Finding Aid

Longfellow Memorial Association Records, 1882-1924, bulk 1907

Edition 1.0 (July 2026)

Collection Catalog No. LONG 37906

DOCUMENT INFORMATION AND VERSION HISTORY

Edition	Date of Revision	Author(s)
1.0	July 2026	Isabel Blooston, Digital Archives Intern, LONG

Cover Illustration:
Preliminary study of memorial bas-relief and bust of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow by sculptor Daniel Chester French, circa 1912-1914. 3007.001/002.002-#97.
Courtesy of Longfellow House-Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site.

CONTENTS

Preface ii
Copyright and Privacy Restrictions iii
Introduction 1
Part 1: Collection Description 2
Scope and Content Note 3
Part 2: Administrative History 7
Part 3: Collection Listing 11

PREFACE

This document, the *Finding Aid for the Longfellow Memorial Association Records, 1882-1924, bulk 1907*, describes a collection of records related to the Longfellow Memorial Association, an organization founded after the death of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882) to preserve and create a monument to the poet on the land that would become Longfellow Park. The collection was originally held by History Cambridge. In July 2026, the materials were transferred to Longfellow House-Washington's Headquarters NHS, where it was processed and this finding aid was created.

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INTRODUCTION

This finding aid describes the Longfellow Memorial Association Records, 1882-1924, bulk 1907, a collection of materials related to the Longfellow Memorial Association, which was founded in Cambridge after the death of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882). The organization was formed with the purpose of preserving and placing a monument to the poet upon the land between Brattle St. and Mt. Auburn St. that, through the efforts of the Association and the Longfellow family, would become Longfellow Park.

Most materials in the collection were given to the Cambridge Historical Society (now History Cambridge) on May 18, 1932, by Margaret Norton (1870-1947), daughter of Charles Eliot Norton (1827-1908). Charles Eliot Norton was a professor of art history at Harvard, the second president of the Longfellow Memorial Association, and an early member of the Cambridge Historical Society. A close friend of Longfellow—the two co-founded the American Dante Society with James Russell Lowell—Norton wrote a biography of the poet, *Henry Wadsworth Longfellow: A Sketch of His Life, Together with Longfellow's Chief Autobiographical Poems*, published in 1906 as part of the Cambridge Historical Society's commemoration of Longfellow's centenary. The provenance of the remaining materials, including the Longfellow Memorial Association's account book, is not recorded.

In July 2026, the collection was transferred from History Cambridge to the Longfellow House-Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site (LONG) as part of accession LONG-213. During processing, materials were rehoused in a legal-size acid-free box and folders. The collection came to LONG without a meaningful order. Because of the small size of the collection, materials have been arranged at the collection level. Folders have been arranged alphabetically and described in the collection listing. Materials within folders have been arranged chronologically.

PART 1:

COLLECTION DESCRIPTION

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

Longfellow Memorial Association Records, 1882-1924, bulk 1907

Accession Number: LONG-213

Catalog Number: LONG 37906

Quantity: 0.21 linear feet

Storage: 1 legal half-size archives box

Location: Longfellow House-Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site, 105 Brattle Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138-3407, (617) 876-4491.

Description: The Longfellow Memorial Association records span the years 1882-1924. Administrative and financial records include the Association's 1887 by-laws and its account book for 1882-1924, which records the Association's contributors, its credits and debits, and its invested funds. Also included is an 1882 letter from Susan C.H. Gilman to Elizabeth Cummings related to the fundraising activities of women in Cambridge in support of the Longfellow Memorial Association.

The collection is predominantly printed matter related to the commemoration of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's centenary in 1907, including a booklet published by the Association reproducing the Secretary and Treasurer's reports, their by-laws, and the 1883 deed of gift from the Longfellow children for the land that would become Longfellow Park. Two newspaper editions are included in the collection. A February edition of the *New-York Daily Tribune* documents the Cambridge Historical Society's plans for the centenary. A March edition of *The Cambridge Tribune* documents the annual meeting of the Association, reproduces the report of the Secretary, and gives an account of the Cambridge Historical Society's centenary commemoration. Other printed materials related to the centenary include an invitation to the National Arts Club's Longfellow centenary dinner, extracts from *Pine Tree Magazine* vol. VII, no. 1, and two advertisements by Houghton, Mifflin and Company publicizing their Longfellow editions and photoengravings.

Printed materials in the collection also include a copy of the Association's certificate of honorary membership, the program for authors' readings for the Longfellow Memorial Fund in 1887, and a copy of the "Map of the Land opposite the Home of the late Mr. Longfellow Presented to The Longfellow Memorial Association by the Poet's Children."

Arrangement: Materials have been organized at the collection level. Folders have been arranged alphabetically and described in the collection listing. Materials within folders have been arranged chronologically.

Language: English

Conditions Governing Access: The collection is open for research use.

Preferred Citation: [Identification of item], in the Longfellow Memorial Association Records, 1882-1924 (LONG 37906), Longfellow House-Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site.

Related Material: Longfellow Memorial Association Records, 1882-1889 (MS Am 1340.8). Houghton Library, Harvard University.
This collection includes minutes, financial records, a survey map of Longfellow Park, and other papers of the Longfellow Memorial Association, as well as correspondence of Association members, primarily correspondence to John Bartlett (Treasurer) and Arthur D. Gilman (Secretary).

Frederick Law Olmsted Sr., Olmsted Brothers, and Olmsted Associates Records, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.
This collection includes a preliminary study (1887), topographical map (1910), and cross sections and profiles plan (1912) of Longfellow Park (2001.001/01.01479). Related materials held by the Library of Congress listed below.

Frederick Law Olmsted Papers. Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.
This collection includes undated correspondence from Charles Eliot to Frederick Law Olmsted (1870-1957) related to plans for Longfellow Park and the Cambridge Park Department annual reports for 1894-1895 (ms001019.mss35121.0270). Related to subseries 2001.001/01.01479 at the Frederick Law Olmsted NHS.

Olmsted Associates Records. Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.
This collection includes correspondence between 1909-1922 related to plans for Longfellow Park and the memorial monument, including correspondence between Frederick Law Olmsted (1870-1957) and Daniel Chester French (ms001018.mss52571.01201). Related to subseries 2001.001/01.01479 at the Frederick Law Olmsted NHS.

General photographic collection. Historic New England.
This collection includes postcards of Longfellow Park including views prior to the installation of the monument (PC001.03.01.USMA.0820.0440).

Prints and engravings collection, 1830s-1920s. Historic New England.
This collection includes the "Map of the Land opposite the Home of the late Mr. Longfellow" (duplicate in LONG 37906) (GC002.01.MA.4150.001).

Henry W. Longfellow (1807-1882) Family Papers (LONG 27930).
This collection includes an 1882 ledger of Longfellow Memorial Association subscribers (1006/001.014).

"Letters given by the English Longfellow Memorial Committee to "The Longfellow Memorial Association" of Cambridge" (LONG 27931).
Bound collection of letters by supporters of the English Longfellow Memorial Committee's campaign to establish a Longfellow memorial in Poets' Corner Westminster Abbey, given to the Longfellow Memorial Association in 1884.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Dana (1881-1950) Papers (LONG 17314).
This collection includes "The Longfellow Memorial Association 1882-1922," by Winthrop S. Scudder (LONG 16388), a booklet commissioned and published by the Longfellow Memorial Association to mark its dissolution in 1922 (1002/008.004.008). It also includes newspaper clippings from 1914 and 1947 related to the dedication of Longfellow Memorial Park and the sculptor, Daniel Chester French (1002/008.004.003).

Longfellow Family Photograph Collection (LONG 27886).
This collection includes photographs of the memorial monument in Longfellow Park; the dedication of the monument, including photographs of the Longfellow children; and a close-up of a preliminary study of the monument taken indoors (3007.001/002.002-#034–040, 061–069, 097).

Longfellow National Historic Site Buildings and Grounds Photograph Collection, 1855-1970 (LONG 27885).
This collection includes photographs of Longfellow Park. circa 1882-1938 (3008/001.001–002) and an article from the Harvard Alumni Bulletin, November 22, 1923 by Winthrop S. Scudder mentioning the Longfellow children's donation of land to the Longfellow Memorial Association (3008/005-#017)

Access Terms:

Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth, 1807-1882--Anniversaries, etc
Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth, 1807-1882--Societies, etc
Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth, 1807-1882--Statues
Longfellow Memorial (Cambridge, Mass.)
Longfellow Memorial Association (Cambridge Mass.)
Longfellow Park (Cambridge, Mass.)

Rights Statement for Archival Description: Pursuant to 17 U.S.C. § 105, this work is in the public domain.

PART 2: ADMINISTRATIVE HISTORY

The impetus for the creation of the Longfellow Memorial Association began in the days after Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's (1807-1882) death, when the architect Arthur D. Gilman (1821-1882) sent a letter to the editors of the *Boston Daily Advertiser*, which proposed the creation of a memorial to the poet on the lot opposite his home,

> Longfellow's memory will, indeed, ever be with us, but a statue upon the spot over which his eyes so much loved to wander, will connect it permanently with the place that his life has made sacred. I think I hazard nothing in saying that if Cambridge in her corporate capacity should not raise this memorial, the people would love to contribute to it.[1]

On April 4, 1882, the first informal meeting of the group that would become the Longfellow Memorial Association was held at Gilman's home in Cambridge. At the next meeting, on April 14, a report was read which recommended the construction of a portrait statue on the lot, which would be laid out as a public park "to be surrendered to the City of Cambridge to be kept open forever, when the City is ready to accept the trust."[2] On May 23, 1882, the Longfellow Memorial Association was incorporated by special act of the legislature of Massachusetts, "for the purpose of providing suitable memorials to the late Henry W. Longfellow and of arranging for their care and preservation."[3] The group's founding members were Longfellow's friends and associates in Cambridge society. The officers elected were James Russell Lowell (1819-1891) as President; Charles Deane (1813-1889), Charles W. Eliot (1834-1926), Oliver Wendell Holmes (1809-1894), William Dean Howells (1837-1920), and John Greenleaf Whittier (1807-1892) as Vice Presidents; Arthur D. Gilman as Secretary; and John Bartlett (1820-1905) as Treasurer. Membership was capped at one hundred active members. Annual meetings were set to be held on Longfellow's birthday, February 27, during which yearly elections were held. Boston and Cambridge newspapers covered the activities of the Association throughout its lifetime, and the Association publicized its work through printed reports.

Longfellow's children were receptive to the Association's plan and donated the lot between Brattle St. and Mt. Auburn St. to the Association in 1883, with stipulations of how the land should be developed. In 1888, the Longfellows made a second donation of a lot between Mt. Auburn St., the Charles River, and the Cambridge Casino; this land was taken by the Cambridge Park Commission in 1894 for what would become the Charles River Reservation. Members of both the Association and the Longfellow family saw the creation of Longfellow Park as a way to protect a piece of the poet's old Cambridge from the transformations of the "ever encroaching City."[4] Ernest Wadsworth Longfellow (1845-1921) observed in a letter offering the second gift of land to the Association,

> such a breathing space on the river…will one day be a great boon to Cambridge when it becomes crowded, and would be a better monument to my father and more in harmony

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[1] Arthur D. Gilman, "Letter to the Editors," Boston Daily Advertiser, March 30, 1882.
[2] Winthrop S. Scudder, *The Longfellow Memorial Association 1882-1922, An Historical Sketch*, The Cosmos Press, Inc., 1922, 8.
[3] *Acts and Resolves passed by the General Court of Massachusetts, in the year 1882*, Boston, 1882, chap. 248.
[4] Scudder, *Longfellow Memorial Association*, 21.

with his character than any graven image that could be erected.[5]

The Association had two major committees: the Committee on Plans and the Finance Committee. The Committee on Plans was formed to select the sculptor and oversee the plans for the memorial monument. The Finance Committee was tasked with the responsibility of fundraising. Initially, the Finance Committee issued circulars through newspapers and by mail asking for subscriptions (one-time sums) of one dollar from adults and ten cents from children. In return, adults would receive a certificate of honorary membership to the Association, and children would be given an illustrated memorial card. This resulted in an immediate outpouring of small donations, but the costs incurred by postage and the production of certificates and cards reduced the yield of these efforts. The Treasurer's Report of 1883 reported $7,568.51 total receipts and $2,613.73 expended, for a sum of $4,964.78 cash in hand. An appeal for funds published in the *Boston Daily Globe* in the same year estimated the total cost of the work to construct the park grounds and monument at $50,000. By 1887, the Association had shifted their fundraising strategies to seek larger sums. A reading held at the Boston Museum featuring authors including Mark Twain and Julia Ward Howe raised $5,208. Two smaller authors' readings raised around $1,247. In 1888, personal donations from individuals in Boston and Cambridge society raised $10,000.

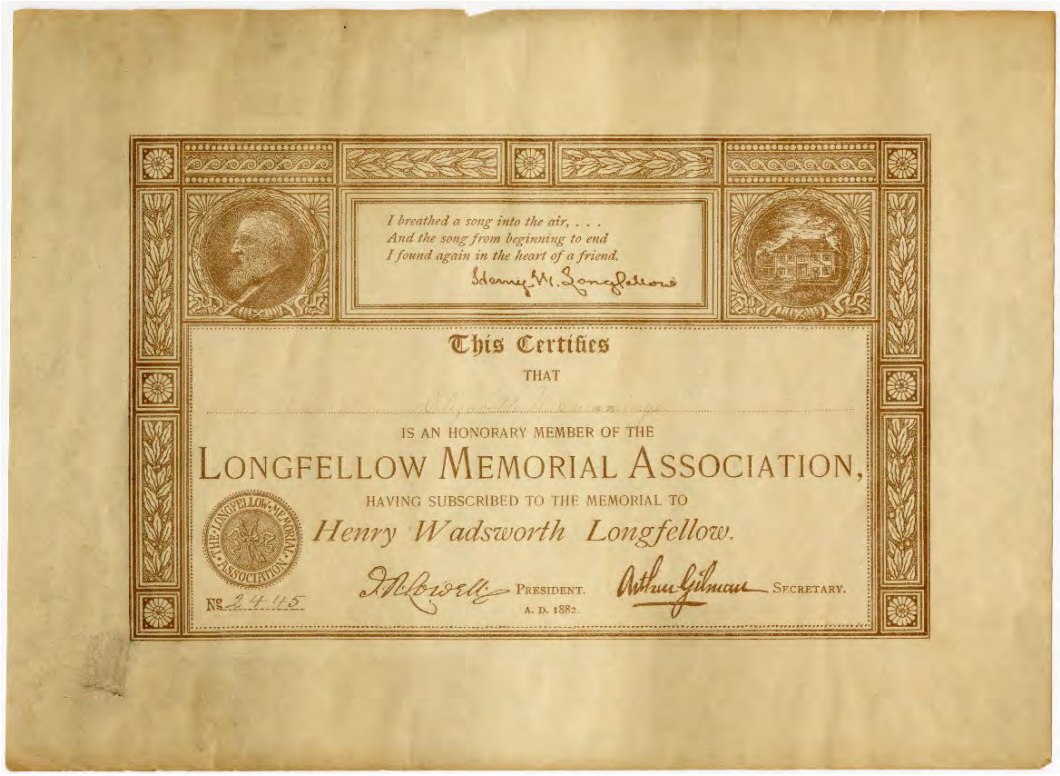

Fig. 1. Longfellow Memorial Association honorary membership certificate, in the Longfellow Memorial Association Records, 1882-1924 (LONG 37906). Courtesy of Longfellow House-Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site.

[5] Scudder, *Longfellow Memorial Association*, 13.

In 1887, the Association hired landscape architect Charles Eliot (1859-1897)—then an apprentice to the F.L. & J.C. Olmsted firm—to design a plan for the park. Eliot designed a park in two sections to accommodate the natural division between the lot's upland and lowland areas. He imagined an open lawn in the upland near Brattle St. connected to a gated garden in the lowland area by a short terrace and a flight of stairs, with the prospective monument placed at the brink of the bank between the two areas. According to the Longfellows' wishes, no trees were to be planted to preserve the open view of the river, and a horseshoe-shaped road surrounding the park was designed to provide access from their adjacent properties. Between 1887 and 1889, a reduced version of Eliot's plan was accomplished, while other elements, such as brook to mitigate the lowland area's poor drainage, were never realized. In 1888, the architect Charles Howard Walker's (1857-1936) plan for the stonework of the park was selected and carried out.

The Association ceased active fundraising after 1889. Its accounts were invested, with some of the interest expended to maintain the park grounds, and the rest saved until the amount necessary to construct the monument was reached. In 1907, the Association transferred ownership of the park to the city of Cambridge, to be permanently preserved. In 1912, a sufficient sum had been saved for the Association to commission sculptor Daniel Chester French (1850-1931) to create a monument. French submitted his design in collaboration with the architect Henry Bacon, who submitted plans for the reconstruction of the park's stonework. The monument was to be placed collinear with the Longfellow house and the park's Mt. Auburn gate, against a new stone retaining wall flanked by steps connecting the upper and lower halves of the park. The Longfellows had to be persuaded to accept this choice; they initially objected to the placement of the monument in the lower part of the park, which was wet and "not frequented by the same class of people as the upper lot."[6] In 1914, landscape architect Paul Frost adapted the park's layout for the installation of the monument. The monument was completed in the same year: a bronze bust of the poet on a plinth in front of a marble bas-relief panel depicting six figures from Longfellow's works (Miles Standish, Sandalphon, the Village Blacksmith, the Spanish Student, Evangeline, and Hiawatha). On October 29, 1914, an unveiling ceremony for the memorial monument was held with the Longfellow family in attendance.

The Association continued to meet until 1922, when members voted to dissolve the organization at their annual meeting (though their account book continues until 1924). At the direction of the third president, Charles W. Eliot, Winthrop S. Scudder prepared a history of the Association, which was initially published in the *Boston Herald* on September 3, 1922.

[6] Catherine Evans, *Cultural Landscape Report for Longfellow National Historic Site: Volume 1: Site History and Existing Conditions*, National Park Service, 1993, 57.

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Evans, Catherine. *Cultural Landscape Report for Longfellow National Historic Site: Volume 1: Site History and Existing Conditions*. National Park Service, 1993.

Finance Committee. *The Longfellow Memorial Association, of Cambridge, Mass. Report of the Finance Committee*. Cambridge, 1883.

"For the Longfellow Memorial." *Boston Daily Globe*, May 14, 1883.

Gilman, Arthur D. "Letter to the Editors," *Boston Daily Advertiser*, March 30, 1882.

Gilman, Arthur D. "Report of the Secretary 1882-1907." In *The Longfellow Memorial Association 1882-1907*. Longfellow Memorial Association, 1907.

Longfellow Memorial Association honorary membership certificate, in the Longfellow Memorial Association Records, 1882-1924 (LONG 37906), Longfellow House-Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site.

Scudder, Winthrop S. *The Longfellow Memorial Association 1882-1922, An Historical Sketch*. The Cosmos Press, Inc., 1922.

PART 3: COLLECTION LISTING

	Box	Folder
Account book, 1882-1924	1	1
Administrative records and correspondence, 1882-1898, 1923	1	2
Printed material, circa 1883, 1887, and undated	1	3
Printed material related to the Longfellow centenary, 1907	1	4