

Paul Curtis, American Shipbuilder

(Partially Extracted from Wikipedia)

Paul was the youngest of nine children of Elijah and Rachel (Clapp) Curtis. He was born on December 26, 1800 in South Scituate, Massachusetts and died in Boston in 1873. In 1819, at the age of 18, he moved to Medford and began an apprenticeship as a shipwright at the shipyard of Mr. Thatcher Magoun. When serving time as apprentice, he was called "Honest Paul". In 1834 the firm of Curtis and Co. was formed together with James O. Curtis and lasted until 1839 during which time nine ships were built. Carrying on business on his own, Paul built another 27 vessels at Medford before moving his shipbuilding business to East Boston in 1852. Included in the ships he built were nineteen clipper ships.

To illustrate the quality of his work a lady related this experience: She was returning from Europe with husband and family on the ship *John Elliot Thayer*. They encountered an unusually severe gale lasting three days, with constantly increasing violence. The passengers became so alarmed that the captain was appealed to for assurances of safety. While he admitted the storm to be the worst he had ever known, he called the ladies to the cabin and asked them to notice the builder's name in golden letters on the white enamel panel. They read this: 'Paul Curtis, builder.' He assured them that no ship of Paul's had ever foundered,—no ships had so high a record for low insurance rates,—no timber or bolt was introduced unless free from all defect. 'I assure you, ladies,' he said, 'I think she will ride this terrible storm safely.' The ship came safely through the storm.

Paul married Almira James (1805-1895) in 1825 and had five children. He was the sixth generation of a line from Thomas¹ Curtis of Scituate, MA 1638 and Thomas^A and Richardene Curtis of Ash, Kent Co.; thus, Paul⁶, Elijah⁵, Elijah⁴, Benjamin³, Samuel², Thomas¹.



The clipper ship "Reporter" built by Paul Curtis, 1853



"Over the River and Through the Woods to Grandfather's House We Go!"

The Paul Curtis House

(Extracted from Wikipedia)

While living in Medford, MA, Paul Curtis, the master shipbuilder, built and occupied the large house with pillars of the Greek revival period on South Street known today as the Paul Curtis House. It is the original house named in the poem and eventual song "Over the River and through the Woods."

The rear portion of the house was built in the early 19th century. Lydia Maria Child (1802-1880) recalled the farm house when she wrote of her childhood visit to her grandmother's house in the poem "Over the River and through the Woods," published in 1844. When "to Grandfather's house" was changed to "to Grandmother's house" is not known. About 1859, Paul Curtis greatly enlarged the house and gave it a two-story portico. The house went in the U.S. Register of Historic Places in 1975. In 1976, Tufts University purchased and restored the house and uses it for staff offices. In the 19th century, ships were built across the street from the house on the Mystic River. The river mentioned in the poem is the Mystic River and the woodland surrounding the house has long disappeared.



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