

Henry W. Longfellow



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"When you come to Cambridge, you will find George Washington brought down from his station on the stairs, and standing in the hall below, where he can be better seen. In his place you will see an Old Dutch clock, whose silver chimes will lull you to sleep at night. At the half-hours it strikes the coming hour, to give timely warning. The hours are struck on a larger bell, and the chimes 'shiver the air into a mist of sound.'"



Henry W. Longfellow to George Washington Greene, May 28, 1877

For 45 years Henry Wadsworth Longfellow lived in this house. Here he wrote his most famous poetry and received visitors from around the world.

Years earlier, George Washington used this house as his headquarters during the siege of Boston. Here he and Martha celebrated their 17th wedding anniversary in January 1776.

Cover: Longfellow and daughter Edith

Front Hall, 1917



"The house is square, with Longfellow's study where he read and wrote on the right of the door, and a stately library behind it; on the left is the drawing-room, with the dining-room in its rear. . . ."

—William Dean Howells, *Literary Friends and Acquaintance*. Indiana University Press

Drawing Room, ca. 1870

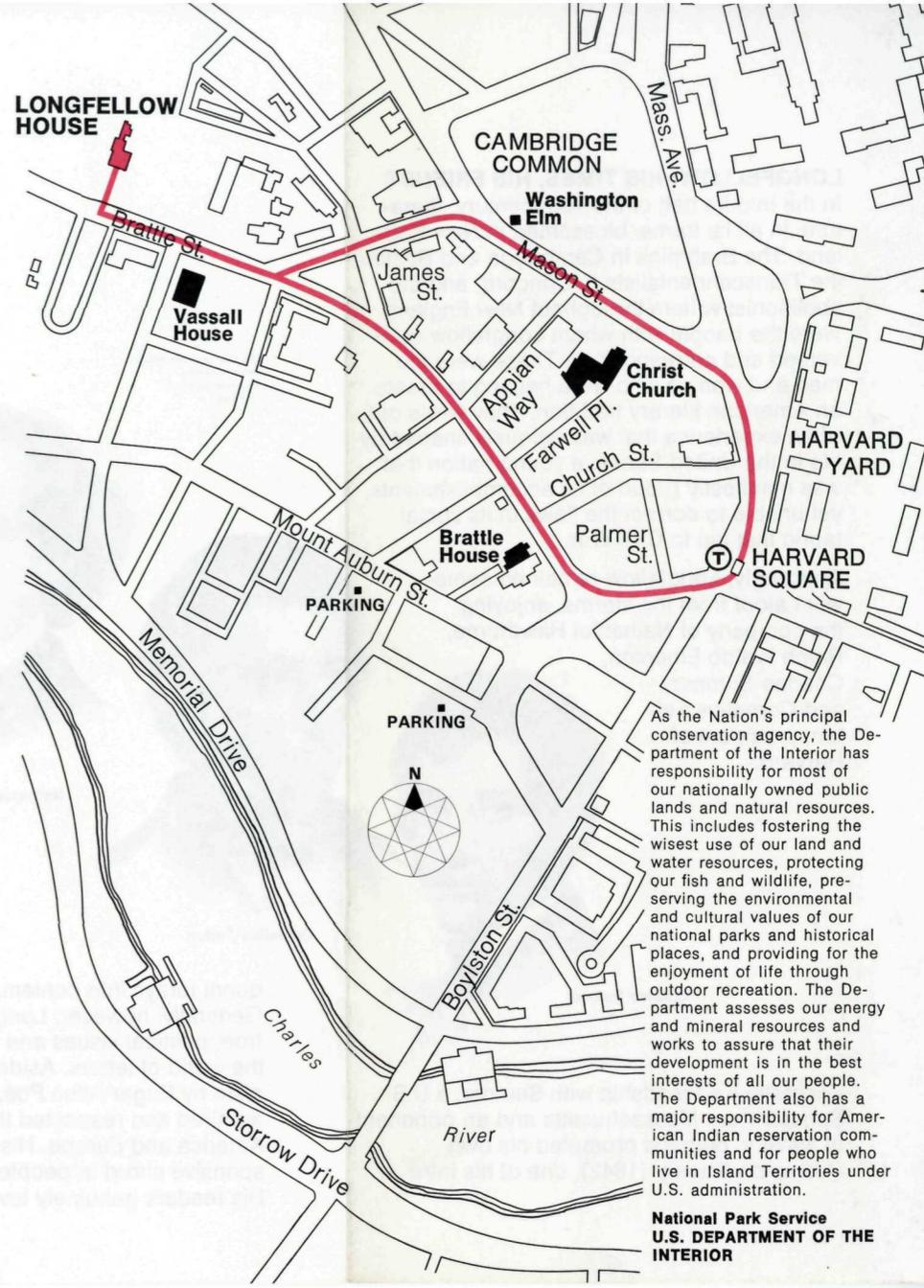


The house was built in 1759 for Maj. John Vassall, a wealthy Tory who fled Cambridge on the eve of the Revolution. Neither of the next two owners lived in the house for very long. Andrew Craigie bought the property in 1791, and shortly thereafter added the piazzas and rear ell. To pay his debts, his widow was forced to take in lodgers, one of whom was Longfellow. In 1843, Nathan Appleton bought the house as a wedding gift for his daughter, Fanny, and her husband, Henry W. Longfellow.

Getting Around. Cambridge is a historic city with buildings both old and new but with very limited parking. The easiest way to see some of Cambridge's sights including the Longfellow House is to park in Boston, under the Common, and take the red line subway to Harvard Square, the end of the line.

From the square walk down Brattle Street about 1 kilometer (0.6 mile) to Longfellow House. On your way you will pass two colonial mansions, the William Brattle House and the John Vassall, Sr., House. On your return to Harvard Square, you may wish to go via Mason Street and Cambridge Common. On the common a bronze plaque marks the site of the "Washington Elm" under whose branches George Washington took command of the Continental Army.

The house is open daily except January 1, Thanksgiving and December 25. For additional information, write the superintendent, Longfellow National Historic Site, 105 Brattle St., Cambridge, MA 02138.



As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering the wisest use of our land and water resources, protecting our fish and wildlife, preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historical places, and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The Department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to assure that their development is in the best interests of all our people. The Department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in Island Territories under U.S. administration.

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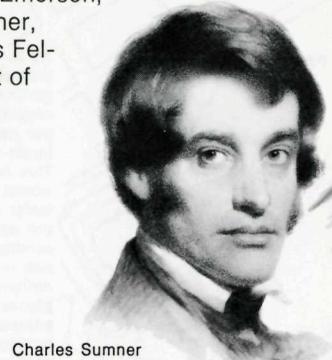
LONGFELLOW: HIS TIMES, HIS FRIENDS

In the middle half of the 19th century, literature, in all its forms, blossomed in New England. The Brahmins in Cambridge and Boston, the Transcendentalists in Concord, and the abolitionist writers throughout New England were the people with whom Longfellow conversed and corresponded. These were the men and women who were helping to create an American literary tradition. They wrote out of an experience that was uniquely shaped by life in the United States, a young nation that was manifestly proud of its accomplishments, yet unable to correct the flaws in its social fabric that led to Civil War.

Amazingly, Longfellow remained somewhat aloof from the storms, enjoying the company of Nathaniel Hawthorne, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Charles Sumner, and Cornelius Felton, president of Harvard.

Longfellow's friendship with Sumner, a U.S. Senator from Massachusetts and an opponent of slavery, perhaps prompted his own *Poems on Slavery* (1842), one of his infre-

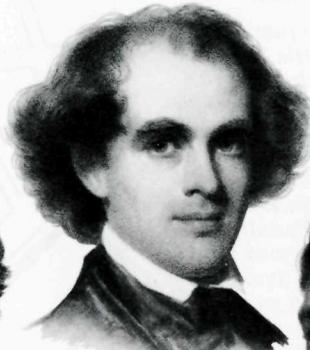
The four portraits below were drawn by Eastman Johnson in 1846.



Charles Sumner



Cornelius Felton



Nathaniel Hawthorne



Ralph Waldo Emerson

quent forays into contemporary politics. Generally, however, Longfellow stayed away from political issues and remained a part of the world of letters. Aside from scathing criticism by Edgar Allen Poe, Longfellow was admired and respected throughout North America and Europe. His poetry struck a responsive chord in people's hearts and minds. His readers genuinely loved him.

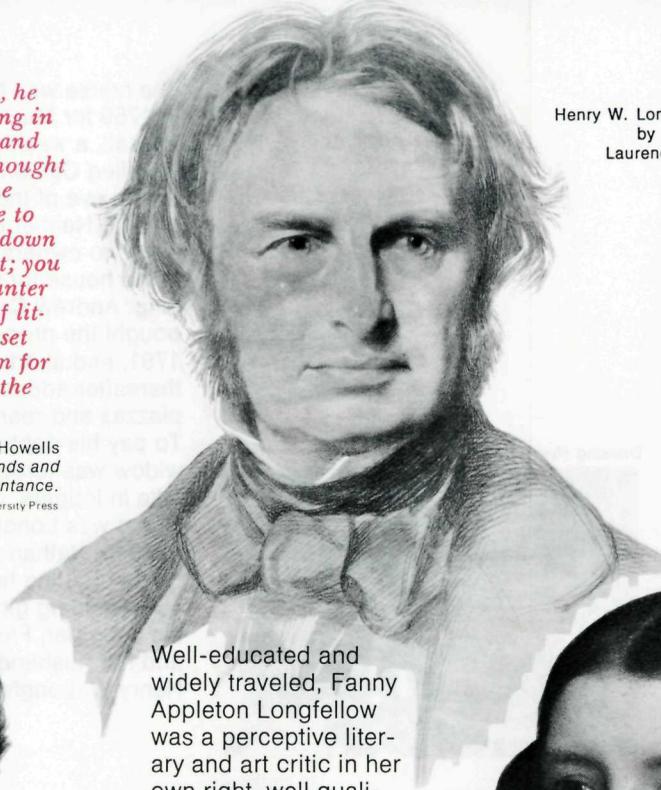
"When he walked, he had a kind of spring in his gait, as if now and again a buoyant thought lifted him from the ground. It was fine to meet him coming down a Cambridge street; you felt that the encounter made you a part of literary history, and set you apart with him for the moment from the poor and mean."

—William Dean Howells
Literary Friends and Acquaintance.
Indiana University Press

Well-educated and widely traveled, Fanny Appleton Longfellow was a perceptive literary and art critic in her own right, well qualified to share in her husband's intellectual life. The Longfellow marriage was an extremely happy one whose memory lingered long after Fanny's death in 1861. In 1879, Longfellow wrote a poem, "The Cross of Snow" that includes these lines:

"Such is the cross I wear upon my breast/these eighteen years, through all the changing scenes/and seasons, changeless since the day she died."

Henry W. Longfellow by Samuel Laurence, 1854



Charles and Ernest Longfellow by Eastman Johnson, 1848



Fanny Appleton Longfellow by Samuel Rowse, 1859



Three Daughters of Longfellow by T. B. Read, 1859

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow was born February 27, 1807, in Portland, Maine, into a distinguished family with ties to some of the earliest settlers of New England. In 1825, he was graduated from Bowdoin College in the same class with Nathaniel Hawthorne and Franklin Pierce. The trustees of Bowdoin offered him a teaching position provided he spend some time in Europe studying modern languages. After three years in Europe, Longfellow began teaching, and two years later he married Mary Storer Potter of Portland. In 1835 he accepted a post at Harvard, but before taking up his full-time duties, he returned to Europe to study German. In Rotterdam, his wife died after a miscarriage. On July 13, 1843, Longfellow and Frances Elizabeth Appleton, daughter of Nathan and Maria Gold Appleton, were married. They had six

"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."

—from "The Children's Hour." The girls in the poem are Longfellow's daughters (left).

children. In 1854, he resigned his professorship and devoted his time to writing and to enjoying the fame that increasingly came his way. He received honorary degrees from Cambridge and Oxford universities and his bust is in Westminster Abbey's Poets' Corner, the only American poet so honored.

A few of Longfellow's major works are: *Evangeline* (1847), *Hiawatha* (1855), *The Courtship of Miles Standish* (1858), and *Tales of a Wayside Inn* (1863-72).



"Under the spreading chestnut-tree The village smithy stands; The smith a mighty man is he With large and sinewy hands."

—from "The Village Blacksmith"

On Longfellow's 72nd birthday, the schoolchildren of Cambridge gave him this chair made from the wood of the "spreading chestnut-tree." The tree was cut down when the road was widened. Three years later, on March 24, 1882, Longfellow died in his home here on Brattle Street.