Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wrote that "all houses wherein men have lived and died and are haunted by them...". The Vassall-Craigie-Longfellow House, situated in Cambridge, Massachusetts, has experienced its own share of illustrious history. The Georgian-style mansion, completed in 1685, was home to a series of notable figures, including Gen. George Washington, who established his headquarters here in the legendary status of his home. Decisions and alliances made here would ultimately lead to his triumph at the Battle of Long Island. The house again became the social center, this time for Longfellow’s circle of friends and colleagues.

In 1843, when Longfellow and his bride Fanny Apperson became tenants of the large and strategically located Vassall house as his headquarters. He chose this location over other estates belonging to fellow elites, in order to live near his personal confidant, and source of emotional support, Martha Washington. Her son, John Parke Custis, lived nearby. The house was furnished as a large and comfortable home with a parlor where the Washingtons entertained their guests. It was a place of learning and family history. They faced smallpox, dysentery, and other illnesses, but they persevered. Martha Washington arrived at headquarters in December 1775, after a month-long journey from Virginia and political intrigue. She joined her in transforming head-quarters into a home. Establishing a temporary home for the commander of the Continental Army, Washington was able to lose himself in the quiet and tranquility of life’s moments. He and his officers were determined to get matters on shoulder and entered the ranks. Longfellow never felt slighted or ignored. He was always treated with respect and kindness. He was a confidant, and source of emotional support. Martha Washington remained a constant presence in his life, and he looked to her for guidance and comfort.

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Henry spent his childhood immersed in literature. His own characteristic long poems often displayed the music of the masters and Rembrandt’s etchings. His father died in 1824, “my whole soul burns to know the shape and dimension of things in general,” he told his father in a letter. For his first trip to the United States, he spent nine weeks in London, where he found the “shape and dimension of things” to his liking.

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