



Introduction

The Writer's Hour: Footprints on the Sands of Time



From www.mainememory.net, item #15478,
courtesy of the Longfellow National Historic Site

Longfellow, a professor, translator, and poet, became the first American to earn his living as a poet. His writing helped to forge the historic identity of America and celebrated the cultures of Europe. The song-like poems brought awareness of natural beauty and freshness to old and familiar traditions. The fruits of his imagination were famous during his lifetime, nearly forgotten thereafter, and are being rediscovered today. He's the only American recognized in Poet's Corner, Westminster Abbey, London.

Longfellow wrote in his famous poem, "A Psalm of Life,"

**Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime,
And, departing, leave behind us
Footprints on the sands of time;**

**Footprints, that perhaps another,
Sailing o'er life's solemn main,
A forlorn and shipwrecked brother,
Seeing, shall take heart again.**

**Let us, then be up and doing,
With a heart for any fate;
Still achieving, still pursuing,
Learn to labor and to wait.**

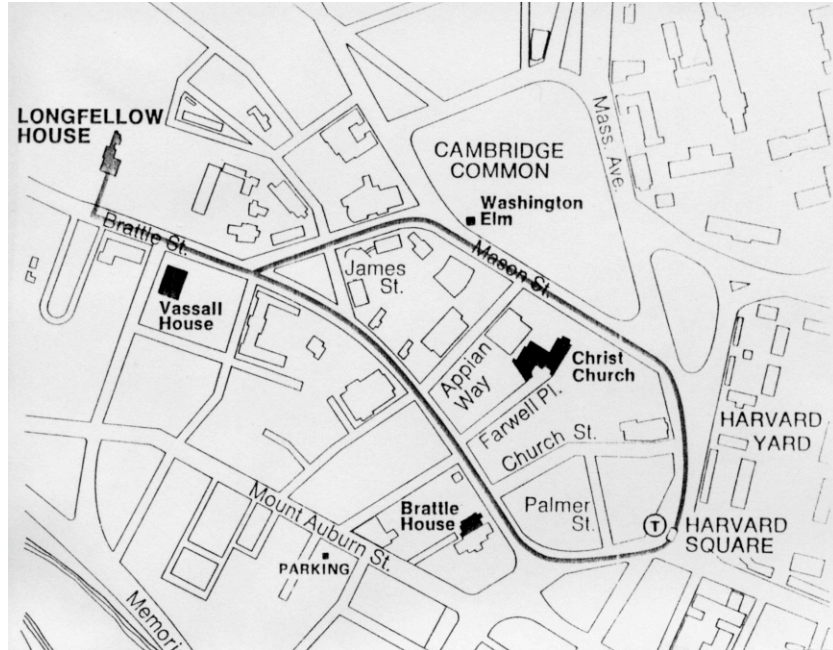
Did Longfellow's work leave "footprints on the sands of time"?
What does it mean to be a poet? A curator? Come on an imaginary journey back in time –
February 27, 1879. Alice, Longfellow's oldest daughter, searches Castle Craigie in

Cambridge for her beloved father before their birthday dinner guest arrives. After the virtual house tour, examine treasures from an old carriage house trunk. Have fun creating acrostic, haiku, cinquain, and other poems in Longfellow's style. The read-aloud poems are:

“The Children’s Hour”
“A Psalm of Life”
“To A Child”
“The Village Blacksmith”
“From My Arm-Chair”
“Travels by the Fireside”

Castle Craigie, Home of the Longfellows

105 Brattle Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts



Courtesy of the National Park Service, Longfellow Historic Site

Searching for the great writer starts at Harvard Square. Follow the dark line north on the map. Continue along Mason Street to the Washington Elm marker.

- Folklore says that the General took command of the troops here.
- Can you locate three buildings, darkly shaded, known to Longfellow?
- Continue west along Brattle Street and find the big Georgian house which had many owners and occupants through time including - John Vassall Jr. built the house as a summer farm in 1759. George Washington used the house as his Headquarters in 1775-76. Elizabeth Craige agreed to rent rooms to Professor Longfellow in 1837. Longfellow lived here for the rest of his life. The house was a wedding present from his father-in-law in 1843.
- How many years did Longfellow live here? His life and experiences were never confined to the inside of his home, but here he treasured his family life with Fanny and their children Charlie, Erny, Alice, Edith, Annie and Trap, the terrier. What activities do you think they enjoyed together?

On Site at the Longfellow's House, Cambridge, Massachusetts

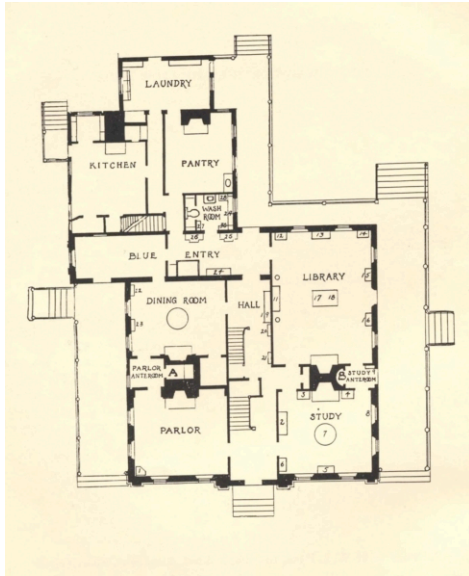
February 27, 1879



Courtesy of the National Park Service, Longfellow Historic Site

The village of Cambridge lies on the meandering Charles River across from Boston. Come stroll through Harvard Square and half a mile down Brattle Street to the beautiful Longfellow House. Surrounded by formal gardens, stately trees, and lilac hedges, the sunny, yellow mansion brightens even a gray February day. The cold outside is all but forgotten in the joyful activities of a happy family. Inside, children's laughter, purring kittens, and whistling teakettles cheer the historic house. It was built in 1759 for Maj. John Vassall, a wealthy English loyalist who fled Cambridge on the eve of the Revolution. Decades later in 1843, Nathan Appleton bought the Georgian style mansion as a wedding gift for his daughter, Fanny, and her husband, Henry Longfellow. They called it Castle Craigie after one of the former owners. Here the poet wrote his most popular works and entertained people from around the world for forty-five years. Let's

slip through the front gate and join Alice Longfellow. The family is preparing to host a fabulous birthday dinner for the poet.



Courtesy of the National Park Service, Longfellow Historic Site

First Floor Plan



From www.mainememory.net, item #15485
courtesy of the National Park Service,
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Alice Longfellow, age 9, 1859

Alice: A warm welcome to Castle Craigie! I wish that Papa could be here to greet you, but we're in a whirl over the arrival of an extraordinary gift for his 72nd birthday. And what is better than a tremendous surprise on your birthday! Once before Papa said, "**My birthday was a very pleasant one, I am surrounded with flowers as if I were going to be married, or buried.**" Why such a fuss over a Cambridge poet? My father is a friendly poet loved the world over. Let me take you on a tour of our home. Look for his birthday gift along the way!



The LAUNDRY room is the hub for our family pets. Our gray and white cat likes to sleep in a wash tub. My sister, Edith, wrote about our cat in a magazine we produce called,

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The Secret, “She would generally make a mattress for herself with the clothes...just after they had been ironed. This of course was not allowed and many a fight she had with the cook about it.” Well, our shy feline may be hiding on this busy day.



From www.mainememory.net, item #15472, courtesy of the National Park Service, Longfellow Historic Site

I smell the pies from the KITCHEN reminding us it's getting close to dinnertime. Baked goods from our new 1870's oven look appealing served on the blue Willowware dishes. My menu suggestions include lobster, salmon, ice cream and bananas.

Avoid getting in the way of our cook as she tends the fire and bakes. She is an old and faithful soul to stay with such a difficult and time-consuming job. Good cooks are hard to keep and she earns an excellent salary as our highest paid female servant. The rest of our domestic staff gathers in the kitchen so they can hear the bell system connected to the family's rooms.



Courtesy of the National Park Service, Longfellow Historic Site

Our festive birthday begins today in the DINING ROOM. The table is often set with the family silver, linens, and china. I remember one Thanksgiving when Papa's good friend, Charles Dickens, was our special guest and they hadn't seen each other

for twenty-five years. Imagine the most widely-read American poet together with the most widely-read English novelist! It's been a trans-Atlantic friendship ever since the writers had breakfast together here as young men in 1842. Do you read Mr. Dickens' stories or know some of his characters such as, Ebenezer Scrooge or Miss Havisham?

The colorful side table in the dining room is a Buddhist altar table bought by my oldest brother, Charley. He's a worldwide adventurer and collector of art and objects from India to China. We unpacked over twenty crates filled with artifacts from his travels

– a bronze crane incense burner...temple jars...a diplomatic sword! Well, what can Papa say? He collects “**splendid old things**” too.



From www.mainememory.net, item #15479, courtesy of the National Park Service, Longfellow Historic Site

The dining room serves as a small portrait gallery. Our mother, Fanny Appleton, painted here by G. P. A. Healey, was an educated, beautiful lady from Boston. She was a devoted parent and our teacher. As Papa’s intellectual partner, she helped him with his work. She was a source of ideas, read aloud to Papa, and recopied his papers. Sadly, in 1861 she passed away. Hannah Davie, our governess, took over many

tasks, such as reading aloud to us. Papa misses Fanny, our mother, and wrote, “**She never came into a room where I was without my heart beating quicker, nor went out without my feeling that something of the light went with her.**” He’s both father and mother to us now.



From www.mainememory.net, item #15475, courtesy of the National Park Service, Longfellow Historic Site

Can you guess who’s who in this painting by T. B. Read? Papa describes the Longfellow girls as “**Grave Alice, and laughing Allegra, and Edith with golden hair.**” Does that sound familiar? It’s from one of his most famous poems, “The Children’s Hour.” Papa affectionately wrote about the nightly antics of his daughters:

**Between the dark and the daylight,
When the night is beginning to lower,
Comes a pause in the day’s occupations,
That is known as the Children’s Hour.**



From www.mainememory.net, item #15899, courtesy of the National Park Service, Longfellow Historic Site

The famous artist, Albert Bierstadt, painted this little scene of *Hiawatha's Departure* for Papa's honorary dinner in London.

Have you heard *The Song of Hiawatha*? It was inspired by the beautiful oral traditions of the American Indians. Papa knew Indians in Maine, read the work of the folklore author Mr. Schoolcraft, and wove his own legends. *Hiawatha* sold over 50,000 copies in five years. Do you hear the rhythm and repetition in these lines?

**By the shores of Gitche Gumee,
By the shining Big-Sea Water
Stood the wigwam of Nokomis
Daughter of the Moon, Nokomis...**

Just off the dining room is our special PARLOR. It's a daytime retreat for the family. The



From www.mainememory.net, item #15901, courtesy of the National Park Service, Longfellow Historic Site

sunshine and floral patterns on the carpet make it a cheerful room. Here we play games, look at pictures through a stereoscope, write letters, and talk by the fire. Mother's journal reads, "*I wonder if these old walls ever looked upon happier faces or through them down into happier hearts.*"

Charley's Oriental vases compliment the other art from around the world. Papa spent many years in Europe and bought more than books. Come back in December to see the Parlor decorated for Christmas. Evergreens embellish the fireplace wall and our family tree will have homemade ornaments.



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item #15920, courtesy of the
National Park Service,
Longfellow Historic Site

Eastman Johnson painted this portrait of the first two Longfellow children, Charley and Erny. Papa calls his son, Erny, the “castle builder.” He wrote a poem about him after watching him build with his blocks. Mother kept records of her “chicks” in a journal titled, *Chronicles of the Children of Castle Craigie*. In 1848 she described

Erny, *“a little past two years...he is now an angelic little child, with soft light hair, and large beautiful, brown eyes, of most tender and dreamy expression...*

He promises to be the poet, Charley the man of action.”



www.mainememory.net, item #15904 &
15905, courtesy of the National Park
Service, Longfellow Historic Site

Erny is a budding artist. His portraits of the family and sketches of Cambridge are only the beginning of an artistic career. One summer in Newport, when Erny was ten, he watched an artist at work. He borrowed some paints and brushes and created his first picture in oils of a sailboat in a

rough sea.

Before Charley or Erny were born, or even before Papa was married, he wrote a poem that spoke to people’s hearts and made him famous – “A Psalm of Life, What the Heart of the Young Man Said to the Psalmist.”

**Tell me not, in mournful numbers,
Life is but an empty dream!
For the soul is dead that slumbers,
And things are not what they seem.**



Please step into our FRONT HALL. Neighborhood scholars, world travelers, friends, and family receive a warm welcome here. Tucked away here next to the stairs is the sculpture of the “Father of Our

Country." This bust of George Washington stands about the same height as the General. It was elevated so people could see how Washington stood over six feet tall. It has a very special meaning to us since the General lived here at the start of the American Revolution! The Commander-in-Chief of the newly formed Continental Army used this house as headquarters when he planned the siege of Boston. Imagine the meetings with his generals and Indian allies. Papa described Washington in this excerpt from "To A Child."

**Once, ah, once within these walls,
One whom memory oft recalls,
The Father of his Country, dwelt.
And yonder meadows broad and damp
The fires of the besieging camp
Encircled with a burning belt.**

Look up the "**broad hall stairs**" to the old Dutch clock made around 1750. Its rhythmic ticking gives company to the big house. Papa wrote ..."**the silver chimes will lull you to sleep at night.**" The words of his poem, "The Old Clock on the Stairs," lull *me* to sleep, "**Forever-never, Never-forever.**"



Courtesy of the National Park Service, Longfellow Historic Site

Next to the front hall is the STUDY, Papa's office. Here's one of my favorite pictures of Papa, painted by Erny. Many days we love to surprise Papa while he's deep in thought writing. He may be standing at his desk by the window or writing on his rosewood lap desk by the fire. Either way, if we enter through "**three doors left unguarded**" and rob him of his time, he may call us "**banditti.**"

The study is not only a work place; it's a gathering place. Here Papa welcomes his close friends including abolitionist Charles Sumner, and writers Nathaniel Hawthorne and Ralph Waldo Emerson. Papa enjoys talking politics and poetry. On the walls of the

room is a series of portraits of his charming, witty, intelligent friends. Papa described Cornelius Conway Felton, his first friend in Cambridge, as **“perfectly happy – just like a child with both hands full of flowers.”**



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item #15893, courtesy of the
National Park Service,
Longfellow Historic Site

Here’s a photograph of Papa with our little terrier, Trap. He would follow Papa around everywhere and often run away from him! Trap loved to join the men’s discussion group, known as the Dante Club, in the study. Imagine Trap falling asleep when Papa read in a deep murmur.

Papa sits like a king within his castle walls. Do you recognize this poem, “The Village Blacksmith”?

**Under the spreading chestnut tree
The village smithy stands;
The smithy, a mighty man is he,
With large and sinewy hands;
And the muscles of his brawny arms
Are strong as iron bands.**



www.mainememory.net, item
#15919, courtesy of the National Park
Service, Longfellow Historic Site

Dexter Pratt worked just down Brattle Street as a neighborhood smithy. Unfortunately, many trees lining Brattle Street, including the spreading chestnut, were cut down to make the street wider. Children heard that Mr. Longfellow was upset and so they saved their dimes to have a chair made from the **“spreading chestnut tree.”** Now can you guess the birthday present for Papa? Yes, the magnificent **“ebony throne.”** Today he’s inviting each child who visits to sit in the chestnut chair. Papa often gives children an autographed copy of the poem, “From My Arm Chair.” A verse reads:

**...Only your love and your remembrance could
Give life to this dead wood,
And make these branches, leafless now so long,
Blossom again in song.**



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item #15476, courtesy of
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The chair is carved with designs of horse-chestnut leaves and blossoms and the seat rail is engraved with lines from the poem. In the future I see everyone visiting Dexter Pratt's historic home, as a new kind of shop - a bakery. The cookies are delicious! Nearby chestnut trees are growing again.

Why does Papa work so hard at his career? Because poetry is his passion and he wants to touch the hearts of everyone. He says that poetry can “**charm, strengthen, and teach.**” For this, he resigned teaching at Harvard University to write full time. But it can hardly be a chore if he calls the study his “**palace of song.**” He works to make poems like songs. What is your favorite song today?

Many people ask where Papa finds ideas for his poems. He is inspired by everyday life. As you know, his own and the neighborhood children provided the ideas for “The Children’s Hour,” “The Castle Builder,” “Children,” and many other poems. He welcomes the company of little ones in our home. He keeps an “**emergency supply**” of chocolate in his desk for visiting children. Papa encourages the girls to bring their dolls along to play – not their best ones – but those they can really play with.



And Papa loves American history. His grandfather, Peleg Wadsworth, was a general in Washington’s army. The amazing adventure of Peleg’s capture by the British and his narrow escape from prison during the

Revolution was told again and again to his relatives. For generations the dramatic story has fired the family's imagination with patriotism and courage.

Ideas also come from the daily news. "The Wreck of the Hesperus" was sparked by a disastrous shipwreck near Boston. Slavery, a divisive national issue leading to the Civil War, inspired seven poems. Papa was a strong anti-slavery advocate along with his close friend, Charles Sumner.



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item #15955, courtesy of
the National Park
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Papa writes from the heart. Here's a photo of him capturing an idea with his scratchy, quill pen. But sometimes the ideas just don't come. "Writer's Block" needs a big dose of inspiration like rain after a drought.

This happened in 1861. No poems came to mind. Then one day he visited The Wayside Inn in Sudbury, Massachusetts. At this charming, historic inn, the setting inspired Papa to write *The Tales of the Wayside Inn*. In the style of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, imaginary travelers share fascinating stories for entertainment. One of the most celebrated is "The Landlord's Tale, Paul Revere's Ride."

**Listen, my children, and you shall hear
Of the midnight ride of Paul Revere,
On the eighteenth of April, in Seventy-five;
Hardly a man is now alive
Who remembers that famous day and year...**



www.mainememory.net,
item #15887, courtesy of the
National Park Service,
Longfellow Historic Site

Continue along to your next stop, the most beautiful room in the house, the LIBRARY. As Papa says, it's "**dark and rich in tone, with a look of spacious elegance and home-like comfort.**" Here stories take us to far off places. The 10,000 books in our home provide plenty of reading – in English, French, Italian, German, and

Spanish! Papa mastered twelve languages. Can you speak a foreign language?



www.mainememory.net,
item #15918, courtesy of the
National Park Service,
Longfellow Historic Site

There's adventure and activity beyond reading in the library. After dinner we gather with friends and family to dance, sing, make up plays, and listen to music. Mother wrote, *“Charley says his lessons to me now daily in the Library at a little table where his books are kept...after dinner Erny joins too and says his letters very well and counts on the Chinese counting board. They both delight in geography as I teach it, making their fingers ships to sail to China for tea, to California for gold.”*

(Fanny, 29 October 1849)

After many trips to Europe, Papa journeys the world in another way. He wrote, **“The heart has his own memories like the mind.”** Imagine it's his birthday night and we're sitting by the fire as Papa reads “Travels by the Fireside” to his guests before retiring to bed.

**...Let others traverse sea and land,
And toil through various climes,
I turn the world round with my hand
Reading these poets' rhymes...**



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item #15912, courtesy of the
National Park Service,
Longfellow Historic Site

Perhaps Papa is prepared for all the guests by now and is enjoying a moment with one of the neighborhood children. It never took much to get him to play a game, read a story, or boat on the Charles River. The world seems to know him as a great writer, it's true.

The Boston Herald hailed him as *“the sweet poet, the gentle scholar, the genial gentleman and admirable citizen, whose pure thoughts, embodied in verse, have carried joy and peace to the hearts of millions...”* I know his

heart is happy and grateful, especially for his chestnut chair. Now I must check on the birthday arrangements.

THANK YOU so much for visiting Castle Craigie, a treasure for all generations. I hope you've discovered something about a friendly poet and the historic home which is the center, but not the circumference of his world. If you'd like to know more about Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, please download "The Writer's Hour: Footprints on the Sands of Time" lesson plan from the lesson plan page at www.mainememory.net.