

Paul Shelby Curry



Paul Shelby Curry was born 17 May 1894 in Hastings. He was a son of James Dabney Curry (1859-1933) and Phoebe Emma or Ella Branson (1863-1943) who came to Hastings in the spring of 1885 from Rockingham County, Virginia. They lived at 4th & River Streets in Hastings where James built a house. Nine of their ten children graduated from Hastings High School, including Paul, who graduated with the class of 1911. After James Curry's death in 1933, Emma moved to Minneapolis where some of her children had preceded her. Before the War, Paul was working as a bartender for the Odin Club in Minneapolis. He registered for the draft in 1917 in Minneapolis; he was 23 and single.

Paul and his brothers, Charles and Gilbert, joined the service in August 1918. Paul served as a Musician 2nd Class in the all-Black 809th Pioneer Infantry. In those days, the troops were segregated.

The men of the 809th were assigned primarily to non-combat jobs including construction of hospitals, roads, bridges and railroad lines. Paul and his brother Gilbert served in the Infantry's Band. They trained at Camp Dodge, Iowa. The 809th Infantry arrived in France in September of 1918. During the 14-day voyage aboard the *USS President Grant*, about half of the five thousand men on board became ill with influenza, and many died en route. Within two months of the 809th's arrival, Armistice was declared on 11 November. Curry was released from service on 26 July 1919.

After the War, Paul worked for the United States Postal Service. In 1937, he married Marjory A. Wormley (1908-1985), the daughter of Alfred and Evelina (Christian) Wormley. He died on 9 January 1981 in Minneapolis and is buried in Fort Snelling National Cemetery.