of civil disobedience by the “Glorious Ninety-Two” was a major step leading to the American Revolution. The bowl was commissioned by fifteen members of the Sons of Liberty, a secret, revolutionary organization to which Revere belonged.

5) “Three exotic beverages—coffee, tea, and chocolate—arrived in seventeenth-century Europe at a time of burgeoning exploration and trade, and their arrival caused a near revolution in drinking habits. Celebrated by some, deplored by others, these stimulating brews gave rise to a number of important social institutions, such as the coffeehouse, the tea garden, and the ritual of afternoon tea. At first valued for their curative powers, they were soon counted among the necessities of daily life, and the utensils used in their preparation and service became essential as well.” (metmuseum essay) The Templemans ordered this set from Paul Revere, as well as buying many other household items from him. “For such items, Revere often used coin silver. Making silver objects from melted coins was a common practice at that time. If later on the owner needed money, he could sell an object for the value

of the silver it was made from or else have the silver melted down and sell the metal.” (Teaching the Arts, Mia)

Current Mia Label Information (optional)

The most complete Revere service known, this set of which this teapot is a part was made for a Boston merchant and his wife, John and Mehitable Templeman. It includes one of only two tea caddies made by Revere. The locked boxes held loose tea, an expensive and fashionable commodity. The shell-shaped spoon was used for measuring tea and the sieve was used for straining punch, a beverage often served along with tea. The second stand may have been used as a tray for spoons. The accompanying teaspoons have only recently been reunited with this service.

Sources of Information and/or Prop Ideas (photos/videos)

Teaching the Arts, Object in Focus: <https://new.artsmia.org/teaching-the-arts/paul-revere-tea-service/silver-a-precious-metal-indeed/>

Biography of Paul Revere: <http://www.biography.com/people/paul-revere-9456172#early-years>

Met museum essay, Paul Revere, Jr. (1734–1818):
http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/rvre/hd_rvre.htm

Link to the MFA, Boston, painting of the Samels Family by Johann Eckstein:
<http://www.mfa.org/collections/object/samels-family-33631>

Portrait of Paul Revere, from MFA: <http://www.mfa.org/collections/object/paul-revere-32401>

Explore the basics of silversmithing in colonial America:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JaqmzKFWDEI>

Met museum essay, Coffee, Tea, and Chocolate in Early Colonial America:
http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/coff/hd_coff.htm

