



Longfellow House Bulletin

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

June 2009

Family Programs Expanded Through Centennial Challenge Funds

Much new research will enrich the longstanding tradition of programs for the whole family at the Longfellow National Historic Site. Thanks to a Centennial Challenge initiative from the National Park Service and the necessary matching funds provided by the Friends of the Longfellow House, LNHS staff have delved into records, documents, and artifacts to uncover and bring together details of several generations of Longfellow family life. Beginning this summer on June 21, the Family Sundays programs will reflect more closely actual activities of the Longfellow extended family.

The Longfellow museum staff have pored over hundreds of family photographs and transcribed homespun newspapers and



Family Day art projects on the front lawn, September 2008

parental diaries to learn more about the children, pets, and projects that contributed to the daily rhythms and fabric of the lives of the poet and his relatives.

Based on this historical research, each of the Family Sundays will present a variety of activities for all ages: the games of croquet, hoops, and graces; the arts of drawing, painting, nineteenth-century crafts, and stereograph viewing; and the literary pursuits of writing poetry, wordplay, journal-keeping, and reading aloud. Beginning at 1 P.M., these offerings precede the weekly performances at 4 P.M. that comprise the annual Summer Festival of events in the open air. All are free and open to the public.

NPS staff will guide children in craft-making, painting, and drawing in the garden, while providing information about how the Longfellows pursued these inter-

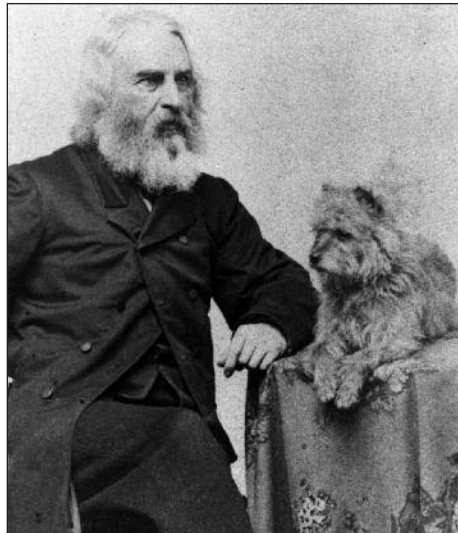
(continued on page 2)

Discovering the Furry and Feathered Members of the Longfellow Family

Longfellow aficionados recognize the names "Alice," "Edith," and "Allegra," but what about "Trap," "Jack," "Tippy," and "Tyler"? The biggest surprise in the new research to supplement the expanded family programming was the wealth of material in the House archives that describes the Longfellow-Appleton-Thorp family pets. Children and adults alike wrote copiously about their animals. Through several generations of Longfellows, pets remained a favorite topic in letters, journals, children's writings, and family photos. Numerous dogs and cats as well as birds, rabbits, horses, and even a mouse figured prominently in these unpublished, private records.

In her personal journal entitled "Chronicles of the Children of Craigie Castle," Fanny Longfellow jotted her observations about the lives of her sons and daughters from 1848 to 1858. Many of her entries mentioned pets. During this same time and continuing into the 1860s, her husband,

Henry, wrote and illustrated for his children "Little Merrythought – An Autobiography with a Portrait" in which he called Trap "the last and greatest of all the dogs ... Trap, the Scotch Terrier, Trap the polite,



Longfellow with his most beloved dog, Trap, 1864

the elegant, sometimes called Turveydrop, sometimes Louis the Fourteenth." (For more about Trap, see page 5.)

In 1865 Henry and Fanny's daughters Edith and Annie created a newspaper to circulate among friends and family. "The first cat I remember in our house was a great big gray and white one," Edith wrote. "How she came here I do not know, but I rather expect she ran away from some neighboring house. She was never admitted into the parlor but always kept in the kitchen. I think she was an enemy of the dogs and would hide herself when the dog came in."

The Longfellows' love of animals is reflected throughout the House in the many images of pets and other animals in paintings, sculpture, and prints. Mather Brown's painting of two children and their dog hangs in the parlor (see page 7), and two dog sculptures sit on the mantel in the library.

Longfellow's children, grandchildren,

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All images are from the Longfellow National Historic Site collections, unless noted otherwise.

Centennial Challenge Enriches Programs *(continued from page 1)*

ests. Some Family Sundays will feature additional special workshops and events, such as Rolande Duprey's puppet show in a nineteenth-century style toy theater.

Volunteers will join NPS staff to help run the many programs and workshops. During the Painting and Drawing Workshop, for example, Diana Tatz, a professional artist from the community, will demonstrate watercolor, pastel, and colored-pencil techniques and will work with participants. NPS staff will provide information about the Longfellows who painted. Two fourteen to eighteen year olds from Cambridge's Mayor's Youth Program will be available to help out during this and other informal activities such as poetry writing and games.

With the newly gathered historical information, the park rangers can expand not only Family Sundays in the summer, but also the year-round thematic tours and House publications available to the community. Through this effort, Boston- and Cambridge-area neighbors and visitors of all ages will have increased opportunities to learn about history, poetry, music, art, and

literature in the informal setting of the House's grounds.

The Centennial Challenge aims to engage the community in preserving the heritage and history of the Longfellow NHS for future generations, to reaffirm the site's relevance to diverse communities, and to celebrate the centennial of the National Park Service. The funds also serve to connect the site with new audiences, to provide impetus for new partnerships, and to assure the continuation of a high level of public programming, such as professional poetry readings and concerts.

The Centennial Challenge is a multi-year initiative leading up to the hundredth anniversary in 2016 of the National Park Service. To prepare for the centennial celebration, parks across the country will be planning various programs, events, and signature projects over the next seven years.

Thanks to other centennial funds, Longfellow NHS will be able to hire eight more seasonal staff that includes four park rangers and three maintenance professionals. This will allow the implementation of the expanded programs.

The Longfellow Pets *(continued from page 1)*

and great grandchildren all created "newspapers." In these handwritten, single-copy editions the youthful voices depicted their own experiences in words and illustrations. They recounted tales of siblings, cousins, friends, and adults, and they reported the creative and imaginative ways they spent their childhoods, the games they played, and books they read. Their short stories incorporated real life events. And, like most children, they talked about their pets.

The poet's granddaughter Alice Allegra Thorp penned an item for the September 1903 children's newspaper called the "Greenings Island Herald." She titled it simply "Obituary" and reported matter-of-factly: "Mr. Rabbit cherished dearly by everyone was found dead the other day by Mr. Raymond Reed. The cause of his death is unknown but is believed to be from exhaustion caused by much chasing from

Masters Laddie & Carlo." Previous articles recounted the canine adventures of the chasers, and we learn that "On account of [Carlo's] little disagreeabilities of temper they were obliged to" give him away.

In the House archives researchers uncovered over two hundred photographs of pets.

Mary King [Mamie] Longfellow, the poet's niece, took many of these photos between the 1880s and 1912. Mamie purchased her first camera in the early 1880s and took small "instants" of cats and dogs with her pocket Kodak.

Mamie and her brother Alexander W. Longfellow Jr. lived in Maine, but made extended visits to their Cambridge relatives and were very much part of the family. These intimate family photographs provide a



Tippy the dog & Tyler the cat, c. 1896-1902. Photo by Mary King Longfellow.

peek into the Longfellow households in Cambridge and Portland, Maine, and their summer homes in Manchester-by-the-Sea, Massachusetts, and Greenings Island, Maine.

Interview with a Friend...Meet Susan Moynihan, School Librarian

Susan Moynihan has come to know the Longfellow House from several vantage points. As a public-school librarian at the Kennedy-Longfellow school in Cambridge, she has brought her classes to the House on field trips. She has attended many public programs at the House, and her daughter Abby Murray worked last summer – and will work again this summer – as a park ranger.

Longfellow House: How did you first become acquainted with the House?

Susan Moynihan: Before the Kennedy and Longfellow schools merged a couple of years ago, I really had no connection to the Longfellow House. I had driven by the House, but I had never been inside. When the two schools merged and Longfellow's two hundredth birthday came up, I completely immersed myself in his story.

When the schools merged, we received boxes full of various materials from the Longfellow School. One of the teachers gave me a binder that the Longfellow House had given her with a wonderful slide presentation that had a little blurb about each slide. I showed that presentation to every single class in the school during Longfellow's two-hundredth year. It summarizes his life beginning with his childhood in Maine right through to his death. It has snippets of his poetry. I became a complete fan of Longfellow.

LH: So you got to know the House during the bicentennial? Before that, the House was not on your radar?

SM: The only thing I knew about this house was that Longfellow School used to have its graduation here on the porch. Yes, there were all kinds of events that bicentennial year. On the day of his birthday, we had a big to-do at our school where every classroom got a birthday cake, and we had lots of visitors – people from the Park Service and public dignitaries. A lot of classes actually visited the House, so I came to the House that year and got very excited. The Longfellow connection to the school was really rekindled. The kids drew pictures, wrote stories, and memorized poems. We've continued celebrating Longfellow's birthday, although on a smaller scale.

LH: And you have another family member who loves Longfellow and the House?

SM: About a year ago, my daughter, who was a college freshman, said she was interested in going into museum studies and she needed to find a summer internship. It occurred to me that there might be

opportunities for young people at the Longfellow House, so I inquired. My daughter is now a seasonal summer ranger. One of her classmates, Sonia Booth, from Somerville High School is also working here. Last summer, because Abby was here, I went to a lot of Summer Family programs, concerts, and poetry readings.

LH: Has Abby's work at the House influenced her in any way?

SM: She gained really valuable job skills, and her interest in the world of nineteenth-century Boston was piqued. Giving tours



has helped her feel comfortable talking to a group. On her days off she would go to places like the Boston Public Library for a tour of their art or to the Gardner Museum. It completely opened her eyes to some of the treasures here in Boston. She's now declared herself an American Studies major at Amherst College.

LH: Can you tell us your impressions of the family programs you saw last summer?

SM: I think if I had brought my children here when they were young, they would have been really engaged by the activities. I saw people walking by on the sidewalk, noticing the [Family Days] sign, and coming in. It's like walking into another century and experiencing hands-on learning by playing some of the games. One of the nicest things about the family programs is that there are lots of people – adults and kids – playing these games together. You can engage families by playing a game. They'll see it's a wonderful place to come, and they'll come back. It's a different way of entering the House.

LH: How do you use the House for school field trips with your classes?

SM: If a group of school kids came here

without having learned about Longfellow beforehand, it would not be a successful trip. But when you are able to learn about him ahead of time, it comes alive when you visit. I'm looking forward to bringing both third grade classes from my school in June. I know they are going to do an activity in the garden. Maybe they could play some of those nineteenth-century games? When you look at it from the point of view of teaching, those are the kind of learning experiences that kids remember. They remember rolling hoops or even running through the grass. I think something that's missing for a lot of today's kids is just playing games. Anything that's hands-on that you can actually do really works with kids.

LH: And being outdoors helps?

SM: I think people often think of the House as being the indoor space, whereas the House is the outdoor space too. And that's what I say to the kids at school when I tell them about the Longfellow House. First of all, I say that the House belongs to us as part of the National Parks. Then I explain what a wonderful treasure our National Parks are. The grounds are open to the public, and people need to know that the House includes the gardens and the grounds and the beautiful [city] park across the street that goes down to the river. I tell the kids you can stroll through the grounds, and it is a beautiful place to be, even if you don't set foot inside the House.

LH: Do the school kids come back later with their parents?

SM: That's what I hope. I know of families that have come here in the summer. I think if you come here with your class, it is much more likely that you will come back in the summer with your parents. Also the poetry competition brings kids here.

LH: How could we reach out more?

SM: I think the Park Service is doing a great job. Every third grade in the city can visit for free. But maybe you could get the word out to neighboring cities? Because you don't open for tours until the end of the school year, you could partner with local arts organizations, Cambridge recreation, day camps, and summer enrichment programs. And there are so many tourists in Harvard Square that don't even realize this place is here. Maybe use social networking – put the Longfellow House on Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, YouTube? You can have young people help you do that – and it will attract more young people too.

The Longfellow Pets Through the Years

Henry and Fanny Longfellow's household – like many of their time, particularly those with children – incorporated pets. Parents thought that pets helped to teach children the virtues of affection and caring for others. By the 1870s many Americans – including the Longfellow relatives – had an array of pets similar to those we have today.

Fanny herself had grown up with pets in her home. In 1824, at the age of seven, she wrote to her

brother Thomas Gold Appleton, "I have a little kitten, it is a very pretty thing, and it is all black; it has blue eyes, and is named after Mrs. Sedgwick's little dog Sable."

Twelve years later when the Appleton family traveled abroad by ship "Tom ... brought along a bulldog named Brag, which he seemed to think the Appleton party needed for a traveling companion. Everybody fell over Brag in their narrow quarters, while at first Brag felt called upon to pick fights with the captain's dog," according to Louise Hall Tharp in *The Appletons of Beacon Hill*. Brag spent most of his days at sea on deck with his master and stayed in hotels in Paris, where the family fretted over his disappearance and rejoiced when he returned. "Tom decided that Brag might

not be much of an asset during further travels, however. He gave the bulldog to the Baron de Poilly, a friend he made on his first visit to France and whose estate, Polambray, Tom had visited."

As a wife and mother, Fanny welcomed pets into the Longfellow home. In 1847 her brother-in-law Alexander Wadsworth Longfellow Sr. had left Dash, a dog of uncertain pedigree, as a gift to the Longfellow children.

"Dash is well,"

Henry reported

back to his brother. "He has only eaten one window-sash, since you left...." But life with Dash went from bad to worse. A few months later Henry wrote to his brother Stephen, "We sent Dash to Portland yesterday, with a letter of introduction, finding him uncontrollable here, and a terror to the children, which would doubtless very much amuse and astonish the meek quadruped, could he be made aware of the fact...."

Fanny introduced other animals into her children's lives. In her journal on September 17, 1852, she noted: "Have just returned from Nahant where we passed 9 weeks.... Brought two pretty white rabbits from N[ahant] they are very fond of & found here a nice little dog called Frances, a charming playmate for them. They greatly delight in their home, their 'chaise-horse' & the spacious garden.... Little Alice imitates the cows by mooing & is getting on her feet, very strong & merry.... I let out the rabbit for a little run in the grass. Frances pounced & chased him & the children were in an agony thinking their darling killed, but Mrs. Patten rescued him from the dog who was well scolded & beaten. My parasol alone suffered in the combat."

Many dogs, some with the same names, came and went in the Longfellow's lives. "Edward [a friend] goes

back, taking the dog, Willie, to our great relief. Work vigorously at 'Hiawatha' till dinner time. But it is hard to write Poetry in a closet, on a wash stand, with a gale at the window and flies inside," Henry commented from Newport in his journal on July 31, 1855.

Cats, too, regularly lived with and amused Henry and his family. While his daughter Annie was summering at Manchester-by-the Sea in June 1865, Henry wrote to her: "Do you know that your wild little 'Tutzen' – the youngest one – has taken possession of the Library, and jumps over the sofas and the tables – and we cannot get her out. When we try to catch her, she hides under the book cases, and Trap sits

and watches her as if it were great fun. She likes the soft carpet better than the hard floor of the cellar."

Although they grew attached to their animals, nineteenth-century pet owners had little access to veterinary care and were accustomed to the loss of these animals. In "Little Merrythought – An Autobiography with a Portrait" that Henry made for his young children, he told sev-

eral tales of their childhood dogs and their inevitable ends. "[The dog Willie's] life was harmless and tragic. He was poisoned; and came rushing wildly into the hall, fell in a fit at the dining room door, and died, and was buried in the garden under a silver-poplar. When the wind blows the leaves part just as Willie's hair used to do, when he was angry."



Alexander Wadsworth Longfellow Sr. & wife (center), three daughters (& unknown couple), & dog Onie. Portland, 1887.



Poet's granddaughter Frances Dana & her cousin Mary King Longfellow's dog Tippy, 1896. Probably on a visit to Portland.



Nathan Appleton, brother of Fanny, and his wife, c. 1885. Studio photo with their cat (name unknown).

Fanny Longfellow's journal,

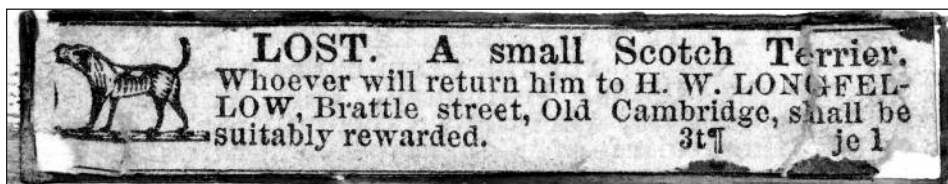
January 13, 1849:

"Little Dickey the Canary, is banging from the book in the ceiling of their nursery. He seems to enjoy [the children's] companionship as much as they bis. He cocks his bright eye at them & throws them down his bread as they sit at their little table beneath him."

February 15, 1849:

I opened the door of Dickey's cage & he soon hopped out, first upon the door then on the roof of it & finally ventured to the floor. Charley greatly delighted & wanted him to hop on his head & in despair when the door was shut, but poor, little, timid Erny very much frightened.

A Dog Named Trap



From snippets in Henry Longfellow's journals and letters, stories he wrote for his children, writings of friends and relatives, and photographs, the story of Trap emerges — as well as an intimate look at the poet and his family life.

In his 1922 memoir, *Random Memories*, Ernest Longfellow reminisced about his father's favorite dog: "When my brother went to war [in 1863], he left behind his Scotch Terrier, called Trap, who was then getting old and rheumatic. He attached himself to my father and followed him everywhere, and spent most of his time in my father's study sleeping on a closed register, where just enough heat came through to make him comfortable. My father used often to take a nap in the afternoon in his armchair in front of the fire. As the gods nod, so do the poets sometimes snore. When this happened, it seemed to disturb the dog in his slumbers, and he would get up and paw at my father's knee till he waked him up, and then would lay himself down again with a sigh of contentment to continue his own sleep undisturbed. There was something so human about this that my father never resented it."

"Trap," Henry wrote on June 21, 1865, to his twelve-year-old daughter, Edith, "is fat and happy, and sends his compliments. He does not know what to make of so many people going away. I wonder whether he knows that Charley is coming. He keeps watch at the front door as if he did; and I suspect he has overheard something about it; but he is very sly, and keeps his own secrets. I saw him in the yard this morning with three little shiny black dogs, and one white one. Perhaps he told them."

On June 11, 1865, Henry had submitted for his children's newspaper, "The Secret," some canine news: "As Trap Longfellow was going down [the] street the other day he met a little girl coming up with her father. The little girl said; 'Oh Papa! What an ugly dog!' The Papa answered, 'Why ugly, my dear? He seems to be a very good

little dog.' 'Yes', said the little girl. 'but he has a body just like a pig!' Poor Trap!"

To Ernest, age twenty, on November 17, 1865, Henry spoke of his work and his dog: "To enliven the winter, I have formed a Dante Club ... meeting here every Wednesday evening, with a good deal of talk and a little supper.... Trap sends his regards. His last misdemeanor was stealing a partridge from the supper table of the Dante Club. That was his view of the Divine Comedy!"



Trap, a small Scotch Terrier, 1864

"The Prodigal Son of a ---- called Trap has been recovered through the intervention of a dog-dealer in Boston," Henry wrote to his friend George Washington Greene on May 25, 1867. "He found him in Chelsea; and I went into Boston and brought him home. He looked degraded, demoralized and low. I put a new collar upon him, and had him fed; whereupon he ran away, and was stolen again on the same day. I have recovered him again, and he is now asleep under the great chair. He has had hair dye put all about his eyes to disguise him, and is quite abject and forlorn. He evidently thinks Cambridge a dull place. At the dog-dealer's they gave him rats to kill. That is the charm, which he cannot resist. He had been trying to sneak away this afternoon; and will be stolen again tomorrow no doubt."

The publisher James T. Fields became fond of Trap. "We sat down together," Fields wrote to Henry on August 11, 1868, "and talked of old times, he wagging his tail briskly, and extra comically, when I recalled the Dante evenings to his memory. He seemed to be looking younger, and more frissled than ever." On September 5, 1868, Henry wrote to Fields, "Your interview with poor Trap was very charming, and I thank you for paying him so much attention."

At Christmas 1869, when Henry sent a letter to his son Charley, who was traveling in India, he broke the sad news: "Trap. I am very sorry to say, is no longer among the living. He died in one of his summer fits a year ago. I miss him constantly."

Longfellow Descendent Recalls Family Pets

Frances (Frankie) Appleton Smith Wetherell, whose grandmother was Henry Longfellow's daughter Anne Allegra (Annie) Longfellow Thorp, described her family's longtime penchant for pets. Beginning with her grandmother Annie and continuing with Annie's five daughters — including Frankie's mother, Priscilla Smith — and then Frankie's siblings, the family took in a steady stream of dogs, cats, rabbits, birds, and goldfish. Some of the Longfellow pet lore was also captured in the children's "Greening's Island Herald."

Frankie vividly recalled the adventures of her aunt Alice Thorp's long-haired Dachshunds, Timmy and Charley. Charley had escaped the intentions of a great horned owl and was later rescued from nearly drowning in a strong tide. Alice enjoyed naming her animals: She had two gray finches with red beaks called Peck and Peck.

Although her sister Mary owned dogs and cats, Frankie had several canaries, a goldfish, and a Belgian hare named Harvey. In later years she had a succession of colorful finches — Nip and Tuck, Flip, and Martini and Rossi. She also had a Shetland sheepdog-English setter mix named Scootch, who loved boat rides and fishing. She was great friends with Penelope, a Newfoundland owned by Frankie's cousins Paige and Alice deBerry Brook. Scootch tried to teach Penelope to catch voles. Paige said the only vole Penelope ever caught was the one she stepped on by mistake.



The poet's granddaughter Erica Thorp & (another) dog Jack, 1893. Probably at Manchester-by-the-Sea in Massachusetts. Erica was Frankie Wetherell's aunt.

Student Poetry Awards at the House

As part of the annual poetry awards ceremony, on June 7th elementary, high school, and college students received awards for their poems and read them to an enthusiastic audience on the Longfellow House lawn. The New England Poetry Club chose the winning poems from almost three hundred entries from young people in the Boston, Cambridge, and greater New England area. The winners received small monetary awards.

For more than ten years now, the Friends of the Longfellow House, the New England Poetry Club, and Longfellow NHS have sponsored the contest. This year, for the first time, prizes for the Longfellow Poetry Award were funded through the Frank Buda Fund, administered by the Friends. Frank Buda spent his entire working life at the Longfellow House, from the 1920s to the 1980s, starting out as Harry Dana's (the poet's grandson) chauffeur and becoming a House guide.

Students from second grade through

college submitted their poems for three separate prize categories: the Longfellow Poetry Award for grades 2 through 8, the Ruth Berrien Fox Award for high school students, and the John Holmes Award for New England college students. The judges announced their decisions in late April.

The fourteen grammar school student first-prize winners attend the following Cambridge schools: Amigos, Cambridge Friends, Haggerty, King Open, Morse, St. Peter's, and Tobin Schools. Another twelve students received honorable mention.

From the more than 150 submissions by high school students, judges chose two winners – Katrina Rosenberg from Arlington High School and Michael Bartley from Milton Academy – and awarded twelve students an honorable mention. Amy Marengo from the University of Massachusetts, Boston, and Lee Keylock from Southern Connecticut State University won the awards for college students.



Young poets award ceremony, 2008

Dog Poem

My dog is less than one foot tall
And hasn't got a tail.
She never answers when I call,
But always brings the morning
mail.

– Sasha Tekeian, third-grade student
Haggerty School, Cambridge
Karen Kosko, teacher

Longfellow House in the Media

Journalists from Ireland – Joan Scales, Barrie Hanley, Ida Milne, and Andrew Lynch – came to view Irish objects and books in the House. They plan to write articles for their respective newspapers about the House and its many Irish connections. In 1882, Irish author Oscar Wilde was one of Henry Longfellow's last visitors.

Richard Shain Cohen's *The Forgotten Longfellow: Alexander W. Longfellow, Sr.: Man in the Shadows* is a biography of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's lesser known brother. Trained as a civil engineer, he became a mapper and surveyor. The author examined the Alexander Wadsworth Longfellow Sr. Family Papers in the House archives.

Published by McDonald & Woodward of Blacksburg, Virginia, William G. Clotworthy's new book *Homes of the First Ladies*, contains a photograph of Longfellow NHS and information about it as the home of Martha Washington for several months during the winter and spring of 1775-1776.



Mary King Longfellow's watercolor of her uncle Henry Longfellow's library, 1876.
Note the white bird in front of the window.

Recent Visitors & Events at the House

People from all walks of life have always come to the Longfellow House for cultural activities. Today the House continues to host numerous people and events. The following items represent only a small portion of what has taken place here recently.

Having found material in the archives for his book *1776*, Pulitzer Prize-winning historian **David McCullough** returned to the House to research for his forthcoming book on Americans in Paris. Throughout their lives, the Longfellows and their friends and relatives spent periods of time in the French capital.

Ted Stebbins, the former curator of American paintings at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and current curator of American art at Harvard's Fogg Art Museum, brought a group of thirty visitors from the Orlando Art Museum in Florida.

Twenty-four members of the Walpole Society – including **Wendell Garrett**, **Peter Kenny**, **Ned Cooke**, **Jonathan Fairbanks**, **John Wilmerding**, **Peter Spang**, **Christopher Monkhouse**, and **Edward Johnson III** visited the House. Dedicated to the study of American decorative art, architecture, and history, the society is named for Horace Walpole, an eighteenth-century English writer, political figure, and collector.

Thirty-four international students in the **Harvard Graduate School of Education's International Programs** visited the house. They came from many countries, including Thailand, Gambia, Trinidad and Tobago, Brazil, and Brunei Darussalam.

George Washington and His Dogs

In her recent book *Pets in America: A History*, Katherine C. Grier (University of North Carolina Press) writes about “the large and varied dog population of George Washington’s plantation, which was almost a town in miniature...”

“The canine inhabitants of Mount Vernon,” she continues “acted as watchdogs, hunting dogs, herders, ... companions, and vagrants and thieves. Nowadays, George Washington the dog lover is most famous for his hunting pack, and he is credited as owner of one of the originating kennels for the (now rare) American foxhound. He imported seven ‘French hounds,’ obtained through the efforts of his good friend the Marquis de Lafayette, in 1785, and over the years he kept records of the various matings and offspring of these dogs.

“Like the Dalmatians (including one named Madame Moose) that accompanied Washington’s carriage, these hunting dogs were status symbols used for the gentlemanly pursuit of fox hunting. Gunner the Newfoundland, on the other hand, accompanied Washington’s enslaved worker Tom Davis on his hunts to provide wildfowl for dining. The spaniels Pilot, Topsy, and Old Harry were probably used for the same purpose. There is evidence of other working dogs at Mount Vernon: two ‘tarrriers’ used to catch mice and rats on the estate and at least one ‘Shepard’s dog.’

“The mansion itself housed companion dogs including the ‘Little hound bitch’ Chloe and the small spaniels Pompey and Frish. Other dogs also ran on the plantation acreage. Washington’s personal dogs must have had some contact with the ragtag dogs that belonged to the plantation’s enslaved people; sometimes these curs were able to mate with the master’s purebred dogs. Slaves’ dogs may have been companions, but they were also used to help their owners augment their diet by hunting wild animals – and by stealing Washington’s own sheep and hogs. The predations of the slave cur-dog population grew so extensive that the general periodically felt compelled to kill them in numbers and to forbid new dogs from showing up in the quarters. However, it seems that campaigns to prevent slaves from keeping dogs were never successful.”

Detailed accounts of these dogs are in unpublished papers by James S. Rush and Mary V. Thompson.

Harvard Ed School Students’ Pet Projects

For their final projects in Shari Tishman and Laurel Thatcher Ulrich’s Harvard Graduate School of Education class called “Teaching with Objects,” some students have developed lesson plans using pet-related objects from the Longfellow House. One team chose Mather Brown’s painting, and another selected Jack the dog’s gravestone under the linden tree.

Jeanne Wellings, an elementary-school educator from Florida, and Cathleen Randall, a former high-school history instructor from Cambridge, focused on Mather Brown’s large oil painting entitled “The Children of Sir William (Sparhawk) Pepperrell, 1781-1785.” The artist chose to include their fluffy white dog as well. Henry Longfellow’s brother Stephen bought the painting for him from the old Portland Museum in 1844.

“Such a large portrait of children and their pet will surely fascinate elementary

school children,” said Wellings. “They will wonder about the identity of the children, inquire about their dog, and ask why their portrait hangs in the parlor of the Longfellow House. This painting provides a great entry point into the history of the Longfellow House and many other topics that are part of the elementary social studies curriculum ... and will surely inspire children to wonder, research, and develop critical thinking skills.”

A group of three other students prepared and practiced with a young audience a lesson plan based on the gravestone

in memory of Jack the dog under the magnificent linden tree on the east lawn alongside the House. Chiseled into the flat gray marker are the words “Our Little Friend Jack, 1901-1914.” The Harvard students used the gravestone as a way to discuss with elementary-school children what pets mean to a family and what people might feel following such a loss.



Mather Brown’s painting in the Longfellow House parlor

Recent Research at the House

The Longfellow House archives contain over 700,000 manuscripts, letters, and signed documents and are used extensively by researchers from around the world. Here are a few recent researchers from among the several hundred who use the archives annually.

Author of an article on Henry Longfellow’s weekend in Nuremberg, Germany, Winston Kelley— an English teacher and translator in Nuremberg – discovered Mary King Longfellow’s signature in the visitors’ book of the Albrecht Durer House in 1906 and 1910. To supplement this research, he was looking for Mary King Longfellow’s letters, journal entries, or drawings that might describe her experiences in Nuremberg.

Also researching Mary King Longfellow, Professor Ben Brown of the University of Texas at El Paso examined her journal account and drawings of her railroad trip from Boston to Mexico in 1885. In a forthcoming book he will compare her description to other accounts of a similar trip.

For an exhibition of nineteenth-century art at the Monhegan Historical and Cultural Museum, curator Emily Grey is studying Mary King Longfellow’s visits to Monhegan Island in Maine. Mary’s diary revealed that during her first trip to the island in August 1890 she “found Monhegan the most quaint, salt, sea-blown, primitive [sic] and delightful place imaginable.” The exhibition will open July 1st.

Che Hao of Beijing is writing his Ph.D. thesis on John Reed and the early Communist movement. The archives hold thirty-nine photos of Reed in the U.S.S.R. and his funeral. Hao said these photos will be the “most important and attractive part” of his work.

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 mysterious miniature wooden house with a hinged door found in the attic. Cataloguers originally thought the object, which measures 11.5 inches high, 15.5 inches wide, and 17 inches deep, was a bird house, but National Park Service staff recently had some other ideas.

One person agreed it was for birds, but only for transport and not as a permanent house. Another identified it as a carrier for a cat. NPS ranger Emily Wheeler hypothesized that “The object appears to be a house or carrier for live animals due to the air holes and latchable door ... probably the right size for a rabbit. I’m unsure of the purpose of the nails sticking through the top of the roof, but perhaps they function as a way of keeping the animal from escaping or are simply too long for that roof.”

While NPS staff Malka Benjamin concurred with the pet carrier theory, she suggested another use for the little house: “It’s possible that the structure was never intended to house a live animal, but rather was built as a home for stuffed animals similar to a dollhouse.” Perhaps written evidence will one day help solve the conundrum.



Longfellow National Historic Site, National Park Service

Longfellow National Historic Site joined the national park system in 1972. Its many layers of history, distinguished architecture, gardens and grounds, and extensive museum collections represent the birth and flowering of our nation and continue to inspire school children and scholars alike. The Vassall-Craigie-Longfellow House most notably served as headquarters for General George Washington in the early months of the Revolutionary War. It was later the home of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, one of America’s foremost poets, and his family from 1837 to 1950.

For information about the Longfellow House and a virtual tour, visit:

www.nps.gov/long



Friends of the Longfellow House

Since 1996, the Friends of the Longfellow House, a not-for-profit voluntary group, has worked with the National Park Service to support Longfellow National Historic Site by promoting scholarly access to collections, publications about site history, educational visitor programs, and advocacy for the highest quality preservation.

To find out more about the Friends of the Longfellow House, visit:

www.longfellowfriends.org

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