

Devens and Revere. This custom arose from Christ Church being the most northerly church in Boston, and having a very lofty steeple, — at that time 191 feet in height, and after the gale in 1804 reduced to its present height, 175 feet, — which formed the most conspicuous landmark for vessels entering the harbor, and thence being well known, especially among the merchants and seafaring men, and generally among the inhabitants of the North End, as the “North Church.” I have an impression, also, that it was so designated in the printed directions to pilots and masters of vessels entering the harbor. The Rev. Dr. Greenwood, in his “History of King’s Chapel,” — when giving an account of the “increase of Episcopacy in Massachusetts, in the year 1723,” says: “And thus Dr. Cutler” — who had been a Congregationalist, and President of Yale College — “became the first Rector of the North, or Christ Church.” I have a letter from a lady whose mother was a member of Christ Church in those times, who says “that, when young, she seldom heard it called by any other name than the North Church; and that she was twelve years old before she ever heard a Meeting-house called a Church, and then it was by a person from the South, and not a New-Englander.” I have also lately been informed that the descendants of John Pulling’s second wife say of her, “that she always called Christ Church the North Church,” and whenever she told her story of the lanterns, which she was fond of repeating, said “that it was from the steeple of that church that they were shown.” And this custom continued to a very late period, and, possibly, even now continues. And, in this connection, I may be permitted to add the testimony of my own experience, — now, of three-quarters of a century, — for, though brought up in Trinity Church, I had friends and acquaintances in Christ Church, with whom I associated, — and in my boyhood I scarcely knew that that church had any other name than the North Church. In later years, in my intimacy with a very dear friend, who was then the Rector of that church, the Rev. Dr. Croswell, when conversing together about the events of its former days, we were very much in the habit of calling it the Old North Church; and I have now before me letters from the same friend, after he left Boston, in which he speaks of it, in affectionate terms, as “the dear Old North”; and in the “Memoirs” of his life, written by his father, there are letters and pieces of poetry, dated from the “Cloisters of the Old North Church.” I conclude, from these and other circumstances that might be mentioned, that when Richard Devens wrote “N. C’h.” he meant “North Church” or “Christ Church,” as the place where the signals were shown.

And all this applies to Paul Revere’s account, with still greater force. For, as is well known, the North Meeting-house was destroyed by the British in the year 1776; and afterward, “as the Old North Society had lost their Meeting-house, and the New Brick Society had lost their minister, the two congregations united, and worshipped together,” in the building called the New Brick Meeting-house. But Revere wrote his Narrative in the year 1798; and it is scarcely probable that, in that account, he would have referred his readers to a building which, twenty-three years before, had been “entirely demolished and consumed for fuel”; at least, without some explanation. And therefore