

Recovery of the Longfellow Landscape

The historic gardens and grounds of Longfellow House have been loved and admired for over two centuries. Unfortunately, time has not been kind to this beautiful landscape. . . .

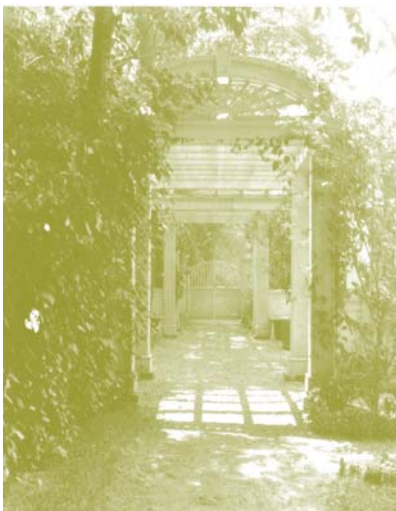


LONGFELLOW GARDEN, POST 1905
Martha Hutcheson, Morris County Park Commission

Many plantings have been devastated by age, disease, and storms. Important design features such as the welcoming forecourt of elms and formal garden are either missing, deteriorated, or greatly reduced in size and scale. Vine and profuse herbaceous vegetation are gone, and walks have been narrowed and paved in brick. It is no longer the lush, romantic landscape that comforted and inspired the Longfellows and delighted their many visitors from Cambridge and around the world.

After much research and planning, the National Park Service has launched an exciting program to actively reclaim the Longfellow landscape! We are undertaking this project in concert with the Friends of the Longfellow House and with the help of generous donations from the community. We will bring back the rich diversity of landscape plantings and features that made this such a congenial home and gathering place in Longfellow's day and an important icon of the Colonial Revival era. Once again schoolchildren, neighbors, and visitors will be able to experience and enjoy one of the finest urban public gardens in America!

What is being accomplished in our garden rehabilitation?



PERGOLA, POST 1905
Martha Hutcheson
Morris County Park Commission

BRATTLE STREET FORECOURT

- Missing historic elms will be replaced with disease-resistant varieties
- Historic vines will be re-established, including rose vines on the Longfellow House pilasters, woodbine on the balustrades, and wisteria on the east porch
- Existing brick walk will be replaced with a wider, more historic one

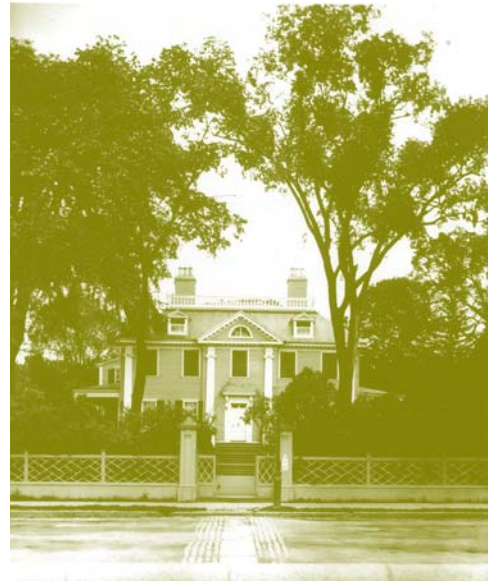
HUTCHESON/SHIPMAN FORMAL GARDEN

- Missing garden pergola designed by Martha Brookes Hutcheson will be reconstructed
- Missing garden beds and paths will be re-established in their historic configuration
- Non-historic trees and other vegetation will be removed
- Missing herbaceous plants, bulbs, shrubs, vines and fruit trees will be re-established based on historic plant lists
- Vegetative screen along the north property line will be rehabilitated
- Missing bench and garden pots will be fabricated and installed
- Lattice fence will be re-aligned in its historic location and the Hutcheson gate will be re-hung in line with pergola

Continued

ADDITIONAL WORK

- In Alice's Garden, the existing bluestone walk will be replaced with grass, perennial plantings will be added, and a missing pipe arbor and climbing roses will be re-established
- On the East Lawn, the walkway will be relocated to align with the Hutcheson gate and pergola, vegetative screening of the adjacent property will be replanted, and the oval walks at the north side of the east porch will be widened
- The irrigation system will be updated and reconfigured throughout the property, and sensitively-designed signs and lighting will be installed for site security and program use.



*VASSALL-CRAIGIE-LONGFELLOW HOUSE
SPNEA (1900)*

Significance of the Historic Landscape

THE EXISTING 1.98 ACRE GARDEN SETTING for Longfellow House is significant as the core of a much larger c.1759 era estate. Its prominent frontage on the Charles River was so appealing to George Washington that he made the house his headquarters in the early months of the Revolutionary War (1775-76). These historical associations later attracted poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow to the site and provided an inspirational setting for his life and work (1837-82).

Conscientious preservation of the house and grounds began in earnest with Longfellow's residency and continued for more than a century after his death through the stewardship of his children. Longfellow was primarily focused on preserving the visual and historical link between the house and Charles River and maintaining those features that "signified" the property and were integral to its identity, such as the forecourt of elms. He also added refinements of his own, including an old fashioned flower garden behind the house in 1847.

Daughter Alice Longfellow carefully nurtured this association with the past through her efforts to establish the property as a memorial to her father and to Washington. Under her stewardship (1882-1928), the property achieved its greatest prominence as a work of landscape architecture and became a nationally known example of the Colonial Revival style – best exemplified in the formal garden designed by leading landscape architects Martha Brookes Hutcheson and Ellen Biddle Shipman.



*PERGOLA VIEW OF GARDEN AND HOUSE
Martha Hutcheson
Morris County Park Commission*

Want to know more?

LONGFELLOW NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

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