

The Edwards Family in Boston

Learn more about author and tour guide Ben Edwards' ancestors who lived in Boston for one hundred fifty years as well as how old they were when certain key events occurred in Boston. The information below appears in Ben's book *One April in Boston*.

Captain Benjamin Edwards (1685-1751)—Born December 15, 1685

Ben's Sixth-Great-Grandfather

- Age 20 when Benjamin Franklin is born on Milk Street in 1706
- Age 27 when the second Town House (today's Old State House) is dedicated in 1713
- Age 29 when Long Wharf is completed in 1715
- Age 36 when Benjamin Franklin writes his fourteen Silence Dogood letters between April and October of 1722
- Age 37 when Christ Church (Old North Church) is built in 1723
- Age 51 when Thomas Hancock's mansion is built on Beacon Hill in 1737
- Age 54 when the steeple is added to Christ Church (Old North Church) in 1740
- Age 56 when Faneuil Hall is built in 1742 and its grasshopper weather vane installed

Captain Benjamin Edwards was a sea captain and merchant who lived in the North End of Boston. Early records indicate he was on Hull Street in 1713 and at the corner of Prince and Salem streets in 1717. In 1719, Captain Edwards bought property on Back Street (now Salem Street) where he lived for the remainder of his life. Today the address of the Edwards family property/home site is 104 Salem Street, where L'Osteria Restaurant now stands.

Captain Benjamin Edwards (1685-1751) was born in England. He married Hannah Harrod on December 10, 1706, at the Second Church (a congregational church also known as the Old North Meeting House) in Boston. They were married by Cotton Mather. Between 1709 and 1717 the couple had three children (two girls and one boy), all of whom died in infancy. In November 1719 Captain Edwards and 23 other men founded the New Brick Church. This congregational church was built in 1721 and stood on Middle Street, now Hanover Street in the North End. Captain Edwards would attend the New Brick Church for the next thirty years. Hannah died in 1728, after 22 years of marriage.

Captain Edwards then married Bathsheba Evans on May 14, 1730, at the New Brick Church. They were married by Reverend William Welstead. Between 1731 and 1738 Benjamin and Bathsheba had seven children: five boys and two girls. Among these children were Captain Benjamin Edwards 2nd (born in 1731), a silversmith and soldier in the French and Indian War; Alexander Edwards (born in 1733), a cabinetmaker and member of the Sons of Liberty; and Dolling Edwards (born in 1737), a mastmaker and fifth-great-grandfather of tour guide Ben Edwards.

Dolling Edwards (1737-1773)—Born May 9, 1737

Ben's Fifth-Great-Grandfather

- Ages 14 and 15 during the town's longest smallpox epidemic in 1752
- Age 18 when the Cape Ann Earthquake strikes Boston at about 4:30 am on November 18, 1755 (Estimated at between 6.0 and 6.3 on the Richter scale—close to 1,600 chimneys in the town are damaged in some way and the Faneuil Hall weather vane falls from the building.)
- Age 19 when the French and Indian War begins in 1756 (his brother Benjamin serves as a captain in the war)
- Age 27 when the Stamp Act is passed by the British Parliament on March 22, 1765
- Age 28 during the first Stamp Act protest when the Sons of Liberty hang an effigy of the stamp distributor, Andrew Oliver, from what would become Liberty Tree on August 14, 1765
- Age 29 when news of the repeal of the Stamp Act reaches Boston on May 16, 1766. Church bells ring and the town soon celebrates with bonfires and fireworks
- Age 30 when the Townshend Acts are passed by the British Parliament on June 29, 1767
- Age 31 when, on September 30, 1768, British warships, armed schooners, and transports arrive and anchor in Boston Harbor. At noon the following day two regiments of British troops land at Long Wharf and march up King Street with drums beating, fifes playing, and colors flying to occupy the town
- Age 32 when his brother Alexander Edwards and 300 other members of the Sons of Liberty meet at Robinson's Tavern in Dorchester on August 14, 1769 to partake in a banquet to celebrate the 4th anniversary of their Stamp Act protest at Liberty Tree
- Age 32 when the Boston Massacre occurs on March 5, 1770

Dolling Edwards (1737-1773) married Rebecca Christie on September 21, 1758 at the New North Church. The New North was a congregational church in the North End and the minister at this time was Andrew Eliot. Mastmaker Dolling Edwards lived on Ship Street. Between 1759 and 1770 Dolling

and Rebecca had five children: three boys and two girls. Among these children were Sally Edwards (born in 1761), who married silversmith Paul Revere Jr., firstborn son of the famous patriot; and Benjamin Edwards (born in 1765), a cooper and fourth-great-grandfather of tour guide Ben Edwards.

Benjamin Edwards (1765-1808)—Baptized April 14, 1765

Ben's Fourth-Great-Grandfather

- Age 8 when the Boston Tea Party takes place on December 16, 1773 (Ben's uncle Alexander is surely in attendance at Old South Meeting House with many other members of the Sons of Liberty for the meeting held there prior to "the destruction of the tea.")
- Age 9 when the Boston Port Bill, one of the Coercive Acts, closes the port of Boston on June 1, 1774
- Age 10 when Paul Revere makes his Midnight Ride and the Battles of Lexington and Concord are fought on April 18/19, 1775
- Age 10 when the Battle of Bunker Hill is fought on June 17, 1775 (Ben may have watched the battle from a rooftop in Boston as many did that day.)
- Age 11 when the Declaration of Independence is read to the citizens of Boston from the balcony of the Town House (soon called the State House and now known as the Old State House) on July 18, 1776
- Age 16 when Cornwallis surrenders at Yorktown on October 19, 1781
- Age 17 when his older sister Sally Edwards marries Paul Revere Jr., firstborn son of Paul Revere, on August 22, 1782 at the New Brick (Second) Church
- Age 21 when 20,000 spectators fill the town to celebrate the opening of the Charles River Bridge on June 17, 1786
- Age 24 when President George Washington visits Boston on his tour of the eastern states on October 24, 1789 (Ben may have marched with the coopers as part of the procession of artisans, tradesmen, and manufacturers that was formed to welcome the president.)
- Age 31 when the first Harrison Gray Otis House, designed by Charles Bulfinch, is completed at 141 Cambridge Street in 1796 (still stands today)
- Age 31 when John Adams is elected president on December 7, 1796
- Age 32 when USS *Constitution* is launched from Edmund Hartt's shipyard in the North End on October 21, 1797

- Age 33 when the Massachusetts State House, designed by Charles Bulfinch, opens in 1798 (The dome is covered with wooden shingles.)
- Age 37 when copper sheeting, manufactured by Paul Revere at his copper rolling mill, replaces the wooden shingles on the dome of the Massachusetts State House in 1802
- Age 39 when the steeple of Christ Church (Old North Church) is blown down in the “great snow hurricane” of October 9/10, 1804
- Age 41 when the African Meeting House is dedicated on December 6, 1806 (Ben lives in the West End a short distance away on Belknap Street.)

Benjamin Edwards (1765-1808) married Polly Bangs at the First Church of Boston (congregational) on June 22, 1791. They were married by Reverend John Clarke. This church was located near the State House (today’s Old State House). Ben was an orphan by the time he was eight and he and his siblings likely lived with their uncle Alexander Edwards at the family home on Back Street. The Boston Directory of 1796 lists Benjamin Edwards as a cooper on Prince Street. This directory also lists him as a cooper on Back Street in 1798 and 1800, on Ship Street in 1803, on Buttolf Street in 1805, and on Belknap Street in 1807 with no occupation noted. Ben lived on Cambridge Street in 1808. Benjamin and Polly had five children: three boys and two girls. Among these children were Benjamin Edwards (born in 1793), who followed in his father’s footsteps as a cooper; Alexander Edwards (born in 1797), a blacksmith; and Joseph B. Edwards (born in 1799), a paver and third-great-grandfather of tour guide Ben Edwards.

Joseph B. Edwards (1799-1852)—Born December 29, 1799

Ben’s Third-Great-Grandfather

- Age 6 when an enlarged Faneuil Hall (today’s building) opens to the public in 1806
- Age 12 when the War of 1812 begins on June 18, 1812
- Age 16 when the largest bell ever cast by Paul Revere (2,437 pounds) is installed in the bell tower of King’s Chapel on February 23, 1816
- Age 22 when the town of Boston is officially incorporated as a city on March 19, 1822
- Age 26 when Atwood’s Oyster House (today’s Union Oyster House) opens on Union Street in 1826
- Age 31 when the first issue of Boston’s abolitionist newspaper *The Liberator* is published on January 1, 1831
- Age 31 when Samuel Francis Smith’s hymn “America” (better known as “My Country, ‘Tis of Thee”) is first sung on the steps of the Park Street Church by Park Street’s Childrens’ Choir on July 4, 1831

- Age 32 when William Lloyd Garrison and others found the New England Anti-Slavery Society at the African Meeting House on January 6, 1832
- Age 37 when the Boston Public Garden is established in 1837
- Age 48 when a 39-year-old congressman from Illinois named Abraham Lincoln gives a stump speech for Zachary Taylor (the Whig candidate for president) at Tremont Temple on September 22, 1848
- Age 50 when the Fugitive Slave Act is passed on September 18, 1850, and slave catchers begin to roam the city. Abolitionist Lewis Hayden continues hiding slaves in his home—a site on the Underground Railroad
- Age 51 when escaped slave Shadrach Minkens is seized and arrested under the Fugitive Slave Act on February 15, 1851, and hundreds of anti-slavery activists rescue him from the courthouse where he is being held

Joseph B. Edwards (1799-1852) married Sarah Mace at the West Church in Boston (congregational) on October 30, 1823. They were married by Reverend Charles Lowell. Reverend Lowell hated slavery and supported the abolitionist cause. The church was one of the first in the country to integrate, giving open seating to blacks and whites alike, and is said to have served as a site on the Underground Railroad. The West Church still stands today at 131 Cambridge Street in the West End.

Joseph B. is listed as a paver in the Boston City Directory for most of the years from 1826 to 1845 at various locations including West Centre Street, Derne Street, 5 Spring Street, Fruit Street, 14 Second Street, 35 Brighton Street, 30 North Russell Street, and 67 Lowell Street. In 1852 he was at 151 Cambridge Street. Joseph B. and Sarah had five children: two boys and three girls. Their fourth child was Benjamin Edwards born on February 22, 1836. He is the second-great-grandfather of tour guide Ben Edwards and his last ancestor to live in Boston.

Benjamin Edwards (1836-1926) married Mary Elizabeth Sawtell at the First Baptist Church in Boston on April 23, 1856. They were married by Reverend Rollin H. Neale. This church was located at the corner of Hanover and Union streets. Benjamin lived in Boston for about twenty years before moving away (later residences included Chicago, Illinois; New York City; Hackensack, New Jersey (where he served as Town Clerk in 1866); and East Haddam, Connecticut (where he was a farmer after 1870). Ben passed down stories his father Joseph B. told him about how he would walk by Boston Common and see the cows graze (this ended in 1830). He would have witnessed the sad spectacle in Boston on June 2, 1854, of federal troops returning Anthony Burns to slavery. Ben's marriage record lists his occupation as a jeweller and the Boston City Directory of 1855 shows him working in that profession at 121 Court Street and boarding at 14 Billerica Street.

Benjamin Edwards and Mary Elizabeth Sawtell had ten children including a son named Joseph B. Edwards who was born in New York City in 1861. Joseph B. Edwards (1861-1937) was a yard foreman for U.S. Rubber Company in Naugatuck, Connecticut—a small town that tour guide Ben Edwards' grandfather and father (both named Benjamin Edwards) would grow up in.



The framed portrait of Boston sea captain Benjamin Edwards (1685-1751) circa 1723.



The signature of Captain Benjamin Edwards from his 1708 family Bible.

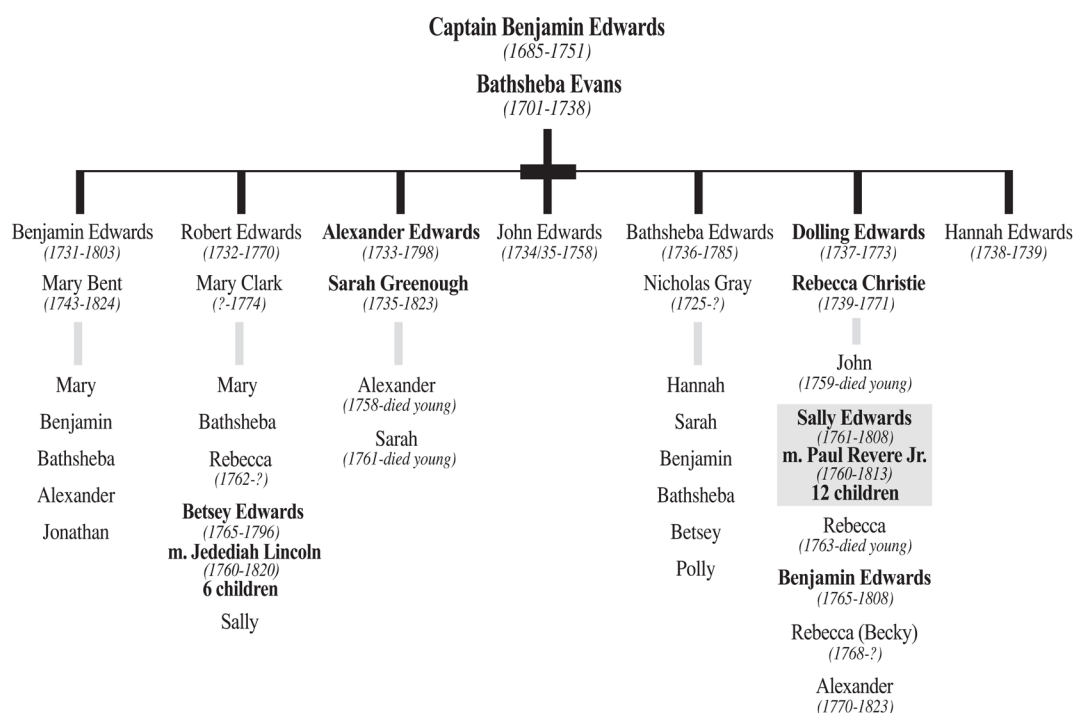


Tour guide Ben Edwards and his father Ben F. Edwards next to the original marker for Captain Benjamin Edwards at Copp's Hill Burying Ground in Boston.



Tour guide Ben Edwards and the Edwards family at Copp's Hill Burying Ground in Boston in 1964.

The Colonial Edwards Family Tree



The names **Sally Edwards (1761-1808)** and **Paul Revere Jr. (1760-1813)** are highlighted in gray. Paul Revere Jr. was the firstborn son of patriot Paul Revere. Sally Edwards was the older sister of Benjamin Edwards (1765-1808), fourth-great-grandfather of tour guide Ben Edwards.



Paul Revere (1789-1857) son of Paul Revere Jr. and Sally Edwards.

Paul Revere (b. 1789) was the fifth child of Paul Revere Jr. and Sally Edwards.

Here is a list of Paul Jr. and Sally's 12 children:

Sally b. 1783; d. young
 Alexander b. 1784
 Sally b. 1786
 Charles b. 1787
 Paul b. 1789
 Rachel b. 1790; d. young
 Rachel b. 1793
 George b. 1795
 Mary b. 1797
 Deborah b. 1799
 Joshua b. 1801; d. young
 Harriet b. 1803

Col. Paul Revere, born in Boston
 Sarah Anne, born in Boston
 died May 3 - 1778
 Dec. 21 - 1794 d. May 10 1815
 April 7. 1736 Married August 17. 1757

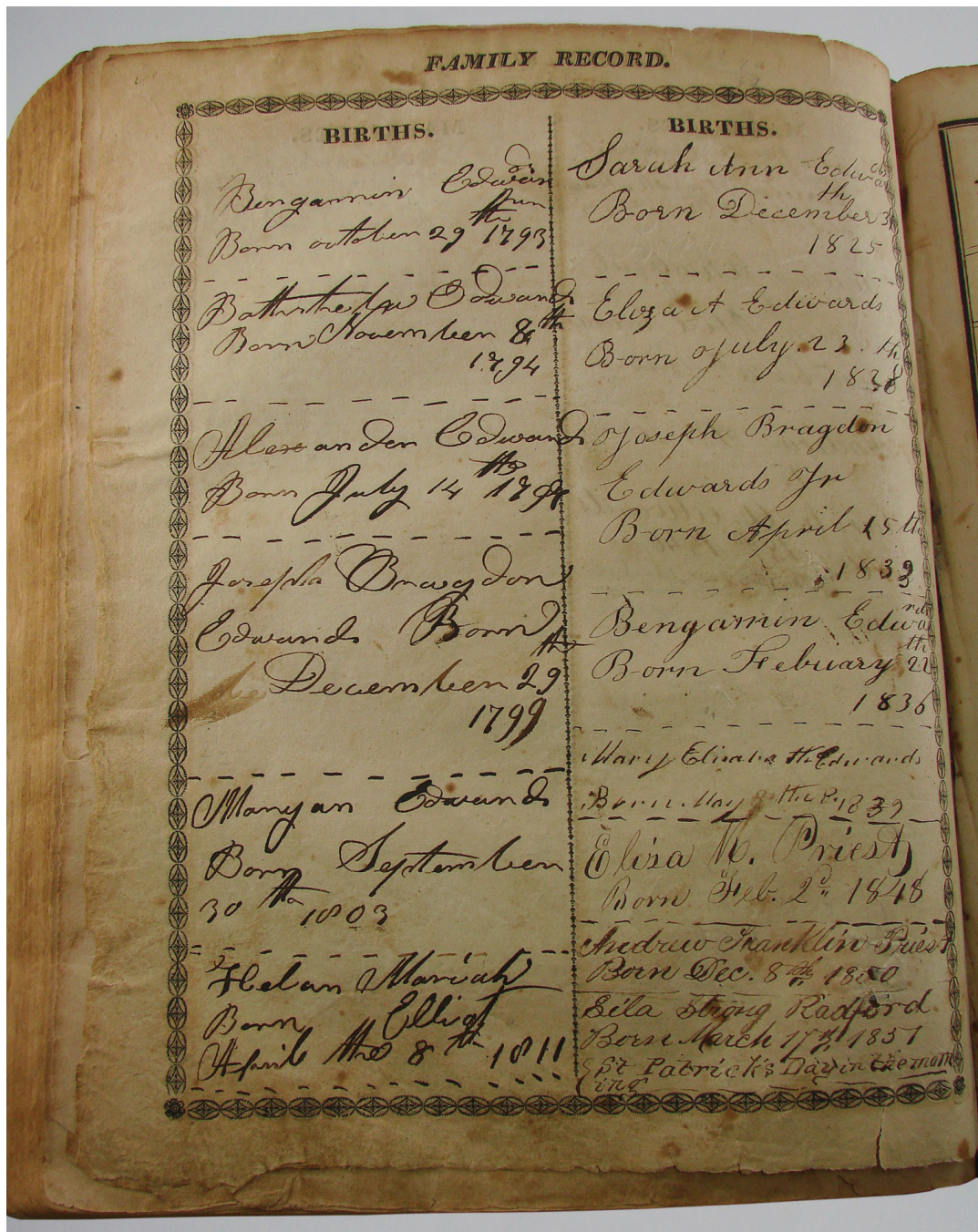
Paul Revere, son of Col. Paul Revere Born years
 January 6th 1760.
 Miss Sally Edwards, Daughter of John Edwards
 Born 18 September 1761.
 Paul Revere, jun^r, Married Sally Edwards,
 Daughter of J Edwards, 22 August 1782.
 Sally Revere, Born 9th June 1783.
 Alexander, C. Revere, 13, Sept^r 1784.
 Sally, Revere, Born 13, February 1785.
 Charles, Revere, Born 2 August 1787.
 Paul Revere, Born 2, February 1789.
 Rachel, Revere, Born 18, November 1790.
 Rachel, Revere, Born 25 June 1793.
 George, W. Revere, Born 25 April 1795.
 Mary, Revere, Born 2^d April 1797.
 Deborah, L. Revere, Born 1 May 1799.
 Joshua, Revere, Born 29th November 1801.
 Harriet, Revere, Born 20. October 1803.

Alexander, C. Revere Died 13. February. 1800.
 Charles Revere, Died 20 March 1800.
 Joshua Revere, Died 26 Novemb^r 1802.
 Mrs - Sally Revere, Died 23 August 1808.
 Mr Paul Revere, jun^r, Died 13 January 1813.

Paul Revere Paul Revere Paul Revere
 Paul Revere
 Francis Revere
 William Revere

The Record accepted by
 me this 17th June 1857 & put
 to my use by Paul Revere -

Paul Revere (b. 1789) son of Paul Revere Jr. and Sally Edwards pens the family records. This document includes the births of his parents, his 11 siblings, the wedding of his parents, and more.



The birth records of Joseph B. Edwards (1799-1852) and his siblings in the 1812 Edwards family Bible.

Joseph B. married Sarah Mace at the West Church in Boston on October 30, 1823.

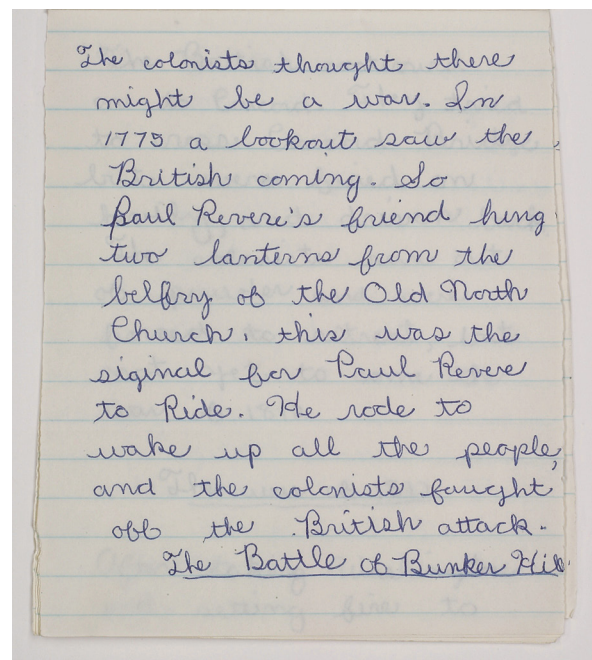
He is listed as a paver in the Boston City Directory for most of the years from 1826 to 1845.

In the right column is the birth record of Joseph's son Benjamin Edwards in 1836.

Benjamin is listed as a jeweller in the Boston City Directory of 1855.



Tour guide Ben Edwards holds his children's book next to the replacement marker for Captain Benjamin Edwards at Copp's Hill Burying Ground in Boston.



Ben's fifth grade class photo and a page from a book he wrote at age 10 that mentions Paul Revere. For the real story, read The Midnight Ride chapter of *One April in Boston*.