

American Antiquarian Society

Manuscript Collections

Name of collection:

Curtis Family, Journals, 1829-1847

Location:

Folio volumes "C"
Octavo volumes "C"

Size of collection:

1 folio volume
1 octavo volume

N.U.C.M.C. number:

RLIN id:

Sources of information on collection:

McLellan, Hugh D. The History of Gorham, Maine (Camden, Maine: Picton Press, 1992)

Source of collection:

Gift of Mrs. Roland M. Kenah, 1996

Collection description:

Capt. John Curtis (1800?-1869) was the son of Capt. John and Mercy Curtis of Portland, Maine. Capt. John, Sr. had been lost at sea in 1812 while in command of the privateer "Dartmouth." Capt. John, Jr. was a successful master mariner. He married, on 22 May 1823, Statira R., daughter of Ai and Eunice Staples, of Gorham, Me. They had two children.

The folio volume (80 leaves) contains a logbook kept for the bark (or barque) "Herald," of which John Curtis was Master. The logbook covers the period 23 November 1829 to 20 February 1832. The ship made coastwise trips of the eastern United States (e.g., Charleston, S.C.; Savannah, Ga.; Portland, Me.; Mobile, Ala.; New York, N.Y.; Philadelphia, Pa.; Baltimore, Md.; Norfolk, Va.), as well as trips to the West Indies, stopping at Guadeloupe and Saint Thomas, and trans-Atlantic trips to Liverpool, England, Havre de Grace, France, and to the Balearic Islands in the Mediterranean Sea. The "Herald" transported lumber, cotton, coal, salt, hay, pipe staves, passengers, molasses, pork, vinegar, whiskey, navy beans, and bread. The entries include weather conditions, duties and activities, shipping information, and navigational notes.

The octavo volume (35 leaves, 16 blank) contains a journal kept by Statira R. Curtis for a voyage she took with her husband, the ship's captain, and their two children on board the "John Marshall." They sailed from Portland, Maine, on 12 January 1836, to New Orleans, Louisiana (via the Mississippi River) to take "... in a cargo of tobacco and cotton for London ..." and returned to Portland on 31 July that same year. The ship stopped at Nassau, Bahamas for the period 5 February to 16 March. From Nassau, they proceeded to the Mississippi River, arriving there on 29 March, and sailed up the river to New Orleans, Louisiana, arriving on 31 March. They remained in New Orleans until 11 June. A terrible leak required them to make their way to Havana, Cuba. They arrived there on 1 July and remained until 15 July, at which time they sailed for home. The ship was plagued by leaks the entire voyage.

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Collection description (continued):

Statira's entries while under sail contain comments on the weather, being seasick and sick of the sea, fishing and catching dolphin and sharks, and reports of other vessels and wrecks seen. Otherwise, the entries mention the people she had spent time with, as well as descriptions of the places she had been and activities engaged in. She entertained, and was entertained by, other ships' captains and their families and diplomats and their families, among others. She took a special interest in religion and attended several different church services and taught a Sabbath school for her children and members of the crew.

There are two partial transcriptions of this journal. The first by Mrs. Kenah, for the period up to 23 June; the second by Susan Motyka, for the period 1 June to 31 July.

The journal also contains a "Valedictory to Mrs. Curtis of Ship J. Marshall" written by E. H. Hickman and dated 2 April 1836; a copy of an undated letter from New Orleans to Hickman; a copy of an undated letter from New Orleans to Mrs. Wenberg; a copy of a poem by Mrs. Curtis; a prayer written by Mrs. Curtis dated Gorham, June 1847; a copy of an undated letter to J---, announcing the death of Capt. Curtis; and a "Journal of a voyage in 1831," which covers the period 11 to 17 August 1831 (3 p., at end).