



Longfellow House Bulletin

Volume 1 No. 1

A Newsletter of the Friends of the Longfellow House

December 1996

Welcome to the Friends Bulletin!

The Friends of the Longfellow House, a recently formed group which raises funds and promotes interest in the house and its collections, plans to publish a newsletter twice a year to acquaint you with the history of this impressive Georgian home and to keep you up to date on the many events going on here.

A regular feature of the newsletter will be a column about individual Friends. We kick off this premier issue with an interview with Friends' president, Diana Korzenik.

The National Park Service has managed the Longfellow National Historic Site since Congress established it in 1972. Director Jim Shea and his energetic staff continue to accomplish amazing feats—not only educating visitors from around the world, but also discovering items still buried in the house, cataloguing and preserving letters to be placed in the archives, and finding new ways to utilize them.

The Bulletin will keep you apprised of recent discoveries, fill you in on past ones, and introduce you to people using the collection. And, of course, there will be historical facts and anecdotes about the residents of and visitors to the house since 1759.



Daguerreotype of Henry and Fanny Longfellow with sons Ernest (left) and Charles, c.1849



Friends' charter signed: (from left to right) Diana Korzenik, Barclay Henderson, Rolf Diamant, and Jim Shea

Interview with a Friend... Meet Diana Korzenik

Diana Korzenik, a founding member and first president of the Friends, is an author and professor emeritus at the Massachusetts College of Art. Ruth Butler spoke with her at her home in Newton on October 1, 1996.

Ruth Butler: Diana, how did you come to the Longfellow House?

Diana Korzenik: It was some time after I had published *Drawn to Art* (University Press of New England, 1985) and in the period when I was contemplating early retirement. Out of that book and my work with the Cross family, I thought about the kind of education that took place in that family. I became interested in a more general way in the relationship between mothers and children who grew up to become artists.

Early in 1993 at an art education conference at the Concord Museum, I shared my interest with several people, among them Sally Sapienza, then a museum technician at the Longfellow House. "But you must come to the Longfellow House!" was her sudden exclamation. What she meant was Fanny Longfellow and Fanny's relationship to her son Ernie, who did become an artist.

Next thing I knew I was sitting in the basement of the house, near the old fur-

nace, looking at journals, letters, and Fanny's sketch book. I began to get a glimmer of how much fascinating material there was for the project that interested me.

One day Jim Shea, the Director at the Longfellow National Historic Site, was down there with other staff members unpacking and rearranging Fanny's clothes. Out they came—gowns, shoes, hair pieces, and fans. I couldn't believe my eyes. I was so excited I thought I had made the whole thing up—this was the ultimate grandmother's attic. It electrified my imagination. Perhaps for me the Friends was born at that moment—a conception that I did not know was happening.

Also, I had just left the college. I always felt I was a good administrator, and I felt sure there was another good organizing project in me—maybe this was it. Somehow looking at those gowns and those fans and feeling how vulnerable they were—the whole thing could have been sold off at any time over the past century. And, in fact, all of the letters to and from Longfellow did go to Harvard. But the rest, the immediate and extended family's letters, are all still on Brattle Street.

R.B.: But you could not have done this all alone. Whom did you work with?

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Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's father-in-law, Nathan Appleton, had originally thought the Craigie House a bad purchase and Longfellow an imprudent catch as he was a poet and teacher, not a merchant. At Longfellow's death, it became evident that he had carefully kept the books, looked after his money, and wisely invested. His estate was valued at \$356,320—an impressive sum in 1882.

D.K.: Well, first of all, Jim Shea—who, by the way, has been a fabulous director for this magnificent house. He has all the energy, curiosity, and love so necessary to take care of this very special historic treasure. It was Jim who brought me to understand how much was there, how little was known or understood. And further, he made it clear how much it would count with the National Park Service to have strong local backing for organizing and maintaining the collection on a higher plane, for instance, to get the archives and photographs out of the basement where they are kept in a room near the furnace.

Then I encountered other really interesting people at the house, people like Joan Mark, president of New England Pen, an organization that held its annual picnic on the Longfellow lawn, Stanley Paterson who was doing research on various men in Longfellow's circle, Lynne Spencer, preservationist, formerly associated with S.P.N.E.A. and a leader of the S.O.S (Save Our Sculpture) group, and Frances Ackerly, retired from Buckingham Browne and Nichols School and interested in early history and educational issues.

We were all there, doing research in one way or another, and we all knew how important it was for more people than just us to understand what this house is about. One thing led to another and we became a group. In the fall of 1994, Joan Mark had a party at her house for about twenty of us. This was the original Friends group. We boldly signed a "charter" so that we could be tax exempt in the state, and then Stanley Paterson arranged for our 501C3 so that we had IRS approval. We were in business.

R.B.: How have you managed to draw attention to the group to move beyond the original twenty interested souls?

D.K.: There have been public events at the house. I felt David McCullough's visit in 1994 was very important. It was not a public event, but he gave us wonderful publicity. And then Jim was always finding

people. I remember the day I met Steve Pratt, who was looking at his father's papers on their ancestors, the Craigies. I remember meeting Edie Bowers, Edith Longfellow's great-granddaughter. Jim brought her to the Longfellow birthday celebration at Mt. Auburn Cemetery a couple of years ago. Thus, little by little, the people and the recognition are growing.

R.B.: Diana, I remember having lunch with you over two years ago in Harvard Square, and I remember your excitement, how you felt you had pinned down the next step in your post-retirement life. As we talk now, I don't feel that any of that excitement




Portrait of Frances (Fanny) and Mary Appleton
by J. Isabey, 1837

has left you. What are your personal hopes for the Friends and for the Longfellow House at this point when the beginnings of a solid relationship between the National Park Service and a local group of committed people is firmly established?

D.K. We have started out so well. It has been such a pleasure for everyone involved. What I want is that it continue in this fashion. What has been good is the genuine demonstration on the part of our group of a love of the arts and of history on a small and local scale. People are working here because they love it.

My hope is that the Longfellow House, as it becomes better known and more visited, will never be operated too bureaucratically, nor become a simple five-minute stop on a whirlwind tour of New England. I want it to remain rooted in the local environment with continuous and enthusiastic involvement of the community

I love the way people are drawn to the house now through such things as concerts and poetry readings by local artists. And I want all that makes up the Longfellow house—the archives, the furniture, the book and photographic collections, the paintings and sculpture, the records of all sorts, the buildings and the gardens—to be protected and enhanced through the kind of social process we have had in the past couple of years, one that is rooted in human warmth. 

Longfellow's Descendants Donate Paintings

The National Park Service was delighted this past October to receive an oil painting by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's artist son, Ernest. Donated by the artist's great niece, Lenora Hollmann, this work entitled "Dana Beach" was signed and dated by the artist in 1875.

The 12 x 18" landscape depicts a shoreline scene in Manchester, Massachusetts, where Ernest had a studio. Ernest's sister, Edith, had married the son of the famous author Richard Henry Dana, for whose family the beach was named.

Frances Appleton Wetherell, granddaughter of Anne Allegra Longfellow, also recently donated a watercolor painting of the same scene by Ernest Longfellow, as well as numerous other family items.

The Longfellow House owns many other works of art by Ernest, some of which hang permanently on the walls for visitors to see. These newly acquired paintings will be used for research and special exhibition purposes.

Longfellow House in the Media

The Journal: New England Journal of Photographic History November 1996 featured an article by Jack Naylor on the Longfellow NHS's photographic collection.

Boston Sunday Globe September 1, 1996 editorial "Protecting Our National Parks" mentioned "irreplaceable papers and artifacts" at the House that need protection, care, and funding.

Boston Sunday Herald July 21, 1996 article "Poetry to the Eyes" called the grounds "an inspiration" and described events at the Longfellow Summer Festival.

Bob Vila's Home Again

October 20, 1996 television program was filmed partly at the House and recognized the work of the Friends.



American Castles (date to be announced) cable TV program about great homes of America devoted an episode to the House and features interviews with staff and Friends.

Kennedy and Kerry Win Funding for House

Thanks to the efforts of U. S. Senators John P. Kerry and Edward M. Kennedy, the Longfellow National Historic Site will receive an annual increase of \$112,000 in federal monies.

With this increase, the National Park Service will be able to provide expert care and preservation for some textiles, historic books, photographs, and 600,000 other archival items, and will be able to increase its hours of operation for the visiting public and school groups. This year the house will close on December 14 but will reopen in mid-March.

Kerry and Kennedy fought to ensure that funding for both the John F. Kennedy National Historic Site in Brookline and the Longfellow site would be included in the omnibus "Continuing Resolution," which will fund a number of important agencies, including the National Park Service.



View of Craigie House by Ernest Longfellow, 1855

Recent Discoveries in the House

- In the ongoing process of cataloguing the Dana family's many papers, the staff was excited to come across an intriguing account of Nathaniel Hawthorne's funeral in 1864 by Sarah Watson Dana to her husband, author Richard Henry Dana Jr., in which she exclaimed, "The afternoon was Hawthorne's funeral... Curiously the body was taken to church for the first time in his life..."
- Artwork by nineteenth-century women artists Ellen Robbins, Sarah Clarke, Mary King Longfellow, and Susanna Hickling Lewis Willard.
- Lottery ticket dated 1768 and signed by George Washington found in an envelope inscribed by Henry W. Longfellow.

NEW PUBLICATIONS

Footprints on the Sands of Time: a Walking Tour of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's Nineteenth-century Cambridge. Written by the Longfellow NHS staff, this twenty-four page booklet will be available in local bookstores. It focuses on 19th century literary culture and the places it flourished—with three individual tours between Harvard Square and Mt. Auburn Cemetery.

A Landscape Through Time: A Guide to the Grounds of the Vassall-Craigie-Longfellow House. Brochure annotating the lawn, garden, and service yard of the house. Available free at the Longfellow National Historic Site.

These and many other publications are available at the Longfellow Museum Shop.

Brooklyn Museum Plans to Borrow Paintings

The Brooklyn Museum is organizing a retrospective exhibit of Eastman Johnson for a traveling exhibit to open in 1999. They are interested in borrowing some of the House's thirteen paintings by this renowned artist, some of which are among his very earliest works.

Upcoming Events

Holiday Open House and Reception. Special tours of the Longfellow House followed by a reception at the Friends' Meeting House across the street. December 10th from 6:30 to 9:30 P.M. Reservations required.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's & George Washington's Birthday Celebration co-sponsored with Mt. Auburn Cemetery features a wreath-laying ceremony at the poet's grave and a reception afterwards at the chapel. February 22nd at 10 A.M.

"Evangeline's Quest" video viewing and tea for Friends. Video produced by the National Film Board of Canada. This event celebrates the 150th anniversary of the writing of Longfellow's "Evangeline." Mid-February. (Date and time to be announced.)

"Historic Housekeeping" video viewing and tea for Friends. Video produced in part by S.P.N.E.A. The care of antique ceramics, textiles, etc., filmed at the Longfellow House and two other historic houses, including Beauport in Gloucester. To coincide



Adopt-an-Object Program

Help us tend to our most critical priorities by donating specifically to an object in need.

Our tall case clock, built around 1750, stands at the turn of the front hall stairs. It desperately needs its walnut case and finials repaired, and should be anchored to the wall for security. The clock's mechanism, built by D. Molonar of Amsterdam, no longer functions. The clock could be restored and work once more with the generous help of a Friend.

Repairs are estimated at \$5000. Won't you help get these hands to turn and these lovely chimes to ring again?



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- I would like someone to call me about volunteer opportunities.

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105 Brattle Street
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