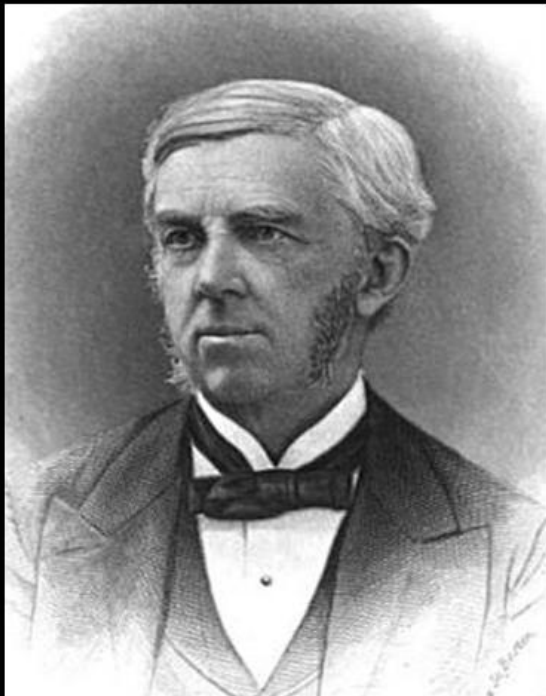


THE POETIC JUSTICE SERIES  
an *auto*SOCRATIC QUICK-START publication

# *Old Ironsides*

*Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr.*



Published by:  
*auto*SOCRATIC PRESS  
www.rationalsys.com

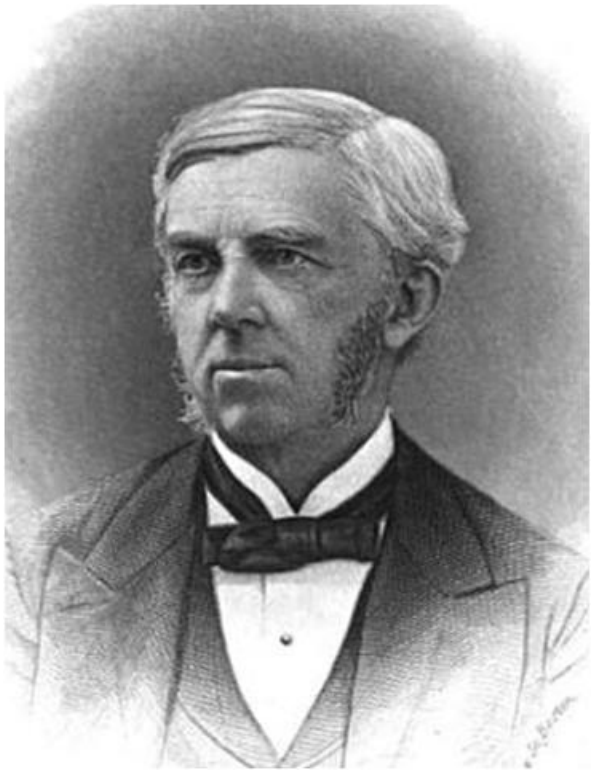
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**Center for**  
*auto* SOCRATIC EXCELLENCE



*A Short Biography*  
*Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr.*



**OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES, SR.**

**1809-1894**

# A POETIC UPBRINGING

## Fireside Poet

Oliver Wendell  
Holmes was born in  
Cambridge,  
Massachusetts in  
1809.

Holmes was  
exposed to some of  
the great American  
poets at an early  
age.

Holmes enjoyed  
writing poetry, and  
wrote many poems  
while at Harvard.

Though he was  
known as one of the  
"Fireside Poets", he  
decided to pursue  
medicine.

Though having made  
major contributions  
in several fields,  
Holmes is best  
remembered as a  
poet.

# A LIFE FULLY LIVED

## The Amazing Life of Oliver Wendell Holmes

After graduating from Harvard, Holmes decided against law and studied medicine.

Holmes pioneered cleanliness to combat contagious diseases, and coined the word "anesthesia".

Holmes was a major contributor to the medical profession.

Holmes was a poet and author as well.

Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr., American physician, poet, professor, lecturer, and author, died in 1894 at age 85.

*A Marine Biography*  
*The Short Story of a Ship*

# PIRATES

## A Country Without a Military

America declared its independence from England in 1776.

American merchants were eager to trade with countries around the world.

Americans sent merchant ships through the Mediterranean Sea to trade.

The USA had no standing navy.

Pirates from the Barbary Coast nations in north Africa would seize the ships and the crew with immunity.



# ENOUGH IS ENOUGH

## Paying Ransom Only Encourages the Criminal

The US decided to build six large warships to secure American interests.

A treaty was signed with the Dey of Algiers, the most powerful Barbary ruler, allowing safe passage in exchange for money.

As peace was secured, it was decided to build only three warships now.

France, at war with England, captured US ships trading with England, and held them for ransom.

It was decided, "Millions for defense, but not one cent for tribute".

## North Africa Today



## The Barbary Coast of North Africa in 1805



### United States Marine Corp Hymn

From the Halls of Montezuma, To the shores of  
Tripoli; We fight our country's battles  
In the air, on land, and sea;

# A NAVAL RESPONSE

## The USS Constitution and Others

Though France agreed to stop capturing American ships, the Barbary rulers began seizing our ships again!

The US Navy had, by this time, built six warships, with the USS Constitution the flagship frigate.

The six warships sailed into the Mediterranean to secure American interests.

Issues in Morocco, Tangier, Tunas, and Tripoli were resolved in our favor.

"Peace through Strength" was achieved!

# THE USS CONSTITUTION

## What Was This Unique Ship?

The USS Constitution had a streamlined hull and more than the usual number of sails to catch the wind.

Gunsmiths installed 44 big cannons on the frigate.

The USS Constitution was faster than other warships, and powerful.

21 inch-thick oak plates were added to protect the sides against cannon fire.

The USS Constitution was a remarkable ship, having strength, power, and speed!

# THE WAR OF 1812

## Heroic Accomplishments and a Nickname

The British and French were at war.

Britain blockaded the US from trading with the French, and impressed our sailors into service.

The USA declared war on England, thus beginning the War of 1812.

During one naval encounter, a British cannonball bounced off the side of the USS Constitution.

The British declared "It must have iron on its sides", and thus, the origin of a nickname!

# AT DEATH'S DOORSTEP

Must All Good Things Come To An End?

33 years of battle and rotting wood led the Navy to decide to destroy the USS Constitution.

The USS Constitution was a main contributor to the early success of the USA.

Oliver Wendell Holmes, just out of Harvard, couldn't stand to see the grand ship destroyed.

Public opinion is often enflamed when an issue is properly explained.

Holmes wrote "Old Ironsides", a poem pleading the Navy to sink the ship, rather than destroy her.

# A FALSE DILEMMA

## A New Life

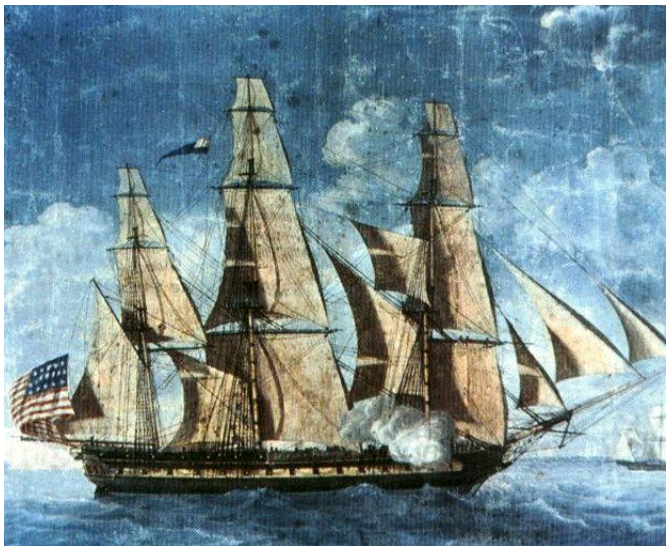
Holmes depicted the destruction of the ship as "birds snatching bits and pieces from her".

A proper death would involved "let me sink beneath the wave, and there should be my grave".

Holmes provided a visual dichotomy between "Destroy / Sink".

Holmes didn't want either - he wanted a public made aware so it would be restored!

The public outcry led to the USS Constitution, "Old Ironsides", "The Eagle of the Sea", being restored!



# *Old Ironsides*

## *The Poem*



# *Old Ironsides*

**Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr.**

Aye tear her tattered ensign down  
    long has it waved on high,  
And many an eye has danced to see  
    That banner in the sky;

Beneath it rung the battle shout,  
    And burst the cannon's roar;--  
    The meteor of the ocean air  
Shall sweep the clouds no more.

Her deck, once red with heroes' blood,  
    Where knelt the vanquished foe,  
When winds were hurrying o'er the flood,  
    And waves were white below,

No more shall feel the victor's tread,  
Or know the conquered knee;--  
The harpies of the shore shall pluck  
The eagle of the sea!

Oh, better that her shattered hulk  
Should sink beneath the wave;  
Her thunders shook the mighty deep,  
And there should be her grave;

Nail to the mast her holy flag,  
Set every threadbare sail,  
And give her to the god of storms,  
The lightning and the gale!

# POSTSCRIPT

## The Pen Is Mightier than the Sword

Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr., wrote an inspirational poem about the USS Constitution.

The nation's newspapers got hold of the poem, and public sentiment was galvanized.

"Old Ironsides" was saved and restored, because of one man and a poem.

The USS Constitution is now a museum, and is the world's oldest commissioned naval vessel afloat.

"The Pen Is Mightier Than The Sword!"

# POST-POSTSCRIPT

## A Rumor can Spread Like Wild-Fire!

The average life-span of wood ships was 10-15 years, and the USS Constitution was 31 years old.

The Navy regularly surveyed ships to determine fitness at sea, and cost to repair damaged ships.

Though likely it would have been broken up, no such order had been given!

The newspaper article stirring Holmes to action wrongly reported the USS Constitution **WOULD BE** destroyed!

"A Rumor can Spread Like Wild-Fire!"

*Old Ironsides*  
*Metaphorically*

# OUTLIER

## When You're In a Class All By Yourself

In Holmes' "Old Ironsides", he is saying good-bye to the fastest frigate in the navy - USS Constitution.

A meteor is an object that streaks across the sky.

"The meteor of the ocean air" describes "faster than all" by a lot.

There are many instances when somebody / something stands way out.

THE OUTLIER METAPHOR:  
You're the meteor of the \_\_\_\_."

# HARPIES OF THE SHORE

When Something Is Going to Destroy Something Grand

In Holmes' "Old Ironsides", the USS Constitution is going to be destroyed.

A "Harpie" is a mythological winged spirit that steals food, and literally means "that which snatches".

"The harpies of the shore shall pluck the eagle of the sea" means the inferior destroying the superior.

The jealous, envious, or inferior often try to "knock the good down a notch".

THE HARPIE OF THE SHORE METAPHOR:  
"The harpies of the \_\_\_\_\_ shall pluck the eagle of the \_\_\_\_\_."

# RIGHTFUL RESTING SPOT

Where Should Something Go To Die

In Holmes' "Old Ironsides", he says a good death to the USS Constitution is sinking it, not destroying it.

"She should sink beneath the wave, and there should be her grave."

"There should be her grave" means being buried where you've got the most memories.

THE RIGHTFUL RESTING SPOT METAPHOR:  
"The \_\_\_\_\_ should be your grave."