Longfellow's Life & Legacy

Longfellow House- Washington's Headquarters
National Historic Site
105 Brattle Street
Cambridge, MA 02138 www.nps.gov/long

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Introduction

Longfellow House- Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site is a unit of the National Park Service that preserves and interprets the historic structures, grounds and collections associated with the life and work of the nation's first professional poet who engaged the major social, political and cultural questions of his day through poetry that engaged the mind and pleased the senses.

Longfellow's poems continue to resonate – inviting new generations to think about the power of words and the marvel of human ingenuity. The park offers several curriculum- based programs for student groups in the Greater Boston area, and is pleased to now offer educators a downloadable teacher packet with materials suitable for classroom use.

This packet, *Longfellow's Life & Legacy*, includes biographical information on Henry Wadsworth Longfellow for students of all ages. In addition the packet includes an extensive bibliography with suggested readings for teachers and students, and a variety of primary source materials – historic photographs, poems, and quotes – suitable for classroom use. All photographs and documents in this packet are courtesy of the National Park Service, Longfellow House- Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site.

Developed by Liza Stearns, Education Specialist

Revised 2017

Biographical Information

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow 1807 - 1882*

Feb. 27, 1807	Henry Wadsworth Longfellow born in Portland, Maine
1820	Longfellow publishes his first poem, "The Battle of Lovell's Pond" from *Voices of the Night*
1825	Longfellow graduates from Bowdoin College
1826 - 1829	Longfellow travels to Europe to study language and literature
1831	Longfellow marries Mary Storer Potter
1835 - 1836	Longfellow travels to Europe 1835 Mary Potter Longfellow dies
1836	Longfellow begins teaching at Harvard as Smith Professor of Modern Languages
1837	Longfellow moves into Craigie House, 105 Brattle Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts
1839	*The Village Blacksmith*
1842	"The Slave in the Dismal Swamp" from *Poems on Slavery*
July 13, 1843	Longfellow marries Fanny Appleton - her father, textile manufacturer Nathan Appleton, purchases Craigie House as a wedding gift
1844	Charles Appleton Longfellow is born
1845	Ernest Wadsworth Longfellow is born
1846	"The Builders" from *The Seaside and the Fireside*
1847	Fanny Longfellow, Henry and Fanny's first daughter is

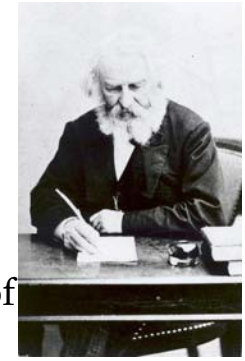
* Poems are listed according to the year in which they were composed and finished. Collections in which the poems appear may have been published at a later date.

	born
1847	*Evangeline: A Tale of Acadie*
1848	Daughter Fanny Longfellow dies
1850	Alice Mary Longfellow is born
1853	Edith Longfellow is born
1854	Longfellow resigns from position at Harvard
1855	Anne Allegra Longfellow is born
1855	*Song of Hiawatha*
1859	"The Children's Hour" from *Birds of Passage*
1860	"Paul Revere's Ride" from *Tales from a Wayside Inn*
July, 1861	Fanny Appleton Longfellow dies
March, 1863	Charley Longfellow enlists in the Union Army
1869	Longfellow completes his last European tour
1874	Charles Sumner (Longfellow's best friend) dies, Longfellow writes "Charles Sumner" from *Birds of Passage*
1879	"From my Arm- Chair" from *Ultima Thule*
March 24, 1882	Henry Wadsworth Longfellow dies in Cambridge

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow: Biographical Highlights

- Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, one of America's most famous and best loved poets, lived over one hundred years ago (1807- 1882).
- Longfellow was born in 1807. He grew up in Maine and went to Bowdoin College in Brunswick, Maine.
- In 1831, Longfellow married Mary Potter. She died four years later. Longfellow was grief- stricken over her death, and wrote poems that reflected his feelings.
- In 1836, Longfellow moved to Cambridge, Massachusetts to teach foreign languages at Harvard College. He spoke at least eight languages well and could read and write four others.
- Longfellow composed his first famous poem, "Psalm of Life," in 1838.
- Longfellow married Frances Appleton in 1843. Her father purchased the Cambridge house in which Longfellow was renting rooms as a wedding gift for them. The house had been a Revolutionary War headquarters for General George Washington.
- *Evangeline* (1847), a very popular narrative poem, brought Longfellow a great deal of attention. By the time he was 47, his success enabled him to leave teaching and devote himself to writing poetry.
- Longfellow wrote many famous poems, including "Paul Revere's Ride" (1860) and *The Song of Hiawatha* (1855). He wrote poetry about his feelings and experiences, and also wrote epic poems that told stories.
- Frances (known as Fanny) and Henry raised five children. A sixth child died in infancy. Longfellow was very close to his family and enjoyed spending time with his children. His family life and experiences inspired many of his poems.
- Strangers often came to Longfellow's home hoping to catch a glimpse of him. He frequently invited them in and spent hours visiting with them.
- By the time of his death (1882), Longfellow's poems were known and celebrated around the world.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow: A Biography



Early Years

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow was born in Portland, Maine on February 27, 1807. His mother, the former Zilpah Wadsworth, was the daughter of General Peleg Wadsworth of Revolutionary War fame and a descendent of passengers on the Mayflower. His father, Stephen, was a noted Portland lawyer who served in the Massachusetts State Legislature and United States Congress.

Second in a family of eight children, Henry enjoyed a happy and active boyhood. He was enrolled at age three in a traditional "dame" school and later attended the Portland Academy and Bowdoin College in Maine where his classmates included Nathaniel Hawthorne and Franklin Pierce.

Career and Marriage

Recognizing his fine academic record, the Bowdoin trustees offered Longfellow a professorship in Modern Languages upon graduation in 1825. The position required travel abroad to prepare for his duties. Longfellow studied in France, Spain, Italy, and Germany. In 1829, he returned to Bowdoin where he spent six successful and productive years teaching, publishing textbooks, and writing articles for popular literary reviews.

In 1831, Longfellow married Mary Storer Potter. The two lived in Maine for several years until Longfellow was offered a position as head of the Modern Language Department at Harvard College in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Once again, he journeyed to Europe for preparatory study. Mary was taken ill on this trip and, in November, 1835, died in Rotterdam, Netherlands.

Suffering great sorrow at his loss, Longfellow plunged into diligent study and spent the following winter and spring in Heidelberg perfecting his German. He met the Appletons of Boston's fashionable Beacon Hill in 1836 while summering in Switzerland. Nathan Appleton was a prominent banker, manufacturer, and politician who made his fortune in the textile industry. His daughter, Frances Elizabeth (Fanny), captivated Longfellow's attentions, but her interest in him was not immediately returned. The

young professor left soon after for America and his duties at Harvard.

Cambridge Life

Seeking residence in Cambridge, Longfellow persuaded Elizabeth Craigie to accept him as a lodger at her comfortable home on Brattle Street with its views of the Charles River. His first writings were published during these years: *Hyperion*, *A Romance*, and *Voices of the Night*.

Fanny Appleton, experiencing a change of mind and heart after several years of courtship, married Henry Longfellow on July 13, 1843. Her father purchased the Craigie house later that year and presented it and the surrounding grounds to the Longfellows as a wedding gift. Thus began eighteen years of devoted marriage during which time two sons and four daughters were born.

Well- educated and traveled, Fanny was a perceptive critic of art and literature who happily shared her husband's pursuits. The couple was seldom apart. Once, while reluctantly attending a ball without his wife, Longfellow lamented that "the light seemed dimmer, the music softer, the flowers fewer, and the women less fair."

Poet and Friend

In 1854, Longfellow resigned from Harvard and devoted himself to writing. Such important works as *Evangeline*, *The Song of Hiawatha*, and *Courtship of Miles Standish* – all published between 1847 and 1858 – brought him great popularity and fame. He also spent many hours entertaining notable friends such as Nathaniel Hawthorne, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Charles Sumner, and Cornelius Felton, who later became president of Harvard.

Success, tranquility, and happiness were shattered in 1861 when Fanny Longfellow suffered fatal burns while sealing packets of her children's locks of hair for keepsakes. She was buried in Mount Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge on the eighteenth anniversary of their wedding day.

Later Years

In the years following Fanny's death, Longfellow gradually put his life back

together again. He continued to reside in the house they had shared and served as both father and mother to the children. His remaining years brought forth such popular and esteemed works as *Tales of the Wayside Inn* with its "Paul Revere's Ride." The poet also made his last trip to Europe where he was honored by the Queen of England, received honorary degrees from Oxford and Cambridge, and visited Charles Dickens and Alfred Lord Tennyson.

Often an unusual mix of despair and encouragement, Longfellow's poetry struck a responsive chord in the nation's collective heart and mind. His was a full and admired life, the legacy of which continues to prompt an enthusiasm for America's people and past. Revered by his contemporaries and touted as "the people's poet," it is important to remember his simplicity of spirit. In 1879, three years before his death in 1882, Longfellow received a gift from the children of Cambridge: a chair made of wood from the "spreading chestnut tree" immortalized in his poem *The Village Blacksmith*. It was a gesture returning to the poet a bit of the love he had given to his own and other children.

Ah? What would the world be to us
If the children were no more?
We should dread the desert behind us
Worse than the dark before.

America's Longfellow

An Essay by Matthew Gartner, December 2, 2002

Introduction

Longfellow is one of the monumental cultural figures of nineteenth-century America, the nation's preeminent poet in his era, whose verse is notable for its lyric beauty, its gentle moralizing, and its immense popularity. A New Englander through and through who traveled widely in Europe and knew a dozen languages, a Harvard professor, and the country's first professional poet, Longfellow heralded a new spirit in American letters. His fame grew until it took on a life of its own, and he was revered and beloved to a degree few poets have been before or since.

When Longfellow began his literary career in the 1820s, poetry often seemed a needless luxury to the practical- minded citizens of the still-young American republic; along with such other genteel poets as William Cullen Bryant, Oliver Wendell Holmes, and James Russell Lowell, Longfellow played an important role not just in helping make poetry respectable, but more broadly in refining and cultivating middle- class readers. In the gentle hands of Longfellow, readers could be introduced to the finer things in life – domestic sympathies, noble aspirations, spiritual consolations, the glories of high culture – without ever being made to feel intimidated or inadequate. A peculiarly American mixture, Longfellow was both a patrician and a populist, an artist of elite social background whose writing reverberated with the masses. One reader, a Mrs. Julia Willard, captured the experience of many when she wrote Longfellow, late in his life, "Your beautiful poems have been a rest, a blessing, a sweet, pure, calming benediction to me ever since I learned to read them in my childhood years."

Over and above his poetry's success and influence, Longfellow became himself a living icon who filled a central niche on the American scene. Americans read his poetry by firesides, in schools, at public occasions; they heard musical renditions sung in parlors and concert- halls; their children celebrated his birthday in school and memorized and recited his poems. Because of his singularly large reputation, a result not only of the place he

carved out for himself but also of sustained promotional efforts on the part of his publishers and defenders, Longfellow became a looming presence, an important symbol for his fellow Americans, representing a set of values and meanings that changed as the country did through the century. Although his reputation declined precipitously after his death in 1882, a Longfellow revival of kinds may now be under way as it becomes possible to see afresh his considerable poetic achievements and historical significance.

Poetry

The nature of Longfellow's poetic genius is elusive, hard to pin down, though it may help to recall that first and foremost he was a public poet. That is to say, he always wrote with his audience in mind, paternally consoling and uplifting them in lyrics, ballads, odes, sonnets, verse dramas, and the long narrative poems whose characters became hallmarks of American culture: Evangeline, Hiawatha, the Puritan maiden Priscilla, the midnight- riding Paul Revere. The essential note of his poetry, its sweet and settling mildness, its serene reassurance, was perfectly modulated to appeal to the reading public. This was socially responsible poetry, poetry with purpose, whose often explicit message urged such virtues as patience, resignation, and hard work.

Given these themes, it seems fitting that as a poetical craftsman he was not boldly original or radically experimental, as were his contemporaries Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson. Rather, Longfellow fashioned his poems out of tried- and- true materials: accessible ideas and language, pleasing stories and rhyme, familiar feelings and form. In a well- known lyric from 1844, "The Day Is Done," Longfellow voiced what may be thought of as his poetic intentions; in this poem about poetry – a favorite subject of his – he celebrates poems that "have power to quiet/The restless pulse of care,/And come like the benediction/That follows after prayer." In these direct, clear, and mellifluous lines, one can see how Longfellow is content to speak simply and softly; indeed, he adopted as a personal motto a Latin phrase, *Non clamor sed amor*, borrowed from an anonymous poem he himself translated: "Not loudness but love." The great American author Nathaniel Hawthorne, a friend and college classmate of Longfellow's, praised just this understated quality: "No one but you would have dared to write so quiet a book," he wrote in an 1850 letter to Longfellow. The remark highlights the

way Longfellow's literary strength lies not in breaking rules but in following them, not in transgressing but in staying within bounds. Longfellow always felt himself dutifully answerable to his readers – he was a poet, quite literally, with a known address – and this sense of public obligation shaped his poetry and his life in fundamental ways.

Though Longfellow was hardly a poet of the startlingly new, he undeniably did break new ground in American poetry, and this was in large part due to the way that, in him, expressive poetic genius met and battled with the stolid forces of New England repression. The result was a strange kind of poetry, shuttling between America and Europe, between Puritan reticence and Romantic feeling, between pious instruction and aesthetic pleasure, between aristocratic ideals and egalitarian principle. Longfellow held these oppositions together by keeping his poetry's energies oriented toward his readers. In other words, the popular success of this often self-contradictory poet may have been possible only because the United States in the mid- to- late nineteenth century was such a conflicted place. Longfellow managed to speak to the conflicts and at the same time to seem a safe haven, an anchor in the storm.

Life and Fame

Longfellow's benign poetic temperament owes much to his full and fortunate life. Born in Portland in 1807, when that bustling port city was still part of Massachusetts, Longfellow came from an old, established family of lawyers, judges, and generals. Enrolled at Bowdoin College by the age of fourteen, during his senior year Longfellow published no less than sixteen poems in a leading literary journal, the *United States Literary Gazette*. Upon his graduation the Bowdoin trustees (his father conveniently happened to be one!) appointed him to a provisional professorship, sending him off to Europe for three years of preparatory study.

He stayed for four, returning to Maine to start his teaching career in 1829. His next years were productive ones, and his ambition, hard work, and social connections paid off when in 1835 – at the age of 28 – he was offered the most prestigious position in his field (what we would now call "Comp. Lit.") that the country had to offer: the Smith Professorship of Modern Languages at Harvard. Granted a year to travel in Europe before taking up

his duties, Longfellow was in Rotterdam with his wife Mary Potter Longfellow when she suffered a miscarriage and died from its complications. Distraught, he continued to drift through Europe for the rest of the year. Installed at last in Cambridge in the fall of 1836, the major, most productive and important phase of his life was about to begin.

This phase was marked by his return, after an almost ten year interruption, to writing poetry. His breakthrough poem, "A Psalm of Life," published in the Knickerbocker magazine out of New York and reprinted in newspapers across the country, stirred a generation of readers with its heady exhortations:

Life is real! Life is earnest!
And the grave is not its goal;
Dust thou art, to dust returnest,
Was not spoken of the soul.
Not enjoyment, and not sorrow,
Is our destined end or way;
But to act, that each to- morrow
Find us farther than today.

With the publication in 1839 of his first collection of poems, Voices of the Night, and that same year of his novel Hyperion, Longfellow established himself as one of America's leading authors. Still in his early thirties, a well-dressed, cosmopolitan figure in small- town Cambridge, Longfellow formed close friendships with other young men of patrician backgrounds and promising futures, and turned his attention to the daughter of a prosperous Boston industrialist, Fanny Appleton, whom he had met for the first time in Switzerland in the summer of 1836. Unusually determined as a suitor, Longfellow waited seven long years before she relented, and the two were married in 1843. As a wedding present her father, Nathan Appleton, bought the couple the historic Craigie House on Brattle Street, a short walk from Harvard Square (Longfellow had been renting rooms there since 1837, and the house came on the market at a fortuitous moment). Henry and Fanny raised five children in Craigie House, and lived among friends and family in great comfort, happiness, and privilege. It is revealing of the Longfellows' elite social position, for instance, that in 1847 Fanny became the first woman in America to be given anesthesia during childbirth.

Moderate in politics, liberal in religion, Professor Longfellow and his wife surrounded themselves with art, music, and books; they had dinner parties, kept up wide- ranging correspondences, and spent their summers in Nahant, by the shore.

Meanwhile, Longfellow's literary career prospered and his fame spread. In this matter of his career, Longfellow must never be confused for a private citizen, a solitary scrivener, alone in his attic pouring forth his soul. Rather, throughout his writing life Longfellow had behind him the powerful New England establishment, of which – as a Harvard professor and world-famous author – he became a leading representative. He counted among his friends the influential figures of the day in culture, politics, and society, and he in turn could be counted on to voice irreproachably respectable ideals grounded in moral decency and concern for the public good. As an avatar of the emerging Boston culture industry, Longfellow was not just a moral emblem but a profitable venture: his books sold extraordinarily well. He wrote prolifically, and his publishers – first Ticknor and Fields, later Houghton Mifflin – were constantly bringing out new volumes and new editions of his collected poems, at all different price points for different segments of the expanding book trade. Longfellow was frequently profiled in newspapers and magazines, and the release of poems like The Song of Hiawatha in 1854 and The Courtship of Miles Standish in 1858 were "events" shrewdly orchestrated to maximize sales. Even in his own lifetime, therefore, Longfellow was larger than life, an institution associated with an array of ideological, social, and commercial interests. Longfellow was often happiest when paying least attention to such matters, but his public aura forms a scrim against which his private self must be seen.

Longfellow's domestic happiness was shattered in 1861, when his wife Fanny died of burns after fire engulfed her from a candle accidentally knocked over as she was melting wax to seal locks of her children's hair. A widower once again, never to remarry, Longfellow continued to raise the children – the oldest was fourteen, the youngest five at the time of the tragedy – and, perhaps to drown his grief, continued to write: lyric poems, the narrative poems collected in Tales of a Wayside Inn, verse dramas, and his landmark three- volume translation of Dante's Divine Comedy. His impressive output never slowing down, in the last decade of his life Longfellow published five new collections of poems, as well as assorted

other writings. By the time he died, aged 75, in March 1882, at his home in Cambridge, he had become a national elder, a white- bearded eminence whose Jove- like image was widely circulated in lithographs and photographs.

Sarah Orne Jewett captured something of the importance of Longfellow in the national imagination when she wrote in eulogy, "It is a grander thing than we can wholly grasp, that life of his, a wonderful life . . . . This world could hardly ask any more from him: he has done so much for it, and the news of his death takes away from most people nothing of his life. His work stands like a great cathedral in which the world may worship and be taught to pray, long after its tired architect goes home to rest."

Home and Home Life

Jewett could refer so knowingly to "[t]hat life of his, a wonderful life" because its basic outlines were a point of public fascination, an indispensable part of the Longfellow legend. The patrician ancestry, the European travels, the early loss of his first wife, the Harvard professorship, the long courtship of Fanny Appleton, the five children, the historic old house in which they peaceably lived, the steadily mounting fame - these items hardly bore repeating in the popular press, so great was Longfellow's celebrity, and yet were repeated nonetheless. Craigie House (named for a former owner, Andrew Craigie, an apothecary) became a focal point of Longfellow's fame, which rested to some large extent on his life and even his lifestyle.

This was a period when private life and the private home took on new public importance, and Longfellow's prestige and authority as a kind of national father figure could seem all the greater by dint of his owning such a place. The house itself, an imposing late- Georgian mansion painted a proper yellow with white trim and black shutters, bespoke affluence, dignity, and tradition. Early in the Revolutionary War it had served as Washington's military headquarters, and hence came down to Longfellow as a patriotic treasure; images of it were frequently reproduced in editions of Longfellow's works, as well as in pictorial magazines, postcards, advertisements, and such other popular media of the times as stereopticon cards. No other author's home, with the possible exception of Washington

Irving's Sunnyside, could rival Craigie House in fame. With the emergence of the Colonial Revival movement in American architecture, many replica Craigie Houses appeared around the country – the first built in 1883 in Maine, the second in 1887 outside Chicago.

Craigie House appeared in Longfellow's poetry too, where it comes across as a place of familial contentment. In poems like "To a Child" and "Children," Longfellow seemed to invite readers into his home, opening the door (just a crack!) onto his family life: such glimpses gave readers the illusion that they knew the illustrious Professor Longfellow in his intimate domestic moments. In "The Children's Hour," for instance, Longfellow imagines his well- behaved daughters – "Grave Alice, and laughing Allegra, / And Edith with golden hair" – granted leave to come into his famous study to play with him at the end of his work day; the father's affection is palpable. Longfellow earned the love and respect, the tenderness and reverence of his readers, then, not just as a poet but as a model husband and father, a father figure, with a privileged home life that could be glimpsed, at times, in his writing. The success of this self- representation may be judged from an 1880 letter written by the novelist Henry James to his mother; James, in London, wrote of a British lord who one day over lunch came out with the thought that "his ideal of the happy life was that of Cambridge, Mass., 'living like Longfellow.'"

Reputation and Popularity

Longfellow's reputation grew so large that the reputation itself became a legend, subject to all the falsehoods of the legendary. Contrary to the popular wisdom that Longfellow was almost unanimously adored in the nineteenth- century, with a few grumpy exceptions like Edgar Allan Poe and Margaret Fuller, the truth is that he was always controversial, always contested. Reviewers and editors in the newspapers and magazines took sides, often not merely on literary but on ideological grounds. The questions that concerned the critics – was Longfellow original or derivative, was he "American" enough or too European, was he "in touch" or was he too cloistered, were his metrical choices fitting? – masked deeper rifts in the country over regional influence, the ascendancy of bourgeois manners, the moral responsibilities of art and artists, and the distribution of cultural power. At the beginning of his career, for instance, Longfellow signified to

many readers a welcome relaxation of the famously severe New England outlook, while for others he introduced an unwelcome note of European cosmopolitanism; and by his career's end, in Victorian America, he seemed to many a stable, authoritative bulwark against accelerating change, while for others he was a staid emblem of an outmoded era.

While the critics were battling it out, the public took Longfellow into their hearts. To his middle- class readers Longfellow meant not only social prestige, intellectual distinction, and moral authority, but the three together filtered through a noble but at the same time somehow approachable life, and contributing to a radiant personal aura inseparable from his poems. When the best- selling anthologist Thomas Bulfinch, for instance, wrote to Longfellow in 1855 seeking permission to dedicate his Age of Fable to him "as a sort of guarantee to the public that nothing worthless or mischievous is offered to them," he was paying homage to the way Longfellow had become not just an author but an icon, embodying impeccable honor and uprightness. Similarly, the writer Mary Austin, growing up on the prairies of Illinois, recalled later that her parents treasured their volume of Longfellow's poetry for "the notion of mannerliness, of the gesture they missed and meant on behalf of their children, to resume;" for these transplanted New Englanders who had settled in the West, Longfellow represented a sought- after ideal of civility and civilization. Still, there were those who interpreted Longfellow more darkly: the South, especially in the years before the Civil War, tended to see in Longfellow an example of New England snobbery and hypocrisy. But even so, a "Longfellow Debating Society" was established in Clarksville, Tennessee in 1861, and a "Longfellow Dramatic Association" was founded in Baltimore in 1865. Other such Longfellow- inspired literary organizations proliferated in the decades following the Civil War, in such far- flung places as Cumberland County, Kentucky; Wheeling, West Virginia; and San Francisco. Despite (or perhaps as a result of) such expressions of Longfellow's sanctioning authority, he increasingly seemed a symbol of an oppressive cultural conservatism; the American poet Sidney Lanier left upon his death in 1885 numerous fragments and sketches for poems, one of which reads in its entirety, "Do you think the 19th century is past? It is but two years since Boston burnt me for witchcraft. I wrote a poem which was not orthodox: that is, not like Mr. Longfellow's."

The rise of Modernist poets and theorists like T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound in the first decades of the twentieth century finally did Longfellow in. The country had changed and so had its literary aesthetics, and Longfellow now seemed naive, sentimental, and out of touch with the hard facts of life. Opening a new chapter in his meta- life as a symbol, in the twentieth century Longfellow came to seem, in fact, not just an author whose star had waned but the very embodiment of facile, flaccid nineteenth- century poetizing; his poetry was a disaster, in this view, and his former popularity an embarrassment. Within the space of a couple decades, that is, Longfellow had gone from one of the most lauded poets who ever lived to one of the most disparaged; suddenly now he seemed to stand for everything wrong with nineteenth- century American genteel poetry and "respectable" culture. Such a reversal in reputation, in retrospect, may be seen as yet further evidence of Longfellow's immense purity and power as a symbol, with a constantly evolving value and meaning – as if Longfellow himself and his poetry were peculiarly open to widely divergent cultural interpretation and reinterpretation.

After decades of relative neglect, a new reinterpretation of Longfellow is currently taking place among poets, critics, and the general public. It seems especially noteworthy that among Longfellow's recent defenders are poets like Howard Nemerov, Dana Gioia, John Hollander, and

J.D. McClatchey. McClatchey's *Library of America* edition of Longfellow, published in 2000, suggests that Longfellow has the power to attract a new generation of readers. Literary critics, too, have been taking a new look at Longfellow in his social and historical context, finding ways to rescue his poetry from the critical oblivion in which it languished for much of the twentieth century. Longfellow is now the subject of scholarly articles, biographies, and even historical novels, and such activity – if history is any guide – betokens the arrival of yet another phase in Longfellow's always contested fame.

Matthew Gartner specializes in 19th Century American Poetry and Prose, American Studies, and Poetry and Poetics. He obtained his Ph.D. from the Graduate School of the City University of New York where his dissertation was "Public Obligation and Poetic Vocation in the Poetry of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow." Currently, Mr. Gartner is an Assistant Professor at Kingsborough Community College and is working on a book project related to Longfellow's poetry in light of Longfellow as a cultural phenomenon in 19th century America.

Poems and Primary Sources

The Children's Hour, 1859

Between the dark and the daylight,
When the night is beginning to lower,
Comes a pause in the day's occupations,
That is known as the Children's Hour.

I hear in the chamber above me
The patter of little feet,
The sound of a door that is opened,
And voices soft and sweet.

From my study I see in the lamplight,
Descending the broad hall stair,
Grave Alice, and laughing Allegra,
And Edith with golden hair.

A whisper, and then a silence:
Yet I know by their merry eyes
They are plotting and planning together
To take me by surprise.

A sudden rush from the stairway,
A sudden raid from the hall!
By three doors left unguarded
They enter my castle wall!

They climb up into my turret
O'er the arms and back of my chair;
If I try to escape, they surround me;
They seem to be everywhere.

They almost devour me with kisses,
Their arms about me entwine,
Till I think of the Bishop of Bingen
In his Mouse- Tower on the Rhine!

Do you think, O blue- eyed banditti,
Because you have scaled the wall,
Such an old mustache as I am
Is not a match for you all!

I have you fast in my fortress,
And will not let you depart,
But put you down into the dungeon
In the round- tower of my heart.

And there will I keep you forever,
Yes, forever and a day,
Till the walls shall crumble to ruin,
And moulder in dust away!

Thomas B. Read, 1859

Alice, Annie Allegra, and Edith

Henry and Fanny had four daughters. Fanny, the first born daughter, died when she was fifteen months old. Alice, Edith and Annie were a great source of inspiration to Mr. Longfellow. He wrote a poem called "The Children's Hour" about the three girls.

"It is Sunday afternoon. You know, then, how the old house looks, - the shadow in the library, and the sunshine in the study, where I stand at my desk and write you this. Two little girls are playing about the room, - Alice counting with great noise the brass handles on my secretary, 'nine, eight, five, one,' Edith insisting upon having some paper box, long promised but never found, and informing me I am not a man of my word!"

Henry Longfellow, January 30, 1859
(from a note to a friend)

Edith and Annie
Longfellow, 1859

Alice Longfellow, 1859

"Alice has just had her seventh birthday and is the best and brightest of little girls, a great pet of her papa's. Edi, though lovely as an angel, is rather obstinate and wilful [sic], but so carressing and sweet all are drawn to her, and Annie is the sweetest little thing you ever saw. I carry her round the library and ask her the names of the busts. She says, Homer, Sophocles, etc. with amusing correctness, and is very eager to learn."

Fanny Longfellow, September 29, 1857
(from her journal)

from To a Child, 1845

Written for Charley Longfellow.

...Through these once solitary halls
Thy pattering footstep falls.
The sound of thy merry voice
Makes the old walls
Jubilant, and they rejoice
With the joy of thy young heart,
O'er the light of whose gladness
No shadows of sadness
From the somber background of memory start.

Once, ah, once, within these walls,
One whom memory oft recalls,
The Father of his Country, dwelt.

And yonder meadows broad and damp
The fires of the besieging camp
Encircled with a burning belt.
Up and down these echoing stairs,
Heavy with the weight of cares,
Sounded his majestic tread;
Yes, within this very room
Sat he in those hours of gloom,
Weary both in heart and head...

The Castle-Builder, 1848

Written for Erny Longfellow.

A gentle boy, with soft and silken locks,
A dreamy boy, with brown and tender eyes,
A castle- builder, with his wooden blocks,
And towers that touch imaginary skies.

A fearless rider on his father's knee,
An eager listener unto stories told
At the Round Table of the nursery,
Of heroes and adventures manifold.

There will be other towers for thee to build;
There will be other steeds for thee to ride;
There will be other legends, and all filled
With greater marvels and more glorified.

Build on, and make thy castles high and fair,
Rising and reaching upward to the skies;
Listen to voices in the upper air,
Nor lose thy simple faith in mysteries

Charles and Ernest Longfellow

Charley and Erny were the Longfellow's two oldest children. In a journal entry from 1848, Fanny Longfellow wrote *"Erny promises to be the poet, Charley the man of action."* Erny did, in fact, pursue a career in the arts; he grew up to be a painter. As for Charley, he ran away to be a soldier in the Civil War and later became a world traveler.

Charles and Ernest Longfellow, c. 1849

Henry, Charley, Erny, & Fanny Longfellow, 1849

"Nursery floor covered with architectureal [sic] elevations. Charley can construct great steps very accurately. Erny takes a little book, & reads scraps of lines he remembers. "Bon Jour mama"! he said Friday. Very riotous both at dinner, overflowing with fun."

Fanny Longfellow, 1849 (from her journal)

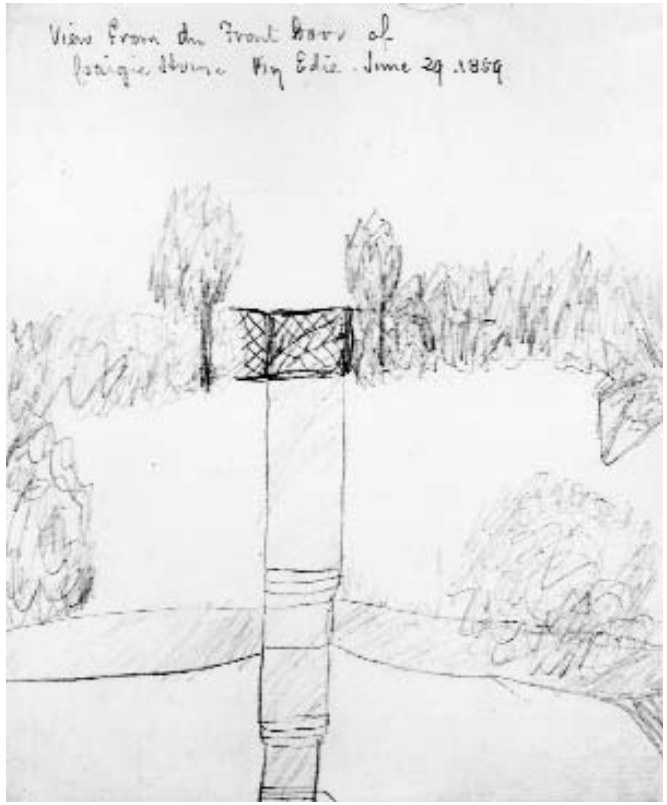
"Nursery floor covered with architectureal [sic] elevations. Charley can construct great steps very accurately. Erny takes a little book, & reads scraps of lines he remembers. "Bon Jour mama"! he said Friday. Very riotous both at dinner, overflowing with fun."

Fanny Longfellow, 1849 (from her journal)

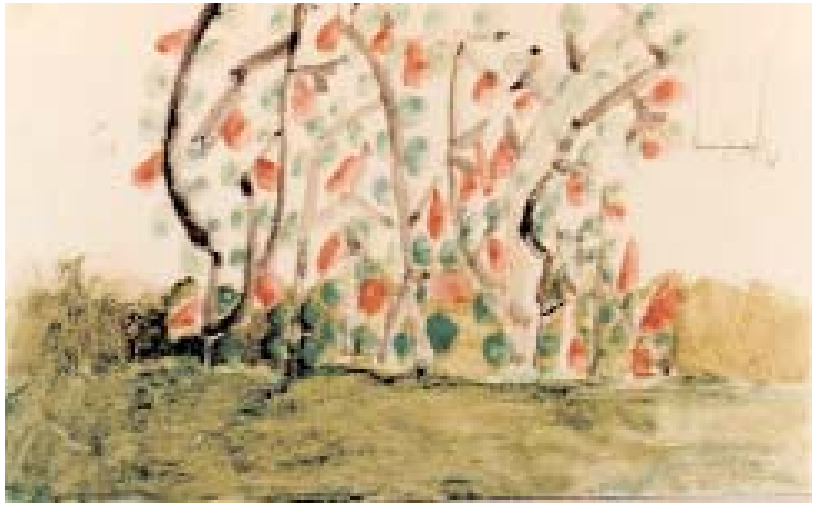
Drawings and Paintings by the Longfellow Children

Henry and Fanny Longfellow believed artistic expression to be an essential part of being human, and art to be one of the most important ways that people communicate. They strongly supported and encouraged their children's artistic expression.

Watercolor painting of the house. Erny Longfellow, 1858. Age 13.

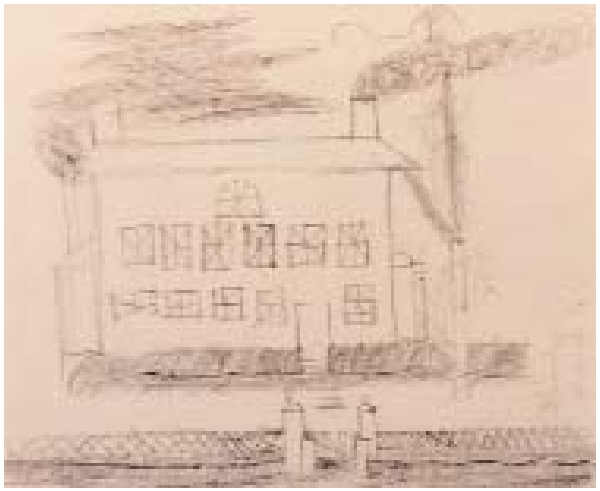


Pencil drawing of view from the front door of Craigie House. Edith Longfellow, 1859. Age 6.



Watercolor painting of lilacs in laundry yard. Edith Longfellow, 1860. Age 7.

Pencil drawing of the view to the Charles River from the house. Erny Longfellow, 1855. Age 10.



Pencil drawing of the house. Charley Longfellow. Age unknown.

Pencil drawing of the house. Erny Longfellow, 1855. Age 10.

The Village Blacksmith, 1839

On his daily walk down Brattle Street, Henry Longfellow would pass by the shop of the village blacksmith, Dexter Pratt.

Under a spreading chestnut tree
The village smithy stands;
The smith, a mighty man is he,
With large and sinewy hands;
And the muscles of his brawny arms
Are strong as iron bands.

His hair is crisp, and black, and long,
His face is like the tan;
His brow is wet with honest sweat,
He earns whate'er he can,
And looks the whole world in the face,
For he owes not any man.

Week in, week out, from morn till night,
You can hear his bellows blow;
You can hear him swing his heavy sledge,
With measured beat and slow,
Like a sexton ringing the village bell,
When the evening sun is low.

And children coming home from school
Look in the open door;
They love to see the flaming forge,
And hear the bellows roar.
And catch the burning sparks that fly
Like chaff from a threshing- floor.

He goes on Sunday to the church
And sits among his boys;
He hears the parson pray and preach,
He hears his daughter's voice,
Singing in the village choir,
And it makes his heart rejoice.

It sounds to him like her mother's voice,
Singing in Paradise!
He needs must think of her once more,
How in the grave she lies;
And with his hard, rough hand he wipes
A tear out of his eyes.

Toiling, - rejoicing, - sorrowing,
Onward through life he goes;
Each morning sees some task begin,
Each evening sees it close;
Something attempted, something done,
Has earned a night's repose.

Thanks, thanks to thee, my worthy friend,
For the lesson thou has taught!
Thus at the flaming forge of life
Our fortunes must be wrought;
Thus on its sounding anvil shaped
Each burning deed and thought.

The Village Blacksmith, illustrated by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, 1840

From my Arm-Chair, 1879

"To the Children of Cambridge
Who presented to me, on my seventy- second birthday, February 27, 1879, this chair made from the wood of the village blacksmith's chestnut tree."

Am I a king, that I should call my own
This splendid ebon throne?
Or by what reason, or what right divine,
Can I proclaim it mine?

Only, perhaps, by right divine of song
It may to me belong;
Only because the spreading chestnut tree
Of old was sung by me.

Well I remember it in all its prime,
When in the summer- time
The affluent foliage of its branches made
A cavern of cool shade.

There, by the blacksmith's forge, beside the street,
Its blossoms white and sweet
Enticed the bees, until it seemed alive,
And murmured like a hive.

And when the winds of autumn, with a shout,
Tossed its great arms about,
The shining chestnuts, bursting from the sheath,
Dropped to the ground beneath.

And now some fragments of its branches bare,
Shaped as a stately chair,
Have by my hearthstone found a home at last,
And whisper of the past.

The Danish king could not in all his pride
Repel the ocean tide,
But, seated in this chair, I can rhyme
Roll back the tide of Time.

I see again, as one in vision sees,
The blossoms and the bees,
And hear the children's voices shout and call,
And the brown chestnuts fall.

I see the smithy with its fires aglow,
I hear the bellows blow,
And the shrill hammers on the anvil beat
The iron white with heat!

And thus, dear children, have ye made for me
This day a jubilee,
And to my more than threescore years and ten
Brought back my youth again.

The heart hath its own memory, like the mind,
And in it are enshrined
The precious keepsakes, into which is wrought
The giver's loving thought.

Only your love and your remembrance could
Give life to this dead wood,
And make these branches, leafless now so long,
Blossom again in song.

"Professor Longfellow's Birthday"

"...it occupies a place of honor at the poet's fireside...The upholstering of the arms and the cushion are in green leather. The castors are glass balls set in sockets..."

newspaper clipping from "Craigie House" booklet, 1879

Travels by the Fireside, 1874

The ceaseless rain is falling fast,
And yonder gilded vane,
Immovable for three days past,
Points to the misty main.

It drives me in upon myself
And to the fireside gleams,
To pleasant books that crowd my shelf,
And still more pleasant dreams.

I read whatever bards have sung
Of lands beyond the sea,
And the bright days when I was young
Come thronging back to me.

In fancy I can hear again
The Alpine torrent's roar,
The mule- bells on the hills of Spain,
The sea at Elsinore.

I see the convent's gleaming wall
Rise from it's groves of pine,
And towers of old cathedrals tall,
And castles by the Rhine.

I journey on by park and spire,
Beneath centennial trees,
Through fields with poppies all on fire,
And gleams of distant seas.

I fear no more the dust and heat,
No more I feel fatigue,
While journeying with another's feet
O'er many a lengthening league.

Let others traverse sea and land,
And toil through various climes,
I turn the world round with my hand
Reading these poets' rhymes.

From them I learn whatever lies
Beneath each changing zone,
And see, when looking with their eyes,
Better than with mine own.

Henry Longfellow in Study,
c. 1872 - 74

The Slave in the Dismal Swamp, 1842

Longfellow felt very strongly that slavery should be abolished. He published a small book of poems about the evils of slavery in 1842, long before the Civil War. This poem is one of eight from that collection.

In dark fens of the Dismal Swamp
The hunted Negro lay;
He saw the fire of the midnight camp,
And heard at times a horse's tramp,
And a bloodhound's distant bay.

Where the will- o'- the wisps and glowworms shine,
In bulrush and in brake;
Where the waving mosses shroud the pine,
And the cedar grows, and the poisonous vine
Is spotted like the snake;

Where hardly a human foot could pass,
Or a human heart would dare,
On the quaking turf of the green morass
He crouched in the rank and tangled grass,
Like a wild beast in his lair.

A poor old slave, infirm and lame;
Great scars deformed his face;
On his forehead he bore the brand of shame,
And the rags, that hid his mangled frame,
Were the livery of disgrace.

All things above were bright and fair;
All things were glad and free;
Lithe squirrels darted here and there,
And wild birds filled the echoing air
With songs of liberty!

On him alone was the doom of pain,
From the morning of his birth;
On him alone the curse of Cain
Fell, like a flail on the garnered grain,
And struck him to the earth!

Portrait of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, by Lawrence, 1854.
Drawn after Longfellow heard about the Fugitive Slave Law (1850).

"If anybody wants to break a law, let him break the Fugitive Slave Law.

That is all it is for."

H. W. Longfellow, May 1858

Haunted Houses, 1852

All houses wherein men have lived and died
Are haunted houses. Through the open doors
The harmless phantoms on their errands glide,
With feet that make no sound upon the floors.

We meet them at the doorway, on the stair,
Along the passages they come and go,
Impalpable impressions on the air,
A sense of something moving to and fro.

There are more ghosts at the table than the hosts
Invited; the illminated hall
Is thronged with quiet, inoffensive ghosts,
As silent as the pictures on the walls.

The stranger at my fireside cannot see
The forms I see, nor hear the sounds I hear;
He but perceives what is; while unto me
All that has been is visible and clear.

We have not title- deeds to house or lands;
Owners and occupants of earlier dates
From graves forgotten stretch their dusty hands,
And hold in mortmain still their old estates.

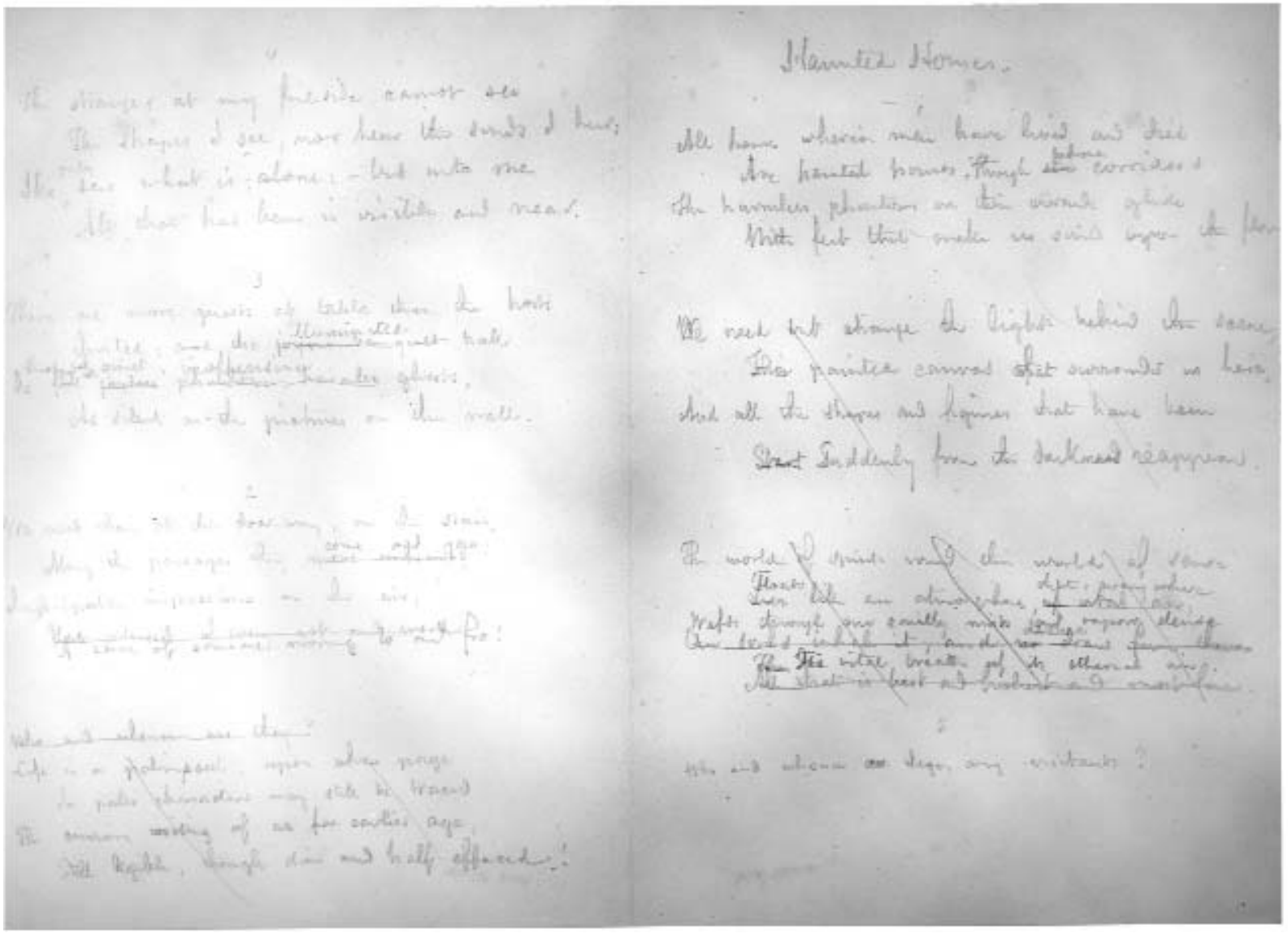
The spirit- world around this world of sense
Floats like an atmosphere, and everywhere
Wafts through these earthly mists and vapors dense
A vital breath of more ethereal air.

Our little lives are kept in equipoise
By opposite attractions and desires;
The struggle of the instinct that enjoys,
And the more noble instinct that aspires.

These perturbations, this perpetual jar
Of earthly wants and aspirations high,
Come from the influence of an unseen star,
An undiscovered planet in our sky.

And as the moon from some dark gate of cloud
Throws o'er the sea a floating bridge of light,
Across whose trembling planks our fancies crowd
Into the realm of mystery and night, -

So from the world of spirits there descends
A bridge of light, connecting it with this,
O'er whose unsteady floor, that sways and bends,
Wander our thoughts above the dark abyss.



Haunted Houses, draft manuscript in Henry W. Longfellow's hand

The Builders, 1846

All are architects of Fate,
Working in these walls of Time;
Some with massive deeds and great,
Some with ornaments of rhyme.

Nothing useless is, or low;
Each thing in its place is best;
And what seems but idle show
Strengthens and supports the rest.

For the structure that we raise,
Time is with materials filled;
Our to- days and yesterdays
Are the blocks with which we build.

Truly shape and fashion these;
Leave no yawning gaps between;
Think not, because no man sees,
Such things will remain unseen.

In the elder days of Art,
Builders wrought with greatest care
Each minute and unseen part;
For the Gods see everywhere.

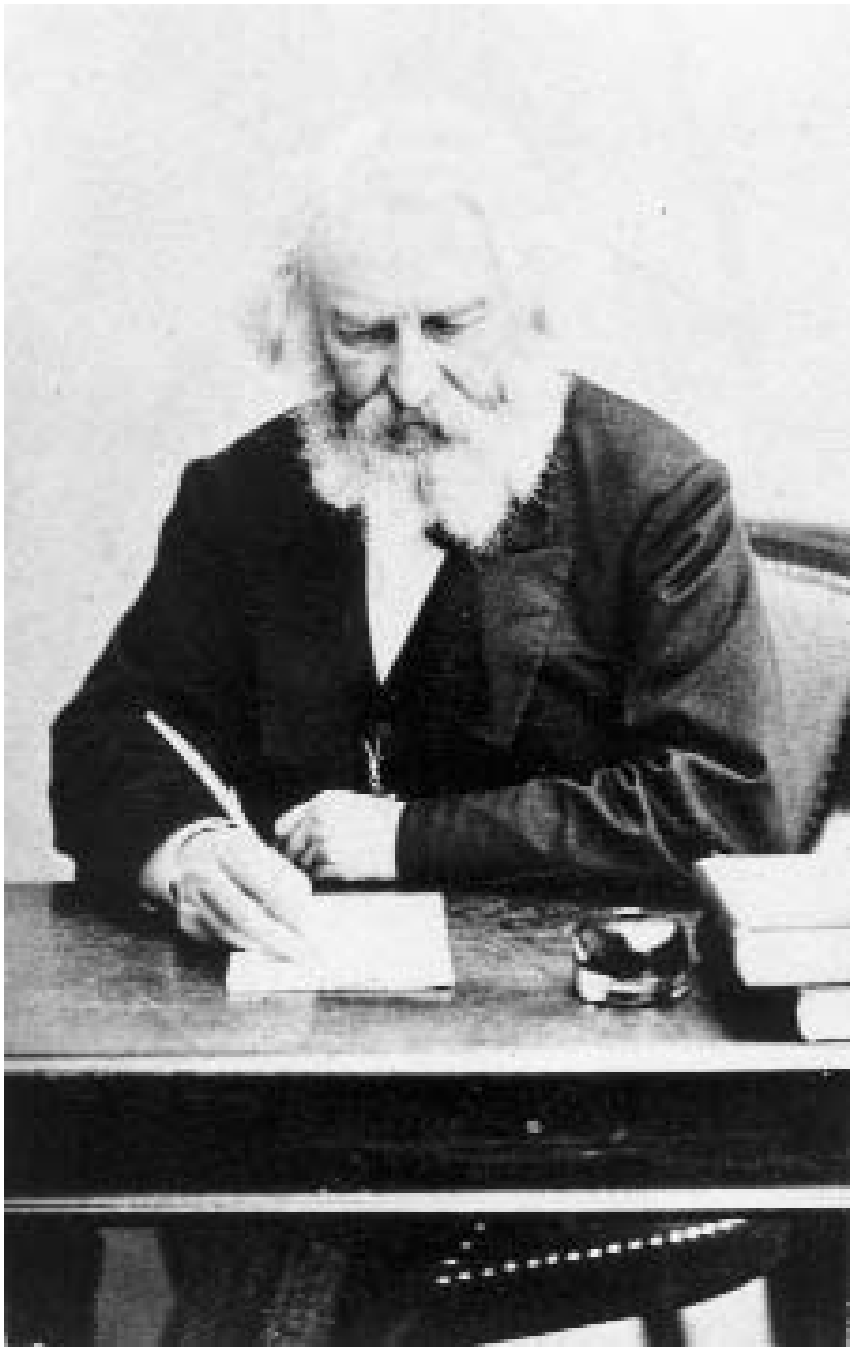
Let us do our work as well,
Both the unseen and the seen;
Make the house, where Gods may dwell,
Beautiful, entire, and clean.

Else our lives are incomplete,
Standing in these walls of Time,
Broken stairways, where the feet
Stumble as they seek to climb.

Build to- day, then, strong and sure,
With a firm and ample base;
And ascending and secure
Shall to- morrow find its place.

Thus alone can we attain
To those turrets, where the eye
Sees the world as one vast plain,
And one boundless reach of sky.

"Our to- days and yesterdays
Are the blocks with which we build..."
The Builders, 1846



Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, c. 1870 - 76

Charles Sumner, 1874

A poem written for Charles Summer and read at his funeral in 1874.

Garlands upon his grave,
And flowers upon his hearse,
And to the tender heart and brave
The tribute of this verse.

His was the troubled life,
The conflict and the pain,
The grief, the bitterness of strife,
The honor without stain.

Like Winkelried, he took
Into his manly breast
The sheaf of hostile spears, and broke
A path for the oppressed.

Then from the fatal field
Upon a nation's heart
Borne like a warrior on his shield!—
So should the brave depart.

Death takes us by surprise,
And stays our hurrying feet;
The great design unfinished lies,
Our lives are incomplete.

But in the dark unknown
Perfect their circles seem,
Even as a bridge's arch of stone
Is rounded in the stream.

Alike are life and death,
When life in death survives,
And the uninterrupted breath
Inspires a thousand lives.

Were a star quenched on high,
For ages would its light,
Still travelling downward from the sky,
Shine on our mortal sight.

So when a great man dies,
For years beyond our ken,
The light he leaves behind him lies
Upon the paths of men.

Charles Sumner

The friendship between Charles Sumner and Henry Longfellow lasted from the time they met as young professors at Harvard in 1837 until Sumner's death in 1874. Sumner is best known as an anti- slavery activist and a Senator from Massachusetts.

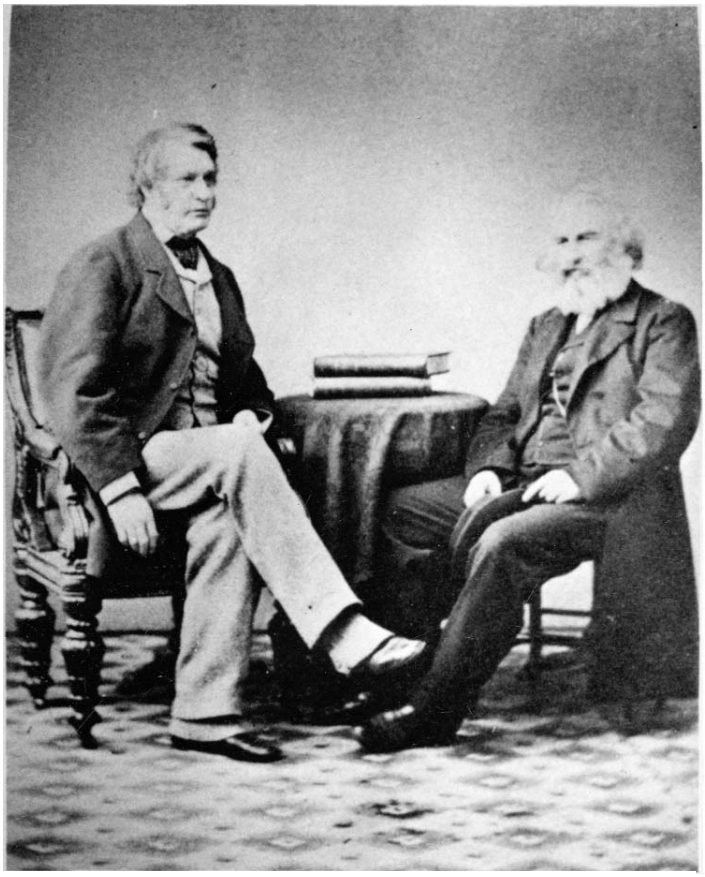
> *"...he stands six feet, two, in his stockings. A colossus holding his burning heart in his hand, to light up the sea of Life...He is a very lovely character...full of talent with a most keen enjoyment of life; simple, energetic, hearty, good with a great deal of poetry and no nonsense in him."*
>
> Henry Longfellow, 1838 (from a letter to George Washington Greene)

"Longfellow's reputation is rising, rising, soon I prophecy to illumine the whole horizon."

Charles Sumner, 1842

"Sumner...in fact breathes in quite another atmosphere."

Henry Longfellow, 1846



Charles Sumner and Henry Longfellow, December 1863

Recommended Resources

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Calhoun, Charles C. (2004) *Longfellow: A Rediscovered Life*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Hilen, Andrew, ed. (1967) *The Letters of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Volumes I - IV*. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Monteiro, George, intro. (1975) *The Poetical Works of Longfellow*. Cambridge, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Wagenknecht, Edward. (1955) *Longfellow: A Full- Length Portrait*. Toronto: Longmans, Green & Co.

The Longfellow Family

Laidlaw, Christine Wallace. (1998) *Charles Appleton Longfellow: Twenty Months in Japan, 1871 - 1873*. Cambridge, MA: Friends of the Longfellow House.

Poetry, Writing and Literature

Bumgarder, Joyce. (1997) *Helping Students Learn to Write Poetry*. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Koch, Kevin. (1992) *Rose, Where Did You Get that Red? Teaching Great Poetry to Children.* New York, NY: Vintage Books.

McKim, Elizabeth and Judith Steinbergh. (1992) *Beyond Words, Writing Poems with Children: A Guide for Parents and Teachers.* Brookline, MA: Talking Stone Press.

Moyers, Bill, ed. (1995) *The Language of Life: Eight- part Video Series.* David Grubin Productions, Inc. and Public Affairs Television, Inc.

Perry, Aaren Yeatts. (1997) *Poetry Across the Curriculum*. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Sedgwick, Fred. (1997) *Read My Mind: Young Children, Poetry and Learning*. New York, NY: Routledge.

The National Park System
Caring for America's Treasures

www.nps.gov

Our national parks tell the story of America — its wondrous places, memorable events, and unforgettable people. From the Statue of Liberty to the Grand Canyon, the National Park System includes areas of historical, scenic, and scientific importance. The National Park Service takes care of these places so future generations can enjoy them, learn from them, and be inspired by them.

On March 1, 1872, Congress established the first national park, Yellowstone National Park in the Territories of Montana and Wyoming. Forty- four years later, on August 25, 1916, President Woodrow Wilson signed an act creating the National Park Service, a new federal bureau in the Department of the Interior responsible for protecting the 40 national parks and monuments then in existence and those yet to be established.

Today, the National Park System of the United States is made up of more than 400 areas covering more than 83 million acres in 50 States, the District of Columbia, American Samoa, Guam, Puerto Rico, Saipan, and the Virgin Islands. These areas include national parks, monuments, battlefields, military parks, historical parks, historic sites, lakeshores, seashores, recreation areas, scenic rivers and trails, and the White House.

Areas within the National Park System vary in size. The largest park in the system is Wrangell- St. Elias National Park and Preserve in Alaska (13.2 million acres). The smallest park in the system is Thaddeus Kosciuszko National Memorial in Pennsylvania (.02 acres).

Additions to the National Park System are now generally made through acts of Congress, and national parks can be created only through such acts. However, the President does have the authority to proclaim national monuments on lands already owned by the federal government.

EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA