



Longfellow House Bulletin

Volume 5 No. 1

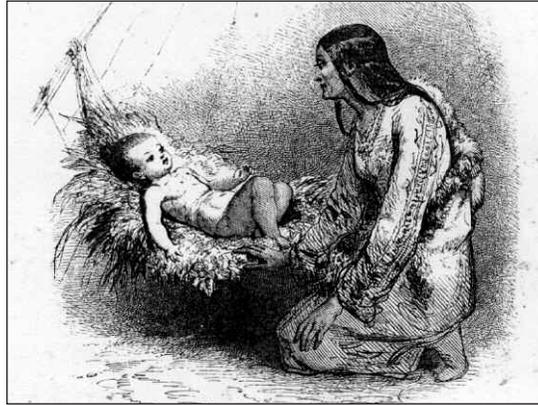
A Newsletter of the Friends of the Longfellow House and the National Park Service

June 2001

New Study Examines *The Song of Hiawatha* as Controversial Bestseller

Matthew Gartner's recent work on M.H.W. Longfellow's most popular poem asserts that *The Song of Hiawatha* was both a bestseller and a subject of controversy as soon as it was published, and quickly became a cultural phenomenon. Gartner, who is writing a book called *The Poet Longfellow: A Cultural Interpretation*, will present his findings and analysis this July at the Society for the History of Authorship, Reading, and Publishing.

When *Hiawatha* was first published in 1855 it sold rapidly. With an initial printing of five thousand volumes, four thousand were already sold as of its November 10 publication date. By mid-December eleven thousand volumes were in print. Longfellow's publisher, James T. Fields, announced in January that they were selling three hundred copies a day. Forty-three thousand copies of *Hiawatha* had sold



George H. Thomas illustration, *The Song of Hiawatha*, London, 1859

nationwide by 1858, making it not only Longfellow's best-selling poem ever, but, arguably, the best-selling American poem of the century.

Controversy over the poem began almost immediately. Less than two weeks after *Hiawatha*'s publication, Longfellow

noted in his journal: "Some of the newspapers are fierce and furious about *Hiawatha*," and a few weeks later, he wrote, "There is the greatest pothor about *Hiawatha*. It is violently assailed, and warmly defended." The historian William Prescott, a friend of Longfellow's, wrote the poet from New York of "the hubbub that *Hiawatha* has kicked up in the literary community."

At the heart of the controversy lay Longfellow's decision to use a poetic meter called "trochaic dimeter." The nineteenth century was an age of great sensitivity to the art of prosody, or poetic meter, and Longfellow surely knew *Hiawatha*'s success would, to a large extent, depend on how this seldom-used meter was received and whether it was deemed suitable for his book-length treatment of an Indian legend.

(continued on page 2)

House Loans Bierstadt's "Departure of Hiawatha" for Exhibitions

Albert Bierstadt's "Departure of Hiawatha," which usually hangs in the dining room of the Longfellow House, can be seen in two major museums this summer. A German-born American and Hudson River School painter, Bierstadt is famous for his large, panoramic views of the American West.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow received this small, brightly colored oil painting as a gift from the artist at a dinner party held in his honor by the artist and his wife at the Langham Hotel in London on the 9th of July 1868. Longfellow was in England to receive an honorary degree from Cambridge University. Among those attending the dinner were the poet Robert Browning, the painter Edwin Landseer, members of the British Parliament, and Prime

Minister William Gladstone himself.

From August 7 to October 14, 2001, the painting will be on loan to the National Museum of Western Art, Tokyo, for their exhibition entitled "American Heroism,"



Departure of Hiawatha by Albert Bierstadt, 1868

which will bring together works of art depicting American heroes, heroines, and heroism, and the shaping of American myth.

"American Heroism" was developed to promote cultural exchanges between the United States and Japan. The idea for the exhibition originated during a conversation between the former Japanese Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama and President Clinton.

From November 2001 until February 2002, "Departure of Hiawatha" will be part of "Primal Visions: Albert Bierstadt 'Discovers' America, 1859-1893" at the Montclair Art Museum in New Jersey. Afterward, the exhibit will travel to the Columbus Museum of Art in Columbus, Ohio, and the Crocker Art Museum in Sacramento, California.



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Printed by Newprint Offset, Waltham, Mass.



The case against *Hiawatha* claimed that the meter was a poetical straitjacket, too stiff to allow the poetry to reflect modulations in the feeling and mood of its story. *Putnam's Magazine* of December 1855 declared: "We do not believe that any man can read ten pages of *The Song of Hiawatha*, in a natural, unforced manner, without lifting his voice into a canter"—in other words, the reader must clop through *Hiawatha* like a horse with an unvaried gait. The opposition argued that *Hiawatha* was written in the best possible measure for such a poem and deferred to Longfellow's own explanation:

*Ye who love a nation's legends,
Love the ballads of a people,
That, like voices from afar off,
Call to us to pause and listen,
Speak in tones so plain and childlike
Scarcely can the ear distinguish
Whether they are sung or spoken; —
Listen to this Indian Legend,
To this Song of Hiawatha!*

The poet and translator Thomas W. Parsons agreed, finding that "[t]he measure is monotonous,—admitted; but it is truly Indian. It is child-like, and suited to the savage ear." The *North American Review*, declaring that "[t]he essential characteristic of Indian life, and so of Indian literature, is that it is childlike," likewise approved of *Hiawatha's* controversial meter. Despite these stereotypes, *Hiawatha* was the first long American poem in which Native American legends and heroes were given center stage.

Longfellow's meter had been attacked previously in *Evangeline*, which adapted the Greek and Latin hexameter, but this time his subject matter stirred up controversy as well. George William Curtis, Longfellow's friend and supporter, defended the poem against criticism that went beyond the metrical and poetical. He summed up the charges: "It is adjudged pointless and uninteresting. It is thought to be a hopeless attempt to invest Indian tradition with the dignity and pathos of a true human romance. It is voted an unfortunate subject, and the simplicity of the treatment is considered to be too simple."

Hiawatha, however, became an overnight cultural phenomenon, read and satirized extensively. In March 1856, according to Longfellow's journal, the actress Grace Darling was "reading *Hiawatha* to crowded houses in Philadelphia," and "Hiawatha's

Wooring" was read to audiences at the Boston Theater as an encore. *Hiawatha* "has been recited (in part) before crowded audiences of our people," noted *Putnam's* later that year, and a gossip column in *Harper's* asked acidly, "Have we great things to boast of in this good year of our Lord 1856, if we set aside the *ad nauseam* singings of *Hiawatha*, and plenty of beef in the New York market?" The proliferation of *Hiawatha*-inspired performances, place names, and paraphernalia of all sorts was just beginning. Already by 1857, for instance, a Mississippi steamboat was named "The Hiawatha" and another "The Minnehaha."

Not all the *Hiawatha* spin-offs were favorable. The poet Bayard Taylor, a few weeks after the poem's release, felt the need to reassure Longfellow in a letter, "It will be parodied, perhaps ridiculed, in many quarters, but it will live after the Indian race has vanished from our Continent, and there will be no parodies then." By February 1856 Longfellow noted with equanimity in his journal, "*Hiawatha* parodies come in from all quarters,—even from California."

Hiawatha marked an important turning point in Longfellow's career—the beginning of a split in public opinion regarding his work. The New England literary establishment backed Longfellow's message of reassurance and refinement, as did many American readers across the social spectrum. But an increasing number of readers in a rapidly changing country on the eve of civil war no longer found Longfellow the innovative American poet he had been in the late 1830s. With *Hiawatha* the debate over Longfellow's reputation began, and it continues to this day.

"THE GOLDEN LEGEND OF AMERICA."

GRAND ENTERTAINMENT!

MISS KIMBERLY!

Has the honor of announcing to the citizens of Troy, that she will give her 10th recitation of Longfellow's Celebrated Trochaic

HIAWATHA!

—IN—

RAND'S HALL!

Wednesday Evening, Feb. 4, 1857.

(Being the only one she proposes giving in Troy.)

PROGRAMME

Of the Song of HIAWATHA, as Spoken by Miss Kimberly.

PART FIRST.

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introduction. 2. The Pease Pipe. 3. The Four Winds. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Hiawatha's Birth and Childhood. 5. Hiawatha's Fight with Mudgekeewis. 6. Hiawatha's Wooing.
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Intermission of Ten Minutes.

PART SECOND.

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Ghosts. 2. The Famine. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. The White Man's Foot. 4. Hiawatha's Departure.
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PART THIRD.

Interview with a Friend...Meet Marilyn Richardson

Marilyn Richardson is a member of the Board of the Friends of the Longfellow House and also editor of this newsletter. Because of her scholarship in nineteenth-century American culture and her forthcoming book on Edmonia Lewis, we thought it was time to turn the interviewer's microphone towards her for this special issue of the *Bulletin*

Longfellow House: Why an issue of the *Bulletin* devoted to *The Song of Hiawatha*?

Marilyn Richardson: The rhythm of the poem and the names Hiawatha and Minnehaha are there in our consciousness as we grow up. The poem has managed to establish itself in a corner of the American psyche. Beyond that, it is internationally recognized in more than forty languages. The publication of the new edition of Longfellow's collected works seemed an opportunity to explore aspects of the poem's significance.

LH: Do you think people still read it today or do they just know it in a vague way?

MR: Last spring I was in France and turned on the BBC one evening and heard the concluding moments of a half-hour recitation with music of passages from *The Song of Hiawatha*. I was certainly surprised, but it seemed to be a bit of commonly held Anglo-American culture that was simply part of that evening's line-up.

LH: Some of your thoughts on the influence of the poem?

MR: Longfellow made his Indians both exotic and romantic, but not particularly threatening. They were also so completely Other that there was no question of incorporating them into the body politic, let alone into the larger social context of an evolving nation. Indians were quintessentially non-urban—Longfellow encouraged his readers to imagine them as our national noble savages. While some figures in the tale are wild and dangerous, Hiawatha is domesticated by his passion for Minnehaha. As a couple, they are so widely known that they rank with George and Martha.

In the way it was taken up by artists of all sorts, popularizers, children's writers and such, *The Song of Hiawatha* was a precursor of the movie Westerns. The Indians that Hopalong Cassidy or the Lone Ranger encountered were essentially the same as those Longfellow wrote about but with the emphasis on savage rather than noble.

They were also a shared American fantasy in a country about to go to war with

itself. Both North and South could hold this idea of the Indian as the Other. *Hiawatha* was published only three years after *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Longfellow was writing at the height of the fury over the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 when blacks in the North were at the mercy of bounty hunters and could in no way be mythologized. Stowe and Longfellow offer two very different views of elements of the American population that could never be digested. All of the characters in the poem and their history are trapped in the rhythms of the meter—figures in literary aspic. The meter is, of course, drawn from an oral tradition which is one of the reasons why it was such a huge



theatrical success, both in costumed performances and staged readings.

LH: You taught at UMass/Boston and at MIT for many years. Then you were curator at the African Meeting House and the Museum of Afro American History on Beacon Hill. What are you involved in now?

MR: I have a small consulting group called African-Americana. I work with museums, historical societies, libraries, and teacher-training organizations. Our emphasis is on African American intellectual history including literature, the arts, and political activism from the Colonial era through Reconstruction. I develop exhibitions, give slide presentations, and conduct workshops documenting and explicating the black presence in virtually every aspect of American life from the Colonial period to the late nineteenth-century.

LH: You have an essay in the recent book *Hope & Glory: Essays on the Legacy of the 54th Massachusetts Regiment* on one of your favorite subjects.

MR: For many years I've been gathering

material and publishing articles on the nineteenth-century Afro-Indian artist Edmonia Lewis. She was the first black American to gain an international reputation as a sculptor. She lived in Rome at the period of the ascendancy of an international group of independent women artists, centered on the actress Charlotte Cushman, who led lives of great determination and success. Lewis was unusual in that she was a black artist, but she was fortunate in arriving in Rome at that era of women—Harriet Hosmer, Anne Whitney, Emma Stebbins, among them—making their names and their livings as artists. She began her professional career in Boston where she knew many of Longfellow's friends—Emerson, Garrison, Sumner—if not the man himself. They met in Rome where she made the lovely bust of Longfellow that is now at Harvard.

LH: Was she affected by the Hiawatha craze?

MR: Lewis, along with so many other artists, produced scenes from *The Song of Hiawatha*, which sold well in the all-but-insatiable market for such pieces. She was a prolific artist whose studio was a well-known stop for visitors on the Grand Tour, many of whom ordered busts of themselves or of significant contemporary figures for their front parlors. In other pieces she drew on history, the Bible, and Greek and Roman mythology. Among her larger works, the "Death of Cleopatra" was a great success at the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition and is now one of at least half a dozen Lewises owned by the Smithsonian American Art Museum.

A *carte de visite* photograph of Lewis was in one of the Longfellow family albums from their travels in the late 1860s. It's one of the joys of working in the House archives that over the generations the family's lively interests led to the gathering of materials that come together in extraordinary ways.

LH: How did you join the Board of the Friends of the Longfellow House?

MR: I was first invited to join the Board by Diana Korzenik whose work I admired, and of course the deal was sealed by Jim Shea's spectacular tour which touched upon so many of my interests. That tour even turned up a photo of a close friend of Lewis's in Rome, Isabel Cholmondeley, whose picture I had been seeking for many years. There she was in one of the albums! Clearly, this was the board I really wanted to

(continued on page 9)

Longfellow's Early Interest in Indians

Long before Henry Longfellow ever began writing *The Song of Hiawatha* in 1854, he had been interested in the character, customs, and plight of Native Americans.

As a child growing up in Maine, Longfellow had little acquaintance with Indians, but he came into contact with a few members of the Algonquin tribe who still survived in the state. Mainly, Longfellow first learned about the Indians from written sources. When he was sixteen and a student at Bowdoin College, he prepared a presentation called "English Dialogue Between a North American Savage and an English Emigrant" together with another student. He chose the role of the Indian and read a number of books on the subject. On November 9, 1823, he wrote in a letter to his mother of his excitement at reading an account by a missionary who had lived among various Indian tribes:

"Since I wrote you last I have read but one volume. That is Heckewelder's *Account of the History, Manners, and Customs of the Indian Natives of Pennsylvania and the Neighboring States*. This is a very interesting volume, and exhibits in a new and more agreeable light the character of this reviled and persecuted race. It appears from this account of them and their customs (and I see no reason why he should not be relied upon as correct, since he passed the greater part of a long life amongst the Indians) that they are a race possessing magnanimity, generosity, benevolence, and pure religion without hypocrisy. This may seem a paradox, but nevertheless I believe it true. They have been most barbarously maltreated by the whites, both in word and deed.

"Their 'outrages'—what ear has not heard of them a thousand times?—whilst the white people, who rendered their cruelty more cruel, their barbarity more vindictive, publish abroad their crimes and thank Heaven that they are not like these heathen!"

Some of Longfellow's earliest poems concerned Indians. In fact, in his first known poem written when he was thirteen, "The Battle of Lovell's Pond," Captain John Lovell and the Indians battle for a day at Lovell's Pond, a place Longfellow knew in his youth. In 1825 he wrote several more poems about Indians, including "Lover's Rock" in which an Indian maiden set to be married discovers her intended is "false-hearted" and throws herself off Lover's Rock. The central character in "The Indian Hunter" (1825) has "bitter feelings" as he

looks over the "populous haunts of man."

Not only was Longfellow interested in the plight of the Indians, but a decade later as a linguist and master of over twelve languages, he was intrigued by and wrote about the Native American tongues as well. He wrote to his Danish friend Carl Christian Rafn on April 23, 1837:

"I had the pleasure of receiving yesterday the Report of the Society [of the Northern Antiquaries], addressed to its British and American Members. In return I send you a paper on the Indian Languages of North America, not yet published. It will appear in the *North America Review* for July next. By sending it now, you will get it probably some



Chief Rain-in-the-Face (see poem on page 10)

months in advance. Pray let me know in what way I can be useful to you here."

Later in 1837 in Washington, D.C., a peace conference between the Fox and Sioux tribes took place. Among the delegates was Black Hawk, the famous Sauk Chief. After the treaty was signed on October 21, 1837, the delegates took a tour of metropolitan areas, including Boston where Longfellow met them. In a letter to Margaret Potter, his first wife's sister, on October 29, 1837, he described his encounter:

"There are Indians here; savage fellows—one Black-Hawk and his friends, with naked shoulders and red blankets wrapped about their bodies; the rest all grease and Spanish brown and vermillion. One carries a great war-club, and wears horns on his head; another has his face painted like a grid-iron, all in bars;—another is red, like a lobster; and another black and white, in great daubs of paint, laid on not sparingly. Queer fellow! One great champion of the Fox nation had a short pipe in his mouth, smoking with great self-complacency as he

marched out of City Hall; and another was smoking a cigar! Withal, they looked very formidable. Hard customers..."

In February 1849, Longfellow had another opportunity to meet a Native American without leaving his home. Kah-ge-gah-gah-bowh had come to Boston to lecture. Longfellow described him in his journal as "an Ojibway preacher who came to see us. The Indian is a good-looking man. He left me a book of his, an autobiography."

"The Ojibway chief" as Longfellow called him in his journal on April 12, 1849 gave "A rambling talk, gracefully delivered, with a fine various voice and a chief's costume, with bells jangling upon it, like the bells and pomegranates of the Jewish priests." Two days later the poet entered in his journal that he had seen him again at the new Athenaeum: "Evening, Kah-ge-gah-gah-bowh again on 'The Religion, Poetry, and Eloquence of the Indian,' more rambling than ever, though not without good passages. He described very graphically the wild eagles teaching their young to fly from a nest overhanging a precipice on the Pictured Rocks of Lake Superior."

Longfellow wrote to his friend Ferdinand Freiligrath, a German poet who translated some of Henry's works into German, on June 12, 1850 to tell him about Kah-ge-gah-gah-bowh: "Let me have the pleasure of introducing my friend Kah-ge-gah-gah-bowh, an American Indian Chief of the Ojibway nation, whose English name is George Copway. You will rejoice to take him by the hand, and talk with him of the grand forests of his native land. I shall make him promise to sing to you some of the mournful musical songs of his nation. In return you shall show him the Cathedral and the skulls of the Eleven thousand Virgins of Cologne, and all that remains of Melchior, Casper and Balthasar.

"Kah-ge-gah-gah-bowh is on his way to the Peace Convention at Frankfurt. He goes with calumet in his hand. You he already knows by sight, having seen your portrait hanging on the wall of my study, and he also is a Poet, which will be another recommendation to you."

Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, the great ethnologist who had worked as an Indian Agent for the Upper Great Lakes Region and married an Ojibway woman, had an enormous influence on the future chronicler of *Hiawatha*. In 1839 Longfellow read the first of Schoolcraft's thirty books on Indians. From

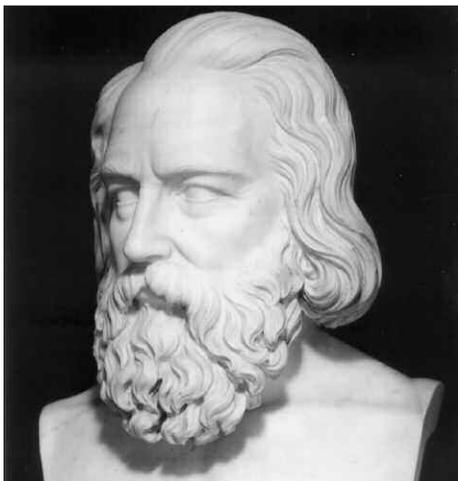
Visions of The Song of Hiawatha

his *Algic Researches*, Longfellow learned the legends of the Iroquois on which he based *The Song of Hiawatha*. He shared Schoolcraft's admiration for Indian handicrafts and customs. He even sent a number of his friends moccasins, baskets of birch bark worked with wampum, and other objects. On March 15, 1843 Longfellow wrote to Freiligrath:

"With this I send you a small package, containing Indian moccasins, and other Indian matters from Canada...all done by the brown fingers of Indian girls, on the banks of the St. Lawrence, and within sound of the roaring Niagara...the black moccasins..., the bracelets,...the card case. They are mere trifles, but they will remind you of me; and the western world; and perchance give rise to a "savage poem" in your teeming brain. Speaking of savage poems you may like to see one. Here it is; written by a Choctaw and translated by a gentleman of Mississippi." Freiligrath translated this poem into German and titled it "Lied der Alten Tschaktas."

In 1847 Congress commissioned Schoolcraft's monumental six-volume work on the Indian tribes of the U.S., which was published between 1851 and 1857. In a letter to his close friend Senator Charles Sumner on June 25, 1854 H.W. Longfellow eagerly wrote: "Can you in any way get a copy of Schoolcraft's great work on the Indians published by the Gov't. Was it among the works distributed by Members of Congress? There are some three or four large vols. Pray bear it in mind and help me if you can."

Longfellow finished his epic poem in 1855. The following year, encouraged by the success of *Hiawatha*, Schoolcraft issued an expanded edition of one of his books and dedicated it to Longfellow, with a new title: *The Myth of Hiawatha, and Other Oral Legends, Mythological and Allegoric, of the North American Indians*.



Bust of Longfellow by Edmonia Lewis

Nineteenth-century artists of every kind found *The Song of Hiawatha* an almost irresistible source of inspiration. Composers, dancers, and actors, all interpreted aspects of the poem to the delight of knowledgeable and enthusiastic audiences. Painters and sculptors found eager buyers for scenes or figures from the heroic idyll for their walls and mantels. Over time Hiawatha himself and his beloved Minnehaha became the most popular subjects from the tale. They were depicted by some of the greatest artists of the age, by firms dealing in the mass production of prints, and by famous illustrators hired to embellish the flood of editions of the poem.

Many of the artists, such as Augustus Saint-Gaudens, would have known the poem from childhood. His first life-size sculpture was an 1872 depiction of Hiawatha as a pensive youth in the wild. Two years later, Thomas Eakins painted Hiawatha's victory over the corn-god, securing the gift of maize for his people:

"All alone stood Hiawatha, /Panting with His wild exertion, /Palpitating with the struggle: /And before him, breathless, lifeless, /Lay the youth with hair disheveled /Plumage torn and garments tattered, /Dead he lay there in the sunset."

Art historian Cynthia D. Nickerson describes how Currier & Ives, a firm that seldom illustrated literary subjects, published prints of seven scenes from "the American epic." Beginning as early as 1858 they produced "Hiawatha's Wedding," "The Death of Minnehaha," and "Hiawatha's Departure" among other vignettes. Over the generations, great illustrators from Frederick Remington to N.C. Wyeth kept dramatic scenes from Longfellow's pen before the eyes of millions of readers.

One artist claimed a particular connection to both the work and, ultimately, the author. Edmonia Lewis was born in upstate New York in the early 1840s, the daughter of a part Ojibway mother and a Haitian-born father. Some of her childhood was spent among her mother's relatives, commonly

called the Chippewa, and she felt herself strongly imbued with the influences of both Indian and African-American history and culture. Following studies at Oberlin College in Ohio, Lewis arrived in Boston in early 1863 with letters of introduction to William Lloyd Garrison and other abolitionists, black and white. Working in Boston's Studio Building at Tremont and Bromfield streets, Lewis studied with sculptors Edward Brackett and, briefly, Anne Whitney.

Lewis soon gained recognition for her portrait busts and terra cotta medallions of



"The Old Arrowmaker and His Daughter" by Edmonia Lewis

(Smithsonian American Art Museum)

the champions of the anti-slavery cause, including Sen. Charles Sumner, Maria Weston Chapman, and the martyred John Brown. It was her memorial bust of Robert Gould Shaw, however, that sold enough copies and photographs to help finance a trip abroad. She settled in Rome with frequent trips to the United States to exhibit and sell her work. By the mid-1870s, Lewis had become the first black American to achieve

an international reputation as a major sculptor.

Following the Civil War, Lewis produced important work on themes of black emancipation including "Forever Free," a depiction of newly liberated slaves, and a bust of Abraham Lincoln. Among her best-selling works were a series of scenes from *The Song of Hiawatha* such as the "Old Arrowmaker and his Daughter," "The Marriage of Hiawatha and Minnehaha," and busts of the two lovers. Collectors considered that work all the more desirable coming from the hand of a sculptor who was part Indian.

In the late 1860s, Longfellow visited Rome. Lewis sketched the famous poet unaware from a discreet distance. Samuel Longfellow, hearing of this subterfuge, visited Lewis's studio and was impressed by her work on a bust of his brother. When Henry then came to the studio, he pronounced the piece a fine likeness and sat for the completion of the marble portrait. It was soon acquired by Harvard College where it remains to this day.

One Hundredth Anniversary: Alice Longfellow

April 6, 2001 marked the one hundredth anniversary of Alice Longfellow's account of her party's visit to the Ojibway people, the subjects of her father's famous poem. The visit and the open-air performance the Ojibways prepared for their guests took place along the north shore of Lake Huron not far from Desbarats, Ontario, a tiny hamlet on the Canadian Pacific Railroad. The following is an excerpt from the introduction by Alice M. Longfellow to the 1901 Riverside Press edition of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's *The Song of Hiawatha*. Her original manuscript resides in the Longfellow House archives.

In the winter of 1900 a band of Ojibway Indians was formed to illustrate Indian life at the Sportsmen's Show in Boston. Among them was the old chief Bukwujjinini, and one of the inducements he had to take the journey was the hope of visiting the home of the writer who had cared enough for the legends of his people to turn them into poetry. But this could not be, for the old man, who was over ninety, fell ill, and died on the very day the Indians were to set forth, and they took their journey without their father, and with genuine sorrow in their hearts.

For some time the Canadian gentleman who arranged the expedition had been cherishing the idea of training the Indians to perform scenes from "Hiawatha" in the forest on the shores of the "big sea water." Kabaoosa readily fell in with this scheme, and after the visit of the Indians to Mr. Longfellow's home in Cambridge the plan rapidly matured and a formal invitation was sent to Mr. Longfellow's family to be present at the representation as guests of the Indians. The invitation was written on

birch bark, in Ojibway, and was as follows:

LADIES: We loved your father. The memory of our people will never die as long as your father's song lives, and that will live forever.

Will you and your husbands and Miss Longfellow come and see us and stay in our royal wigwams on an island in Hiawatha's playground, in the land of the Ojibways? We want you to see us live over again the life of Hiawatha in his own country.

KABAOOSA

The invitation was cordially accepted, and in August the party of guests, twelve in all, left the train at Desbarats on the north shore of Lake Huron; there they were met by the Indians in full costume, and in sailboat and canoes they set forth for the little rocky island, which had been prepared for them.



A fierce encounter from the 1901 performance of *Hiawatha*

There was a square stone lodge on the highest part of the island, most picturesquely finished inside and out, with the flag of England floating above it. Surrounding this were several tepees of tanned hide and stained canvas, and nearer the shore two little groups of tents, where two Indian families lived, who cooked and served, sailed the boats, entertained their guests with songs, dancing, and storytelling, doing all with quiet dignity, ease of manner, and genuine kindness that removed every difficulty.

The play of "Hiawatha" was performed on a rocky, thickly wooded point about two miles away. Near the shore a platform was built around a tall pine-tree, and

grouped around this were tepees and huts forming the Indian village. Behind this the ground sloped gradually upward, forming a natural amphitheatre.



Old Nokomis with little Hiawatha in the 1901 performance

As a prelude to the play a large pile of brushwood was lighted. . . . Down the hill-sides rushed the braves in war paint and feathers. . . . After listening to the commands of the Great Spirit, the warriors threw down their weapons and war-gear and, leaping into the lake, washed the war-paint from their faces. Then they seated themselves and smoked the peace-pipe.

The second scene showed old Nokomis before her wigwam, singing a lullaby to the little Hiawatha in his linden cradle. Then, the scene changing, Nokomis led the boy Hiawatha out upon the stage and taught him how to shoot the bow and arrow, while the warriors stood around watching and applauding when he hit the mark.

The fourth scene was the journey of Hiawatha in his manhood after his battle with Mudjekeewis, a picturesque figure striding through the woods flecked with sunshine and shadow. . . .

The wigwam of the ancient arrow-



Ojibway performance of *Hiawatha*, with stage and onlookers, 1901



Minnehaha and Hiawatha in the 1901 Ojibway perform

Hiawatha's Account of the Visit to Hiawatha's People

maker was placed far from the rest in the shade of the trees, to give an idea of distance. The arrow-maker, himself, a very old man, sat by the entrance, cutting arrowheads; his daughter, a modest Indian maiden, stood beside him with downcast eyes, while the stranger paused to talk with her father.

This scene was followed by the return of Hiawatha to the land of the Dakotahs. Again the old man sat in the doorway, and by him was Minnehaha, "plaiting mats of flags and rushes." She stood modestly on one side while Hiawatha urged his suit. . . .

Then came the wedding dances, full of life and spirit, the figures moving always round and round in a circle, with a swaying motion, the feet scarcely lifted from the ground. . . . Last came the gambling dance, the favorite with the actors. . . . This game was interrupted by a sudden shout, and across the water was seen approaching a canoe, and seated in it the missionary, "the black robe chief, the prophet." On the shore he was graciously received by Hiawatha, and led to the wigwam for refreshment and repose. Then he addressed the attentive tribes in Ojibway:

*Told his message to the people,
Told the purport of his mission.*

Thereupon Hiawatha arose, greeting the missionary, took farewell of his people, and. . .with hands uplifted he glided slowly out upon the lake, floating steadily onward across the rippling water toward the setting sun. . . . A beautiful ending to a most unique and interesting drama. . . .

The next day being Sunday, all the Indians gathered on the island, where a church was improvised, and a simple service was held. . . . After the service an old man arose, welcoming the strangers, because their

father had written in poetry the legends of his people, and with pride produced a large silver medal given to his ancestors by King George III as a pledge that their rights should be respected. "And," he said, "he

told us that as long as the sun shone, the Indians should be happy, but I see the sun shining, and I do not think Indians always happy. But the medal he told us always to wear when with persons of distinction;" and with great dignity the old man slipped the medal with its broad blue ribbon around his neck, looking proud and happy. . . .

A few days before the end of the visit, the Indians were busy building a small platform on the island, and decorating it with green boughs, doing everything with much secrecy. After sunset, when the fire was lighted on the rocks near by, the Indians assembled together, and Kabaoosa as the spokesman announced that they wished to have the pleasure of taking some of the party into the tribe as members. First came the ladies, as their father had turned the Ojibway legends into verse. They were led in turn before Kabaoosa, who took one of their hands in his, and made a spirited discourse in Ojibway. Then striking them three times on the shoulder, he called aloud the Indian name of adoption, and all the bystanders repeated it together. Then the new member of the tribe was led around the circle, and each Indian came forward, grasping the stranger by the hand, and calling aloud the new name. The names, which were valued names in the tribe, were all chosen with care, and given as proofs of high regard; the men of the party were honored as well as the women.

Odenewasenoquay—The first flash of lightning; Osahgushkodawaquay—The lady of the open plains; Daguagonay—The man whom people like to camp near. . . .

The ceremonies were followed by much singing and dancing, of which the Indians



Performance stage overlooking the Lake Huron

never tire, and the following day came the farewells. . . .With many regrets the party turned their faces eastward, while the Indians accompanied their farewells with a parting dance.

*And they said, 'Farewell forever!'
Said, 'Farewell, O Hiawatha.'*

Editor's note: The Indians had been assisted in this unique undertaking by a Montreal gentleman, Mr. L. O. Armstrong. He had been much among them, and was himself an ardent admirer of Longfellow's poem. Alice Longfellow was so impressed with the performance that she asked Mr. Armstrong to arrange that the play be given annually at the same place. The annual performances aroused such widespread interest that one every summer was not enough. They multiplied with each succeeding year. Fifty-one performances were given during summer 1902, and sixty-two during summer 1903. The three-hundredth performance occurred in the last week of August 1903. Several performances were given in Boston in Spring 1903 when Miss Longfellow again witnessed the play and entertained the Indian actors at the poet's house.



formance



Hiawatha and Minnehaha in the 1901 Ojibway performance

Hiawatha Set to Music

Within months of its publication, Longfellow's *The Song of Hiawatha* inspired many composers to develop instrumental and vocal versions of sections of this monumental work. Other composers acknowledged the influence of the poem in the color, tone, or instrumentation of passages in certain compositions. A few examples demonstrate the variety and success of these musical tributes to the poet's epic tale.

Although the name of the German-born American composer Robert August Stoepel (1821-87) is no longer familiar, Longfellow himself enthusiastically approved of his hugely successful *Hiawatha: A Romantic Symphony* (1859). Musicologist Michael V. Pisani describes Stoepel's and Longfellow's correspondence on the subject of settings of his poetry and how the composer gradually gained Longfellow's trust and encouragement. Together they decided that the work would first be performed in Boston. The critic for the *New York Musical World* wrote that, "Mr. Longfellow was immensely interested [in Stoepel's *Hiawatha*] and attended all the rehearsals and readings."

Stoepel enlisted the Handel and Hayden Society, a fifty-person orchestra, and three vocal soloists. In addition, Matilda Heron, a noted dramatic actress and the composer's wife, read narrative sections of the work. The premiere took place at the three-thousand-seat Boston Theatre. According to Pisani, "Longfellow himself was apparently delighted with Stoepel's music...he addressed the audience at the first performance and expressed his pleasure at Stoepel's achievement. Longfellow wrote in his journal, '[the Hiawatha] music is beautiful and striking; particularly the wilder parts,—the War Song and the Dance of Pau-puk-keewis.'"

Building on his Boston success, Stoepel took *Hiawatha* to the Academy of Music in New York City. Critics received it kindly. One wrote that it was, with one exception (an opera about Rip van Winkle), "the only original work of importance that has been brought out in New York for years..." In 1861 it went on to London's Covent Garden. Pisani reports that it was declared "a composition of high merit." Plans for a Parisian

performance fell through although poet Charles Baudelaire undertook a translation of the text.

The extent of international enthusiasm for Longfellow's *The Song of Hiawatha* is reiterated in the work of composer Antonin Dvorak (1841-1904) who first read the poem in a Czech translation. Soon after his arrival in New York, he began work on a short-lived Hiawatha opera project. His close rereading of the poem, however, did influence



portions of his renowned *New World Symphony* (1893). Critic and scholar Michael Steinberg describes how commentators over time have heard that influence in various parts of the symphony—from changes in key and instrumentation that suggest Hiawatha's wooing of Minnehaha or, elsewhere, the darkness of Minnehaha's funeral.

Others propose that pastoral tones evoke landscape and ambience rather than specific events. Steinberg affirms, though, that in the scherzo "[W]e are on sure ground in the matter of the Hiawatha connection: this, Dvorak told an interviewer from the *New York Herald*, was inspired by the description of the dance of Pau-Puk-Keewis in Longfellow's poem."

Between the years 1898 and 1900, Anglo-African Samuel Coleridge-Taylor (1875-1912) composed an elaborate cantata in three parts: *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast*, *The Death of Minnehaha*, and *Hiawatha's Departure*. The son of a West African father and an English mother, Coleridge-Taylor studied violin as a child, and at fifteen was admitted to the Royal College of Music.

The gala premiere performance of the twenty-three-year-old composer's *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast* for Tenor Solo, Chorus and Orchestra at the Royal College of Music in November 1898 was featured on a program that included selections by Rossini, Beethoven, and Schumann. The evening came to be considered "one of the most remarkable events in modern English music history,"

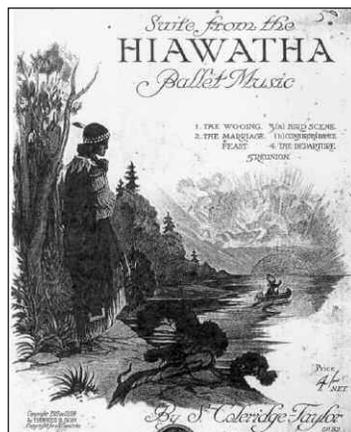
writes William Ethaniel Thomas, Music Director of the Cambridge Community Chorus in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Quoting an eye-witness account, Thomas continues, "It had gotten about in some unaccountable and mysterious manner that something of unusual interest was going to happen, and when the time came for the concert the [hall] was besieged by eager crowds, a large proportion of whom were shut out—but accommodation was found for Sir Arthur Sullivan and other musicians of eminence."

Coleridge-Taylor's *Hiawatha* instantly became a popular and critical sensation and was for many years one of the most widely performed works of modern English music. His settings inspired increasingly elaborate presentations, surely a trial for the publicity and attention-shy composer. An early performance by the Royal Choral Society at London's Royal Albert Hall was announced in the program as "A Dramatic Version with Scenery and Costumes... Pageantry, Music, Ballet," all presented by a cast of "1,000 Performers."

In the United States, Coleridge-Taylor was a major star in the African-American musical firmament, with organizations dedicated to the study and performance of his substantial output of vocal and instrumental music. In 1904 the Samuel Coleridge-Taylor Choral Society of Washington, D.C., sponsored the composer's first visit to the United States where he conducted them in performances of his work. During this visit, President Theodore Roosevelt received the world-renowned artist at the White House.

Hiawatha was not only a denizen of the concert

halls but appeared in popular music as well. Popular composer Neil Moret published his "Hiawatha" in 1901. That same year, John Philip Sousa and his band performed the piece with such success that he telegraphed the composer with the exciting news: "Congratulations, dear boy. 'Hiawatha' is the biggest hit I've ever played." With lyrics by James O'Dea added two years later, sheet music sales soared, and Moret's "Hiawatha" was the toast of thousands of parlor pianists and singers.



Henry W. Longfellow's letter to son Charley Longfellow, May 17, 1871:

Your two letters from Omaha have safely reached us, and yesterday came the parcel of Indian things, which will be opened when the girls come home from school, as they like to be present at the opening of all packages. . . .

[On his way to San Francisco to board a ship for Japan, Charley Longfellow visited Indian tribes in Nebraska and sent home photos and other objects.]

Marilyn Richardson (continued from page 3)

work with. The House and the generations who lived in it well into the twentieth century, all contribute to the many dimensions of what one finds there and the way the different collections speak to each other. In that sense, the contents of the Longfellow House go beyond mere house museum artifacts.

LH: Some thoughts on working on the *Longfellow House Bulletin*?

MR: The people I've had the pleasure of working with on the *Bulletin* have been colleagues of such talent and vision that the idea that we are able to leave a collective record of some of our involvement in this historic site is enormously satisfying.

The Song of Hiawatha on the Map

The Song of Hiawatha has not only secured a permanent place in American literature, it has quite literally been incorporated into the nation's geography through the naming of towns and landmarks on the map.

Minnesota's Minnehaha Falls are well known. The name, or a variant thereof, was sometimes used by Indian tribes early in the nineteenth-century, but it did not become the official designation for the falls until the era of the rage for all things Hiawatha. The name Minnehaha was also bestowed on communities large and small—from towns in Washington State, Arizona, and Colorado, to a county in South Dakota.

The name Hiawatha is found in Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Utah, Oklahoma, and West Virginia. His mother's name, Winona, is even more widely represented, appearing in Arizona, Idaho, Indiana, Kansas, Minnesota, Mississippi, New Hampshire, South Carolina, and Tennessee—a far-flung group of states, indeed—and often in several locales within a state. The heroic grandmother, Nokomis, is remembered in places named after her in Alabama, Florida, Illinois, and Virginia, while the corn god, Mondamin, slain by Hiawatha, is honored nonetheless in Iowa, zip code 51557. Ponemah, Longfellow's "land of the Hereafter," region of the "Islands of the Blessed," whence Hiawatha sails in Bierstadt's painting, is on the map in Illinois, Minnesota, and New Hampshire. And the settlers of Knox County, Illinois, chose the melodious name Dahinda for a site in that state. According to Longfellow's glossary at the end of *The Song of Hiawatha* the word—deceptively mellifluous—means Bullfrog.



Falls of Minnehaha, watercolor, by Lord Dufferin

Rehabilitation Update and Save America's Treasures Progress

After almost two years, the extensive work on the interior of the Longfellow National Historic Site is now finished. The fire protection and security systems are complete, the heating and cooling systems have been installed, and the collections storage facilities in the basement are ready.

Funded by the White House's Save America's Treasures program, conservation work on the wallpaper and chandeliers is currently underway. In April experts from the North East Document Conservation Center in Andover, Massachusetts, began cleaning and restoring the 1840s Gothic Revival wallpaper in the stair hallway. They will also work on the parlor and dining room wallpapers, some of which will be removed and repaired off-site. In areas with a lot of traffic, plexiglass barriers will be installed.

In the process of cleaning the wallpaper, the conservators discovered under the Gothic Revival wallpaper a large fragment of an earlier wallpaper from the Craigie era, c. 1810. They carefully removed and saved it for future documentation and cataloguing

into the House wallpaper collection.

After conservation of the chandeliers is completed by Brigid Sullivan at the Collection Conservation Branch of the NPS, the seven repaired and brightened fixtures from



the main floor will be returned to their previous sites, along with another dozen or so from the rest of the House. The time-blackened dining room chandelier has been restored to its purplish etched-metal beauty.

The entire House—inside and out—is

scheduled to be scraped and painted this summer. The rehabilitation work on the carriage house will begin in July and is expected to continue through December. The carriage house, which served as a storage barn up until now, will be transformed into classroom and meeting space as well as extra work area for the Park Service staff.

The NPS is planning the final phase of the rehabilitation, that of the gardens and grounds, which will be a multi-year project.

Beginning in late June the visitor center at the rear of the House will reopen on Thursdays through Sundays from 10 A.M. to 4:30 P.M. It will offer books by and about Longfellow, and other related items for sale. Tours of the grounds and the neighborhood will leave from the visitor center.

The Longfellow House with its collections is scheduled to open again to the public in Spring 2002.

You can stay up-to-date on the rehabilitation progress by visiting our Web site at:

www.nps.gov/long

or E-mailing us at: frla_longfellow@nps.gov

Recent Research at the House

The Longfellow House archives contain over 600,000 manuscripts, letters, and signed documents and are used extensively by researchers from around the world. Here are a few recent researchers of the several hundred who use the archives annually.

A researcher from St. Petersburg, Russia, Georgey Levinton, is preparing a lengthy paper in Russian on *The Song of Hiawatha* about which, he says, there is a great deal of interest in his country. Levinton has written previously on Longfellow's works.

Amy Johnson, recipient of the Stanley Paterson Fellowship and a doctoral candidate in American Art and Architecture, University of Delaware, is writing on "Tenement House Reform in Boston, 1850-1920." Alexander Wadsworth Longfellow Jr., the poet's nephew, was both a director of the Boston Cooperative Building Company, a philanthropic organization focused on improving the living conditions of the city's lower classes, and the architect for the company's model tenement built in Boston's South End in the early 1890s.

Kumiko Yamada, visiting Fulbright scholar at Harvard University, is researching Kano Shunsen Tomonobu, the Shogun's Last Painter. The Kano School, with the most prominent group of painters in Japan, dates back to the fifteenth century. Yamada is looking for a connection between Ernest Longfellow, the poet's son, and Tomonobu, since Ernest traveled to Japan in 1903 and Tomonobu was known to have given lessons in Japanese painting to Westerners. She is also interested in his brother Charley Longfellow's travels to Japan thirty years earlier and is contemplating translating the book about this, a Friends of the Longfellow House publication, into Japanese.

Longfellow House in Print

In its June 2001 issue *Sky and Telescope* magazine published an article by Stephen James O'Meara entitled "Longfellow: Voice of the Night" which describes the poet's interest in observing the night sky at the nearby Harvard College Observatory and its influence on his poetry.

The Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities' *Old Time New England* Fall/Winter 2000 issue has two articles related to Henry W. Longfellow. "In The Japanese Style: Charley Longfellow's Sitting Room" by Sarah Heald discusses Charley Longfellow's "Japan Room" in his father's house. "Priscilla" by Lorna Condon and Lindsay Schuckhart examines the spinner in *The Courtship of Miles Standish*.

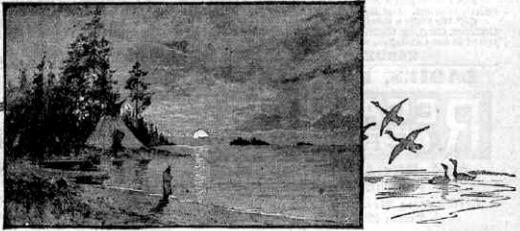
The University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst, just published a biography by Anne Marie Taylor of Longfellow's close friend Charles Sumner. Eastman Johnson's drawing of Charles Sumner graces the cover, and other images from the House art collection appear in the book.

Dover Publications has recently reprinted *Domestic Architecture of the American Colonies and of the Early Republic* by Fiske Kimball. This book on Georgian architecture showcases the Longfellow House on its cover.

This fall public television's *American Experience* will air a program based on Simon Schama's book *Dead Certainties* about the infamous murder of Dr. George Parkman in 1851 by Harvard professor Dr. John Webster, a friend of Henry W. Longfellow. Researchers for the program used journals and letters of the Longfellow family in the House archives.

THE LEGEND OF CEREALINE.

"First he built a lodge for fasting,
Built a wigwam in the forest,
By the shining Big-Sea-Water,
And with dreams and visions many,
Seven whole days and nights he fasted."



WEAK and famished from his fasting
Hiawatha tottered homeward,
Where he swooned and fell exhausted.
"Wahonowin!" cried Nokomis,
"Save him from the hand of Pauguk
And the kingdom of Starvation!"
Straightway, from a paper casket,
Minnehaha took a portion
Of a magic food and boiled it,
Boiled and gave to Hiawatha;
Soon he rose, invigorated.
"Wonderful!" exclaimed Nokomis;
"Wonderful!" the forest echoed,
Then the lovely Minnehaha
Read aloud the casket label:
"Cerealine the Flakes nutritious,
Cerealine the strength restorer,
Cerealine the peerless breadstuff."
"Wonderful!" cried Hiawatha;
"Yes indeed!" crooned old Nokomis.

The series of twelve original pictures of Indian life, of which the above is a small example, will be mailed to any one who will mention where this advertisement was seen and enclose a two-cent stamp for postage to the Cerealine Mfg. Co., Columbus, Indiana.

Harper's Magazine Advertiser's parody of Longfellow's poem.

The Revenge of Rain-in-the-Face

In that desolate land and lone
Where the Big Horn and Yellowstone
Roar down their mountain path,
By their fires the Sioux chiefs,
And the menace of their wrath.
"Revenge!" cried Rain-in-the-Face:
"Revenge upon all the race
Of the White Chief with yellow hair!"
And the mountains dark and high
From their crags re-echoed the cry
Of his anger and despair.

—H. W. Longfellow, 1876

Letter from George Washington to the
Pennsylvania Gazette,

August 30, 1775:

Yesterday Sen-night arrived at camp in Cambridge, Swashan, the Chief, with four other Indians of the St. Francois tribe, conducted hither by Mr. Reuben Colburn, who has been honorably recompensed for his trouble. The above Indians came hither to offer their services in the cause of American liberty, have been kindly received, and are now entered the service. Swashan says he will bring one half his tribe and has engaged 4 or 5 other tribes if they should be wanted. He says the Indians of Canada in general, and also the French, are greatly in our favor, and determined not to act against us.

Σονγ οφ Ηιαωατηα

Πεσν ο Γαιαβατε

Pesn o Gaiavate

ПЕСНЬ О ГАЯВАТЕ

Song of Hiawatha

Hiawatha: Alive and Well in Translation

Hiawatha is alive, well, and on the march. He emigrated from his birthplace atop Longfellow's desk in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and today lives happily in approximately forty-five languages....

During the last quarter-century Hiawatha has been sighted in Swahili, Kazakh, Uzbek, Korean, Chinese, Moldavian, Euskadi, and many more languages. As they lobbed artillery shells at each other, Azerbaidjanis and Armenians could enjoy recent translations in their respective languages telling how Gitche Manito, the Master of Life, smoked a peace-pipe as a signal to the nations.

Internationally, Hiawatha is more popular than ever: in the first half of the 1980s as many new translations appeared as did in the first decade following Hiawatha's advent in 1855. Even as he faded into a well-remembered but little-read figure [in America], in the world-at-large Hiawatha came to emblemize the Indian, pre-contact Native American culture, and the inevitability of post-contact submission to an Europeanized history.

—Prof. J. F. Lockard

excerpt from "The Universal Hiawatha,"
American Indian Quarterly, Winter 2000

Longfellow Summer 2001 Festival Schedule

All programs take place on the side lawn at Longfellow NHS and are free and open to the public.
Seating is limited so blankets and lawn chairs are welcome. No parking available.

Saturdays June 23- Sept. 8 Garden painting and other activities for all ages, 1-4 P.M.

Sundays:

June 24 Joiner Center Poets Reading, 4-5 P.M.

July 1 Dorothy Prince's theatrical presentation of African-American poet Phillis Wheatley, 2:30-3:30 P.M.

Columbia's Music: musical tributes to Washington, with other patriotic songs and historical narratives, 4-5:30 P.M.

July 8 Robert Creeley will read from his new book, *So There, Poems*, and will receive the Golden Rose Award, 4-5 P.M.

July 15 The Cecilia Quartet will perform Mozart's Quartet in C Major, K. 465 "Dissonance," Schubert's "Quartetsatz," and Gershwin's "Summertime," 4-5:30 P.M.

July 22 Leonardo Alishan will read his poetry and selections by Rumi and Hafez; Julia and Company will play Armenian and Persian music, 4-5:30 P.M.

July 29 Eugene Kim, solo cello performance of J.S. Bach, 4-5:30 P.M.

Aug. 5 William Jay Smith will read from his new book, *The Cherokee Lottery*, poems about his family and the Trail of Tears, and his poems for children, 4-5 P.M.

Aug. 12 Longy School of Music Woodwind Quintet, 4-5:30 P.M.

Aug. 19 Galway Kinnell will read from his *New Selected Poems* and other works, 4-5 P.M.

Aug. 26 An Afternoon of Brazilian Music and Poetry for the Opening of the Brazilian Independence Celebrations, 4-6 P.M.:

- Odette Ernest Dias, flutist, and Jaime Dias, guitarist
- Nocturnal Landscape, a musical journey across the vast landscape of Brazilian culture
- Award-winning poets Diana Der Hovanessian, Lloyd Schwartz, and Stephen Tapscott will read translations of Brazilian poetry

Sept. 9 Women Poets and Editors: Grace Schulman, Poetry Editor of the *Nation*, and Maria Mazziotti Gillan, Poetry Editor of *Paterson Review*, 4-5 P.M.

Upcoming Event

Garden Party and Booksignings: June 23, 1-4 P.M.

Come dressed in your garden party best to celebrate the future restoration of the historic Longfellow gardens and grounds!

We will also celebrate the publication of two books on the two women landscape architects who designed the gardens for Alice Longfellow when she remained in the house after her father's death. One book is a new edition by the Library of American Landscape History of Martha Brooke Hutcheson's 1923 book *The Spirit of the Garden*. This book includes photographs of the House's gardens from that time. The other book by Judith B. Tankard, landscape historian and founding editor of the *Journal of the New England Garden History Society*, is called *The Gardens of Ellen Biddle Shipman: A History of Women in Landscape Architecture*, published by Saga Press.

In addition to the booksignings, there will be music, poetry, Morris dancers, and historic plant demonstrations.

Sponsored by the National Park Service, the Friends of the Longfellow House, Radcliffe Seminars, and the Massachusetts Horticultural Society.

Spotlight on an Object

In each issue of the newsletter, we focus on a particular object of interest in the Longfellow House collection.

This time our spotlight shines on a group of moccasins from the Longfellow family. Ranging in size from miniature moccasins used for decorative purposes to children's moccasins to full-sized adult footwear, the eight-pair collection came from several sources and various tribes. Some are elaborately decorated with multi-colored beads and cloth tape, and most have handsewn cotton linings.

Both Longfellow and his wife, Fanny, purchased moccasins as did his son Charley, who sent the family moccasins from Nebraska. Longfellow also liked to give the exotic items as gifts, for he sent a pair to his friend Ferdinand Freiligrath in Germany (see page 4). Henry W. Longfellow's interest in Indian artifacts, and particularly in moccasins, must have been known by his friends for he received as a birthday gift from Mrs. M.C. Collins on February 18, 1882, a miniature off-white deerskin moccasin made by a Dakota Indian named White Dog.



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105 Brattle Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138

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