A View of the Charles

How an American poet's love for his Cambridge estate conserved a piece of the city's most desirable land

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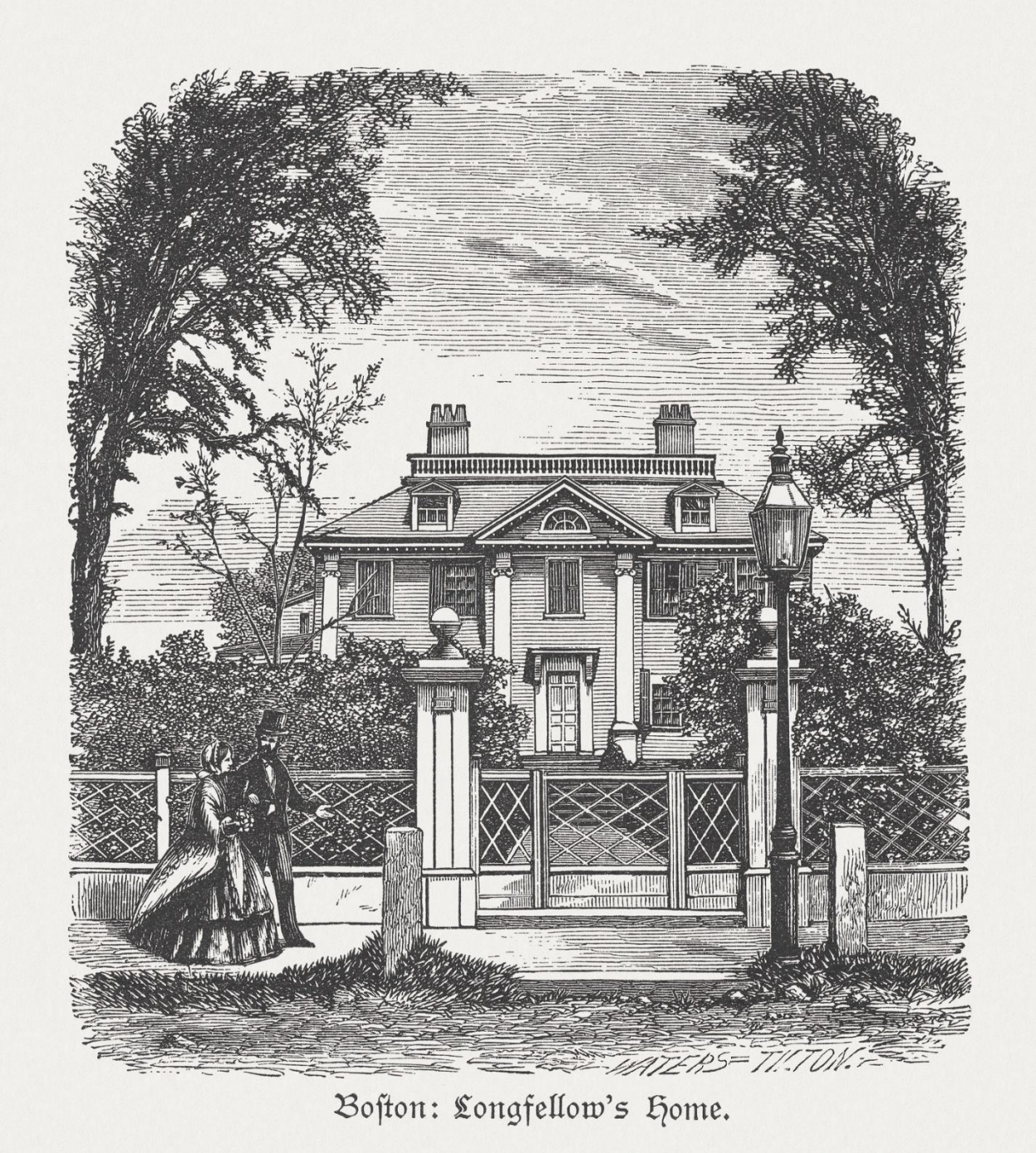

Longfellow House Cambridge, MA, wood engraving published in 1880. Getty: ZU_09.

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Cover illustration: A twenty-first century view of the Charles River in Watertown, upstream of Longfellow Park and the Longfellow House - Washington's Headquarters National Historic Park in Cambridge, MA. The photo reflects the broad reach of the Charles River and rich vegetation along it that Longfellow could view from his home. Photo: Wikimedia Commons, photo by Dadero.

About the Authors

Lily Robinson is a Program Coordinator at the International Land Conservation Network (ILCN), a program of the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, based in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Curiosity and appreciation for land and nature have inspired much of their work as a writer and researcher. They are committed to crafting fair, accessible, and eloquent stories to help people understand and connect with the world around them.

Lily graduated from the University of Massachusetts Amherst in 2022 with a master's in public policy and a bachelor's in journalism. Before joining the ILCN, they worked as a freelance reporter for the Harvard Press and *CommonWealth Magazine*, where they reported on a wide range of topics and took special interest in covering social justice and environmental issues across Massachusetts.

James N. ("Jim") Levitt is the Director of the International Land Conservation Network at the Lincoln Institute. The ILCN, which Levitt cofounded in 2014, now has partnerships with leading civic sector (NGO) and private land conservation organizations on six continents, including organizations based in nations as far-flung as Australia, Canada, Chile, China and Kenya. The mission of the ILCN is to connect organizations around the world that are accelerating voluntary private and civic sector action to protect and steward land and water resources.

Levitt focuses on landmark innovations in the field of land and biodiversity conservation—both present-day and historic—that are characterized by five traits: novelty and creativity in conception; strategic significance; measurable effectiveness; cross-jurisdictional transferability; and the ability to endure. He has written and edited dozens of articles and four books on land and biodiversity conservation, and has lectured widely on the topic in venues ranging from Santiago to Stockholm. He is a graduate of Yale College and the Yale School of Management (Yale SOM), as well as a member of the first cohort of Donaldson Fellows honored by Yale SOM for career achievements that "exemplify the mission of the School." Levitt is also a member of the Board of Trustees of Mount Auburn Cemetery.

Acknowledgements

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Introduction

In 1807, a boy was born by the shores of Portland, Maine, then a rugged port town roamed by Spanish sailors. With a maternal grandfather who was a hero of the American Revolution and Portland's first representative in the United States Congress, and a father who also served in the United States Congress and was a co-founder of the Maine Historical Society, he was taught to revere his nation's history. At the same time, the richness of nature in his hometown stirred a romance between the boy and the natural world in which he would indulge for the rest of his life. His love of history and of natural beauty led him to own, care for, and venerate a house and plot of riverside property that had once served as President George Washington's headquarters in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Better known for his contributions to American literature, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow was a lifelong steward of the earth, and his legacy is a chapter in the nation's conservation coming-of-age story.[1]

The building known as the Craigie House in the early 1800s is, in the 21st century, a museum and park owned and managed by the US National Park Service. The Longfellow House-Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site includes buildings and grounds that have been meticulously preserved to closely resemble the estate's Longfellow-era character. Photo: NPS/ © Photography Rhode Island, James P. Jones.

[1] "Longfellow's Environmental Niche." National Park Service. Nineteenth Century Trends in American Conservation (U.S. National Park Service) (nps.gov).

Today, Cambridge is one of the most remarkable cities in the United States, bursting with innovation, culture, ample green space, and world-class universities. The city's rich mix of amenities, which its residents relish today, is the gift of forward thinkers, including Longfellow and his family. They perceived the value of open space and local connections to nature, and they foresaw how the city's rapid growth could fundamentally change the landscape adjacent to the Charles River. As an early conservationist, Henry Longfellow's love for a bucolic riverfront estate kept a few acres of the city intact and open to the public long after he penned his last words.

Finding and Falling for Craigie House and the River Charles

In 1837 Longfellow was rebuilding himself.[2] Two years earlier, he had been traveling across Europe and studying modern language to prepare for a professorship at Harvard University when his 22-year-old wife, Mary Storer Potter Longfellow, died following a miscarriage. In his grief, Longfellow ended his studies in Europe and traveled to Cambridge to take up his professorship. His wife's body was buried in a plot he purchased on Indian Ridge Path at Mount Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge, a historic landscape, which had been carefully surveyed by Longfellow's first cousin, Alexander Wadsworth.

Longfellow took solace in the tranquil cemetery grounds that had been dedicated only about half a decade earlier. In an 1837 letter to a childhood friend, he wrote, "Yesterday I was at Mount Auburn, and saw my own grave dug; that I, my own tomb. I assure you, I looked quietly down into it, without one feeling of dread. It is a beautiful spot."[3]

The 30-year-old Longfellow was also taken by a nearby estate, then owned by Elizabeth Craigie, which he called "Craigie House." On his first visit he fell in love with the grandeur of the home, the tranquility of its surroundings, and its association with George Washington. He wrote of that first visit to the house: "The window blinds were closed but through them came a pleasant breeze and I could see the waters of the Charles River gleaming in the meadows."[4] Three months later in 1837, he took up residence as a renter in two rooms of the Craigie House, where he boasted to friends and relatives that he lived, "like an Italian Prince in his Villa."[5]

Notwithstanding the pleasure he found in his new Cambridge accommodations, Harvard friendships, and several vacations to the White Mountains and the coastal town of Nahant, Massachusetts, Longfellow's melancholy from the loss of his first wife persisted. He expressed his sadness, and his hopes for better days, in the poem "The Rainy Day," written in a study in his childhood home in Portland, Maine. The poem, which includes the famous line "in each life some rain must fall," was included in the book *Ballads and Other Poems*, published in late 1841.[6]

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[2] Basbanes, Nicholas A. "A Beautiful Ending: On dying and heaven in the time of Longfellow." Humanities. Summer 2020. A Beautiful Ending | The National Endowment for the Humanities (neh.gov)

[3] Mount Auburn Cemetery [Meg Winslow]. "Henry Wadsworth Longfellow: Commemorations." https://www.mountauburn.org/notable-residents/henry-wadsworth-longfellow-1807-1882/ .

[4] Evans, Catherine. *Cultural Landscape Report for Longfellow National Historic Site*. Boston: National Park Service North Atlantic Region Division of Cultural Resources Management Cultural Landscape Program, 1993, page 27.

[5] Evans, page 27

[6] Henry W. Longfellow, with contents selected and notes written by J. D. McClatchy. *Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Poem and Other Writings.* The Library of America, 2000, pages 18-20, 808.

The Rainy Day

The day is cold, and dark, and dreary
It rains, and the wind is never weary;
The vine still clings to the mouldering wall,
But at every gust the dead leaves fall,
And the day is dark and dreary.

My life is cold, and dark, and dreary;
It rains, and the wind is never weary;
My thoughts still cling to the mouldering Past,
But the hopes of youth fall thick in the blast,
And the days are dark and dreary.

Be still, sad heart! and cease repining;
Behind the clouds is the sun still shining;
Thy fate is the common fate of all,
Into each life some rain must fall,
Some days must be dark and dreary.

In the same book, Longfellow offers insight into how the natural environment could bring him profound comfort. The poem gives perspective into the long-lasting attachment to the Charles River that shaped much of his life, work, and philanthropy.

In the poem, "To the River Charles," Longfellow references a place "Where yon shadowy woodlands hide thee/And thy waters disappear/Friends I love have dwelt beside thee /And have made thy margin dear."[7] It is likely that these lines refer to his wife's grave at Mount Auburn Cemetery, which is out of sight of the Craigie House, but lies less than a mile upriver to the west. The solace he found in his view of the river paralleled that which he found sitting at her graveside.

Thus began Longfellow's lifelong love for the geography of Cambridge and its surroundings. Over the decades he spent living in the city, he was motivated to conserve land for a variety of patriotic, historic, aesthetic, emotional, and health reasons. He adored the Craigie House for its ties to Washington, who used it as his headquarters during the Siege of Boston; its extensive gardens where

To the River Charles

River! that in silence windest
Through the meadows, bright and free,
Till at length thy rest thou findest
In the bosom of the sea!

Four long years of mingled feeling,
Half in rest, and half in strife,
I have seen thy waters stealing
Onward, like the stream of life.

Thou hast taught me, Silent River!
Many a lesson, deep and long;
Thou hast been a generous giver;
I can give thee but a song.

Oft in sadness and in illness,
I have watched thy current glide,
Till the beauty of its stillness
Overflowed me, like a tide.

And in better hours and brighter,
When I saw thy waters gleam,
I have felt my heart beat lighter,
And leap onward with thy stream.

Not for this alone I love thee,
Nor because thy waves of blue
From celestial seas above thee
Take their own celestial hue.

Where yon shadowy woodlands hide thee,
And thy waters disappear,
Friends I love have dwelt beside thee,
And have made thy margin dear.

More than this;–thy name reminds me
Of three friends, all true and tried;
And that name, like magic, binds me
Closer, closer to thy side.

Friends my soul with joy remembers!
How like quivering flames they start,
When I fan the living embers
On the hearth-stone of my heart!

'T is for this, thou Silent River!
That my spirit leans to thee;
Thou hast been a generous giver,
Take this idle song from me. [6]

[7] Henry Longfellow, "To the River Charles," Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Maine Historical Society, accessed February 6, 2025, Longfellow: To the River Charles, Ballads and Other Poems - HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW.

he took contemplative walks; its stately elms that cast shade over the poet on warm days; the sweetness of its fruit trees; and—especially—its views of the river, which brought him tranquility, comfort, and joy.

Similar values motivated Longfellow's contemporaries to protect other historical sites in the Greater Boston area, including the Boston Common, Bunker Hill Monument, Mount Auburn Cemetery, and several extensive private estates, such as the nearby Gore Place in Waltham.[8]

Over his lifetime, Longfellow and his family were careful to steward the house and property to preserve its original character. This work led, eventually, to the creation and conservation of Longfellow Park and the Longfellow House-Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site, as well as parts of Riverbend Park and Harvard University's Soldier Field athletic complex.

From Boarder to Owner

The event that most clearly lifted Longfellow's spirits following his first wife's death was the acceptance of his longstanding proposal of marriage by the woman who became his second wife: the young Boston socialite Frances (Fanny) Appleton. It was Fanny, and her father's fortune, that formally united Longfellow with the property.

After their wedding on July 13, 1843, Fanny joined Longfellow in his room in the eastern half of the Craigie house, which by then he was subleasing from Joseph Worcester, who had leased the entire house from Mrs. Craigie's heirs. Fanny immediately began to write home about the beauty of the house and grounds and the newlyweds' love for the place. She more than hinted to her wealthy father, Nathan Appleton, that she might like to own the estate, as well as the surrounding acreage. She wrote to him that "If you decide to purchase this [Craigie House] would it not be important to secure the land in front, for the view would be ruined by a block of houses?"[9]

Appleton could not resist his child's wish. He purchased the house and the surrounding acreage for $10,000.[10] The house and five acres were presented to the couple as a wedding gift. In the following decade, Longfellow purchased the balance of the surrounding land (approximately four acres on the south side of Brattle Street) from his father-in-law for $4,000.

Expanding the Estate

Over the years, the property's history and its aesthetic and recreational value drove Longfellow, Fanny, and, later, their five children, to preserve it.

Over a span of about two decades, from the late 1840s to 1870, Longfellow continued to expand the property, purchasing adjacent land to preserve views and establish an inheritance for his children. He tacked on an additional 2.26 acres to the four-acre meadow south of Brattle Street and bought a 1.7-

[8] https://goreplace.org/about/history .
[9] Fanny Appleton to Nathan Appleton. Boston, Massachusetts. Delivery date 1843. FEAL Correspondence, National Park Service, Longfellow House – Washington's Headquarters National Historic site, Cambridge, MA.
[10] Charles C. Calhoun, *Longfellow: A rediscovered life* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004), 167.

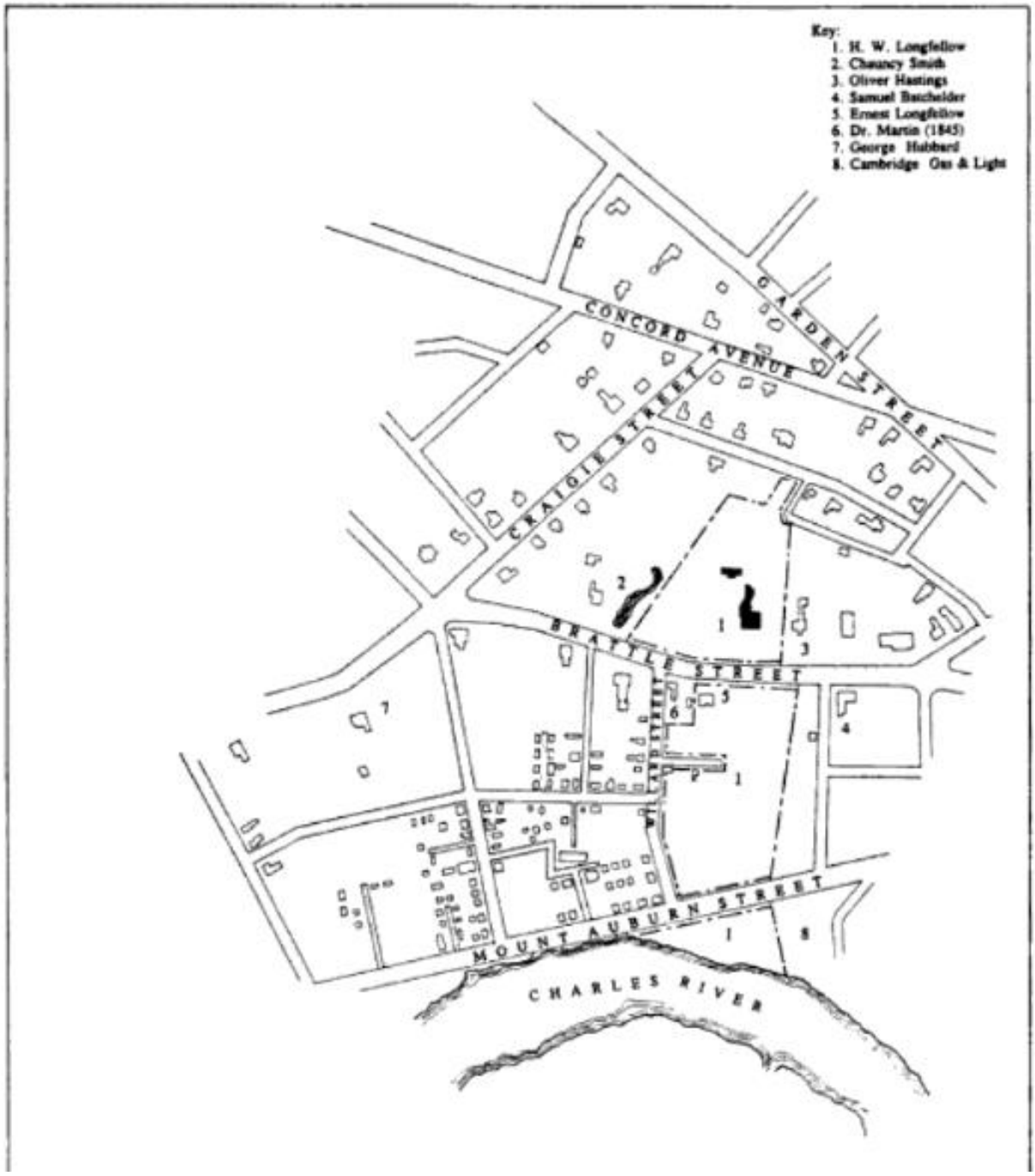
acre triangle of land wedged between Mt. Auburn Street and the Charles River.[11] He then began to divide the land among his children.

Detail of a Plan by Alexander Wadsworth (a first cousin of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow) of the Craigie Estate and surrounding real estate in Cambridge, printed in January 1850, shows number boxes at the location of (1) Longfellow's house, (2) the lot purchased by Nathan Appleton to preserve the view of the Charles River, (3) the notation reporting that "The Red Line marks the boundary of Mr. Longfellow's land, Jan 1870," (4) the former residence of US Supreme Court Associate Justice Joseph Story, a founder of the Mount Auburn Cemetery, (5) the residence of Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr., and (6) the residence in Harvard Yard of Edward Everett, President of Harvard from 1846 to 1849. Elmwood, the home of James Russell Lowell, is just off this graphic to the west (on Elmwood Avenue). Number boxes added by the authors. Map courtesy of National Park Service, Longfellow House – Washington's Headquarters NHS; Archives Number 3002/003-#014

Longfellow's friends living near Harvard, whose residences are marked on the map above, likely approved of his landscape conservation efforts. Longfellow lived within walking distance of many important figures in the early history of historic and landscape conservation in America, including: Judge Joseph Story, a U.S. Supreme Court Associate Justice and a founder of the Mount Auburn Cemetery who died in 1845; Edward Everett, who served as the President of Harvard University in the late 1840s, and was a key supporter of the privately funded Bunker Hill Monument, the Mount Auburn Cemetery, and the preservation of Washington's Mount Vernon estate; Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr., whose 1859 poetry commemorated the effort to raise funds to erect the equestrian statue of

[11] Evans, 26.

Washington that was eventually built on the Boston Public Garden; and James Russell Lowell, who penned a proposal to create a society for the protection of trees in *The Crayon* in 1857.[12]



Plan of the Estate of Henry W. Longfellow, circa 1882, in Catherine Evans, Cultural Landscape Report for Longfellow National Historic Site, Boston: National Park Service, 1993, page 47.

[12] United States Library of Congress. "Documentary Chronology of Selected Events in the Development of the American Conservation Movement, 1847-1920." See https://memory.loc.gov/ammem/amrvhtml/cnchron1.html.

In 1869, a slaughterhouse was proposed to be built across the river from the house, which, if built, threatened to sully Longfellow's coveted view of the water.[13] Longfellow scrambled to organize a corporation to purchase the lot from under the developer. Within a year, the acquisition was complete. The corporation then donated the plot to Harvard College with the stipulation that it remain as marshes and meadows, or for gardens, public walks, ornamental grounds, "or as the site of College buildings not inconsistent with these uses."[14]

The land was adorned with the name Longfellow Meadows. The land which Longfellow left to his heirs stretched all the way from his house to the north side of the Charles River. Longfellow Meadows, which Longfellow himself did not own, extended the scenic view on the south side of the river.

Today, Longfellow Meadows is part of Soldiers Field, the Harvard University athletic complex. While not protected from all development, it maintains some open space and certain facilities, such as the track, are open to the public.

In addition to conserving the land around his home through private acquisition or with special purpose corporations, Longfellow had an interest in more public conservation efforts. The archivist of the Longfellow House-Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site, Kate Hanson-Plass, reports that the site's collections include two prints of the remarkable 1861 photographs of the Grizzly Giant sequoia in California taken by Carleton Watkins. The prints were sent east by Unitarian minister Thomas Starr King and lawyer Frederick Billings, both of whom were transplanted New Englanders with strong connections to literary, scientific, and political leaders of the era.

Prints sent to easterners in Boston, New Haven, New York and Washington, D.C. are believed by art historians such as Tyler Green to have played a key role in convincing Congress to pass legislation during the American Civil War, and in Abraham Lincoln signing the bill to create a state park at Yosemite in June 1864.[15] Yosemite was the precursor to Yellowstone, the first true National Park in the world, which Billings helped to create in 1872.[16] Today there are National Parks in nearly every country that is a member of the United Nations.

An Attempt to Save the Elms at Craigie House

The estate's trees were another special interest of Longfellow's, but his love for the property's old elms caused him mostly heartache. In the late 1830s, the trees were afflicted with cankerworms. Longfellow described the infestation as a plague more troublesome than war, pestilence, or famine. In a lamenting letter to his father, he dreamed of sitting beneath their canopies, "without being covered with creeping things, and brought daily like Martin Luther before a Diet of Worms."[17] Longfellow was desolate and spoke of rallying a "Society for the suppression of Canker Worms" to make "a regular crusade."

[13] Evans, page 48
[14] Evans, page 48
[15] Tyler Green. Carleton Watkins: Making the West American. Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2018, pages 107-115.
[16] Collection of Longfellow House Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site. "Trunk of the 'Grizzly Giant' (Sequoia), Yosemite and Grizzly Giant in Grove of Trees, Site Record for these states "Print 1866 (rounded edges). Original image 1861. Photographer Carlton Watkins gave copies to HWL contemporaries Emerson and Holmes and so presumably gave this copy to HWL."
[17] Evans, page 28

He waged his own war on the pests, tarring the trees in hopes of ridding them of the worms. Joseph Worcester cut off the tops of the trees to try to arrest the infestation. After he and his wife became the owners of the Craigie house, Longfellow purchased eight elms, hoping to reinstate the forecourt's former dignity. By 1847 half had died.[18] "Thus fell the magnificent elms which signalized the place and under whose shadow Washington had walked."[19]

In a similar vein, Longfellow repeatedly campaigned to prevent the City of Cambridge from cutting down trees along the sides of roads to make room for wider streets.

This watercolor view of Longfellow House by N. Vautin, June 1845, depicts Longfellow's beloved elms. Courtesy of the Longfellow House - Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site Museum Collection (LONG 4439).

Learning of Longfellow's love for the trees, the children of Cambridge took up a collection to help pay for a special chair to be carved from the trunk of the tree that once stood in front of the blacksmith's shop at 56 Brattle Street. This was the tree which had inspired Longfellow to write the line, "under the spreading chestnut tree, the village smithy stands" in the poem "The Village Blacksmith".[20] That

[18] Evans, page 36

[19] Evans, Catherine. *Longfellow National Historic Site, Volume 1, Site History and Existing Conditions: Cultural Landscape Report*. Washington, D.C.: NPS Cultural Landscapes Program, 1993. https://irma.nps.gov/DataStore/Reference/Profile/2186272.

[20] Henry Longfellow, "The Village Blacksmith," Poets.org. Academy of American Poets. Accessed February 6, 2025. The Village Blacksmith by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow - Poems | Academy of American Poets.

chestnut wood chair, which was presented to Longfellow on his birthday in 1872, now sits in the front parlor of the Longfellow house.[21]

Legacies Past and Future

Longfellow's concern for the Brattle Street property was rooted, at least in part, in its rich history. As noted above, he was reverent of one of the home's first occupants, President George Washington, who used the house as his headquarters at the beginning of the Revolutionary War. In its interpretive materials, the National Park Service documents that:

> The Longfellows recognized the historical significance of their home as George Washington's Cambridge Headquarters, and Fanny Longfellow declared in 1843 they had "no desire... to change a feature of the old countenance which Washington has rendered sacred." In 1844, the Longfellows acquired a copy of a bust of George Washington and placed it on the stair landing. The original terra-cotta bust, made in 1785 by the French sculptor Jean-Antoine Houdon, is at Mount Vernon. [22]

Not only did the Longfellows proudly display Washington-related artifacts in their home, Longfellow incorporated memories of Washington in his poetry. He framed and hung in his house a hand-copied segment of his 1845 poem "To a Child" to bring Washington's memory alive. [23] The excerpt reads:[24]

> 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.
> Up and down these echoing stairs,
> Heavy with the weight of cares,
> Sounded his majestic tread;
> Yes, within this very room
> Sat he in those hours of gloom,
> Weary both in heart and head.

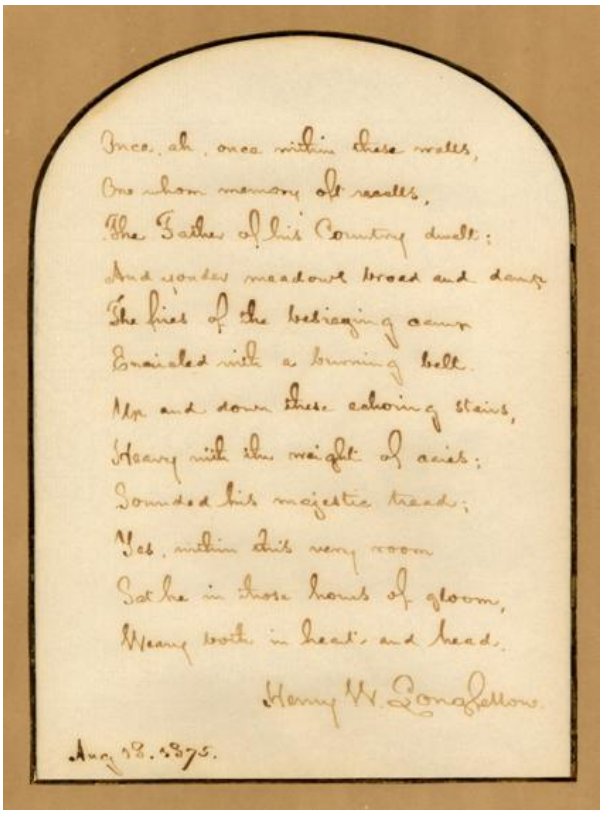
The family's reverence for Washington was in keeping with political sentiment and the practice of patriotic memorialization in the Boston area at the time. For example, Edward Everett prepared an Address in 1832 explaining the objectives of the Mount Auburn Cemetery. He reported that the new cemetery "will afford the means of paying a tribute of respect, by a monumental erection, to the names and memory of great and good men, whenever or wherever they have died. Its summit may be

[21] Maine Memory Network. "The Chestnut Chair." See https://www.mainememory.net/record/15476 .
[22] "'Rendered Sacred,'" National Park Service, updated February 2, 2022, https://www.nps.gov/long/learn/historyculture/entry-hall.htm.
[23] "Stanza 6 of Longfellow's poem," Maine Memory Network, Maine Historical Society, accessed January 1, 2024. https://www.mainememory.net/record/15890.
[24] "The Broad Hall Stair," National Park Service, updated February 2, 2022, https://www.nps.gov/long/learn/historyculture/entry-hall.htm.

consecrated to Washington, by a cenotaph inscribed with his name. Public sentiment will often delight in these tributes of respect…"[25]

In time, a 62-foot tower was designed by Harvard botany professor Jacob Bigelow, one of the cemetery's founders. Construction was completed and dedicated to Washington's memory in 1854. Today it offers spectacular views of the Boston basin from the cemetery's highest point.

In addition to honoring Washington's memory, Longfellow was concerned with his own legacy. He dreamed of his descendants walking where he walked and savoring the same connection to place. In 1843, he planted a row of acorns, from which he hoped great oaks would grow. He wrote to his father, "you may imagine a whole line of little Longfellows, like the shadowy monarchs in Macbeth, walking under their branches for countless generations …"[26]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The Father of his Country dwelt:
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The fires of the besieging camp
Encircled with a burning belt.
Up and down these echoing stairs,
Heavy with the weight of cares,
Sounded his majestic tread;
Yes, within this very room
Sat he in those hours of gloom,
Weary both in heart and head.
Henry W. Longfellow
Aug 18. 1875.

An excerpt from "To a Child," hand copied by Longfellow, now hangs in the front foyer of the Longfellow House in Cambridge. Photo courtesy of the USNPS. See: https://www.nps.gov/long/learn/historyculture/entry-hall.htm

[25] Edward Everett. "The Proposed Rural Cemetery" in Joseph Bigelow, *History of Mount Auburn Cemetery*. Boston and Cambridge, MA: James Munroe and Company, 1860, page 142 (Reprinted by Applewood Books, Cambridge, MA 1988).
[26] Evans, page 33.

Stewardship as a Social Identity

In the mid-1800s, land and nature conservation were en vogue among the upper echelons of America's intellectuals, especially in the Northeast.[27] Artists and writers pioneering their fields were inspired by, and deeply concerned with, nature loss. America's vast forests and open lands had become central to the nation's identity, as they set it apart from Europe's more densely populated countries. Names like Ralph Waldo Emerson, Emily Dickinson, Thomas Starr King, and Henry David Thoreau voiced their reverence for nature and, in doing so, established their place in history.[28]

Longfellow himself tried his hand at nature writing, though this flavor of his work never earned the same acclaim as his other pieces.[29] He also enjoyed styles of nature and landscape art that were gaining popularity among his peers. He traveled to exhibitions by the emerging group of New-England-based landscape painters called the Hudson River School; attended artist lectures; and casually collected pieces in this style.

The Song of Hiawatha

"Fiercely the red sun descending …" by Thomas Moran, 1875. flickr: JR P.

Fiercely the red sun descending
Burned his way along the heavens,
Set the sky on fire behind him,
As war-parties, when retreating,
Burn the prairies on their war-trail;
And the moon, the Night-sun, eastward,
Suddenly starting from his ambush,
Followed fast those bloody footprints,
Followed in that fiery war-trail,
With its glare upon his features.

-Verses from "The Song of Hiawatha" that inspired a landscape painting by American painter Thomas Moran

He was also influenced by his in-laws, the Appletons, who were avid art enthusiasts and may have encouraged Longfellow's interest in the subject. One of Longfellow's own pieces of work, "Song of Hiawatha", even shaped some of the art emerging at the time. Several prominent landscape painters were inspired by the epic and created notable works depicting its scenes. While the poem is one of Longfellow's most successful pieces, it is now considered to perpetuate cultural stereotypes and false narratives about Indigenous people.[30]

There was an element of cultural conflict in the conservation movement at the time. A vein of anti-urbanism and anti-modernism ran through America's mid-19th-century elites. Both Henry and Fanny Longfellow wrote of their concern for houses springing up around them, suggesting they felt protective of their exclusive enjoyment of the area. Similarly, Longfellow's scramble to have the land across from

[27] *American Memory from the Library of Congress*, Illinois. "The Evolution of the Conservation Movement, 1850-1920." Conservation Collection: Materials from the Prints and Photographs Division (loc.gov).
[28] Chapman, Ann E. "Nineteenth Century Trends in American Conservation." National Park Service. Nineteenth Century Trends in American Conservation (U.S. National Park Service) (nps.gov).
[29] "Longfellow's Environmental Niche."
[30] "The Song of Hiawatha". National Park Service. Hiawatha - Longfellow House Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site (U.S. National Park Service) (nps.gov).

his home purchased—not by him personally, but through a newly-established corporation—and conserved, is salted with not-in-my-backyard sentiments.

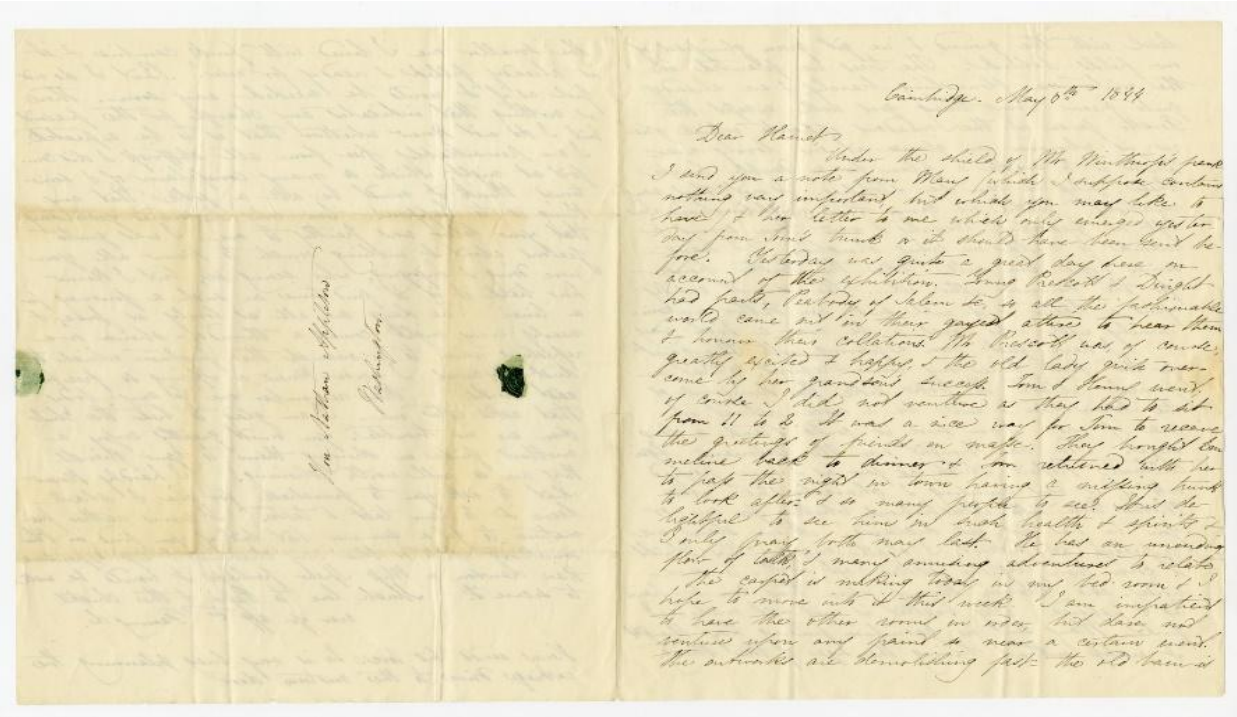
In a letter to her brother in 1843, Fanny wrote:

> We have a driving Yankee neighbor, with a face like a wedge, building too near our left shoulder but as he is to put up a well looking house & not a diseased Temple, & will not sell the land for any Christian sum, we try to resign ourselves, with the hope of getting in time an effectual screen of trees & hedges. One gets horribly covetous in the country, I find of one's neighbour's land.[31]

She was particularly concerned with the Foster family as they made plans to develop the meadows opposite Craigie House while the estate was being divided:

> ...Alas the Forsters [sic], more enterprising than any moths, have already staked out lots and a street beside planting any quantity of bean poles by the road by which they intend, by some miracle, to convert into trees, and we begin to tremble for our lovely bend of the river, & to ~~see~~ imagine it hidden from our eyes by hideous deformities of architecture.[32]

When the same neighbor built a fence in the meadow across from the Longfellows, Fanny wrote that the structure grieved the family, "whenever we glance at our lovely river."[33] Knowing that a house was



Frances (Appleton) Longfellow to Harriot Coffin (Sumner) Appleton, 8 May 1844. Courtesy of National Park Service, Longfellow House-Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site, Archives Number 1011/002.001-014#015

[31] Fanny Appleton Longfellow to Thomas Appleton. London, England. Postmarked December 1, 1843. FEAL Correspondence.
[32] Fanny Appleton Longfellow to Nathan Appleton. Cambridge, Massachusetts. Postmarked April 29, 1844. FEAL Correspondence.
[33] Fanny Appleton Longfellow to Harriet Nathan Appleton. Cambridge, Massachusetts. Postmarked May 8, 1844. FEAL Correspondence.

slated to be built there as well she lamented, “Is not this very vexatious? Until we came this neighbourhood was left in peaceful beauty, & now there seems a mania to build in every direction.”[34]

The Colonial Revival Movement: Architecture and Artifacts as a Memorial to Early America

The latter half of Longfellow’s life coincided with a time of national upheaval and the emergence of the Colonial Revival Movement, a phenomenon that was largely led by upper-class descendants of early European settlers in the United States.[35] The Longfellows, their relatives, and their descendants became deeply engaged in the movement, which often revolved around buildings and their ties to notable historical figures.

Beginning in the mid-1800s, affluent Americans began staking claim to old homes and buildings where famous and influential people, such as George Washington and John Hancock, had spent time. They would then dedicate themselves to preserving and restoring a particular building to an almost museum-like state, filling it with artifacts and memorabilia from, or reminiscent of, its early days.

In doing so, they often framed the cleanest and most romantic aspects of the nation’s adolescent years, while dusting these homes of their associations with slavery and campaigns to abuse and remove Indigenous people.[36] It was not until recent decades that historic sites such as Mount Vernon and Jefferson’s Monticello began acknowledging the impact of slavery and human displacement.

At the Longfellow House-Washington’s Headquarters National Historical Site, careful documentation and interpretation has been completed and posted in recent years to memorialize the lives of formerly enslaved people who stayed on the property after John Vassal, Jr.’s departure to Canada. This includes an essay on the lives of Tony and Cuba Vassal and their children, several of whom were active in the abolition movement leading up to the American Civil War.[37] The site also notes that Longfellow himself was an avid abolitionist, as were many within his social circle, such as former United States Senator, Charles Sumner. Walking in her father’s footsteps, Alice Longfellow was concerned with educational opportunities for Black and Indigenous people, providing scholarship funds for these students at Hampton and Tuskegee Institutes.[38]

One of the earliest historic preservation organizations in the United States was a woman-led group focused on memorializing George Washington and restoring his Mount Vernon mansion. The Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association (MVLA) was founded in 1853 as an advocacy and political action outlet for women, who, at the time, were excluded from most civic rights and organizations.[39] The female founders of organizations like the MVLA gained momentum and prominence and, eventually, support

[34] Longfellow to Appleton. May 8, 1844. FEAL Correspondence.
[35] “The Colonial Revival Movement at George Washington Birthplace,” National Park Service, August 31, 2021, The Colonial Revival Movement at George Washington Birthplace (U.S. National Park Service) (nps.gov),.
[36] “The Colonial Revival Movement at George Washington Birthplace”.
[37] National Park Service. “Though Dwelling in a Land of Freedom.” 2018-2023. See https://www.nps.gov/articles/though-dwelling-in-a-land-of-freedom.htm .
[38] “Alice Longfellow,” *NPS*.
[39] “The Early History of the Mount Vernon Ladies Association,” George Washington’s Mount Vernon, Early History of the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association · George Washington's Mount Vernon.

from many highly regarded civic leaders, including Edward Everett, who served as president of Harvard and in the US Senate. Everett was integral to the MVLA's fund-raising efforts.

The Colonial Revival Movement was not carried solely by organizations. It was also spread through individuals, some whose private homes had been passed down through generations and some who simply coveted the antique aesthetic that was in vogue.[40] In many ways, what happened at Craigie House was an early example of what later took place on a grander scale across the nation.

Making Land the Longfellow Legacy

Longfellow's values regarding the family property lived on through his children. To honor their father after he passed, they hoped to preserve the plot across the river as a memorial. In 1882, a group of Longfellow's colleagues met to begin planning to create a memorial to their friend.[41] For this purpose, they incorporated the Longfellow Memorial Association, to which the Longfellow heirs donated two parcels of land: two acres opposite Craigie House in 1883, and a triangular lot spanning the space between Mt Auburn Street and the Charles River in 1888. The goal of the association was to erect a statue of Longfellow as a memorial and designate the land it stood on as a public park, to be gifted in trust to the City of Cambridge.

The children were more concerned with preserving the meadow as open space than they were with the monument itself. Ernest Longfellow wanted the area to be a "breathing space" on the river.[42] He wrote that, as the city continued to crowd, the park's value as such would only grow and "would be a better monument to my father and more in harmony than any graven image that could be erected."

However, the public which the surviving Longfellows hoped to serve may not have been entirely inclusive. As the park was designed and debate turned to the placement of their father's monument, his children pushed back on recommendations for siting the statue. They worried that the suggested location would be too wet, and that the area was "not frequented by the same class of people" as others.[43]

As a new century dawned on Cambridge, plans for Longfellow Park continued to develop. Upon donating the land, the Longfellow heirs stipulated that a road would be built along the lot within five years. In 1900, Charles River Road was complete and was lined with plane trees. The trees benefited from the Charles River Dam, which was finished in 1910, stabilizing the area's hydrology to the delight of the riverbank's trees and woody shrubs. The land was later incorporated into a linear park by the Metropolitan District Commission.

Some of the people involved in creating Longfellow Park went on to make notable contributions to conservation across the region. Charles Eliot, who helped design the park, later founded the nation's first land trust, The Trustees of the Reservations in 1891.[44] He also led the establishment of the Metropolitan District Commission, whose first acquisition was the Beaver Brook Reservation in

[40] Mary Miley Theobald, "The Colonial Revival the Past that Never Dies," *The Colonial Williamsburg Journal*, Summer (2002), The Colonial Revival | The Colonial Williamsburg Official History & Citizenship Site.
[41] Evans
[42] Evans, 53.
[43] Evans, 57.
[44] "Charles Eliot". The Cultural Landscape Foundation. Charles Eliot | TCLF

Belmont, Massachusetts, to protect the "Waverly Oaks." Only one of the Waverley Oaks is still standing, but the park is still home to impressive elder-growth trees, several of which may be much older than the park itself.[45]

The Extended Family Engages in Conservation and Preservation

Alice Longfellow

Born at Craigie house, and raised in its gardens, Alice Longfellow's connection with the home was, perhaps, even deeper than her father's and was fostered over a lifetime. The special affinity each of her parents held for the estate pulsed through their eldest daughter. The solemn and precocious child grew into a sharp-witted and capable woman who saw and responded to inequality in the world around her.[46] She was a leader and advocate for opportunities in education for women and people of color and a philanthropist for schools for the blind. Her political savvy also manifested in her conservation work.

Like her parents, Alice was enamored with the nation's first president and his connection to her home. She worked diligently over her lifetime to preserve his legacy through her work at the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association, a group which, following the Civil War, carried on the work of its founding generation to restore Washington's Mount Vernon mansion and burnish the memory of the nation's first President.

In 1879, Alice—after several years of involvement with the Association—became the second vice regent for Massachusetts of the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association, filling a long vacant role for the group.[47] Traditionally, each vice regent adopted a room at Mount Vernon. The ladies were responsible for restoring and furnishing the room in its original style and would stay in them when they attended council sessions. Alice was eager to adopt George Washington's Study, which would become known as the Massachusetts Room.

She was fastidious in her restoration of the room, tracking down original furnishings and raising the funds to purchase them.[48] Alice returned *Great Falls of the Potomac*, a large landscape painting owned by Washington, to Mount Vernon. She purchased a secretary bookcase the president used while in office with her own funds to return to its place in the study. She also served as chair of the Association's Library Committee for an extended period, helping to find books that had been in Washington's personal library or their copies. She remained in her role as vice regent and Massachusetts representative until the end of her life in 1928.[49]

[45] "Beaver Brook Reservation". The Cultural Landscape Foundation. Beaver Brook Reservation | TCLF.
[46] Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, "The Children's Hour," Poetry Foundation, accessed December 4, 2023.
[47] "Alice Longfellow's Quest for Authenticity," George Washington's Mount Vernon, Alice Longfellow's Quest for Authenticity · George Washington's Mount Vernon.
[48] "Alice Longfellow's Quest for Authenticity".
[49] "A Legacy of Preservation," National Park Service, October 14, 2022, A Legacy of Preservation - Longfellow House Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site (U.S. National Park Service) (nps.gov).

In addition, Alice was a governing member of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities founded by her cousin, William Sumner Appleton. She was also a member of several other historical and preservation organizations, including:

- Massachusetts Audubon Society;
- Daughters of the American Revolution;
- Massachusetts Historical Society; and
- National Geographic Society.

Alice was instrumental in preserving her father's memory beyond his writing. Notably, she wrote "Longfellow in Home Life," which was published in *The Cambridge Magazine* in March 1896.[50] She also wrote "Longfellow with His Children" in 1897 and "Reminiscences of My Father" in 1896. After his death, Alice, along with her siblings, helped direct establishment of Longfellow Park. This was facilitated partly by the Longfellow House Trust, for which Alice provided $25,000 of the $45,000 raised at its inception.[51]

William Sumner Appleton

Alice's zeal for conservation was mirrored in her younger cousin, William Sumner Appleton.[52] Early in his adult life, William showed an affinity for documenting the past, filling scrapbooks with memorabilia from his hobbies, interests, and international travel. As he entered his thirties, he began to take up conservation more seriously. He joined the Sons of the Revolution and, in 1905, took on the challenge of preserving the Paul Revere House in Boston's North End. In 1906, when the Boston Transit Commission began eying the Washington street doorway of the Old State House as an additional entrance to the Washington street tunnel, William stepped in and led a successful effort to thwart the plan.

A proposal in 1909 to alter Lexington's Jonathan Harrington House, which survived the Revolutionary war, spurred William to establish the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities (SPNEA, now Historic New England). Alice lent her renown, and her bank account, to the cause, helping to establish the organization and later taking up a role as a governing member.

William's conservation work through Historic New England was strongly molded by his own whims and passions. He often selected buildings for their architectural appeal and other items simply because they caught his eye. Regardless, his work amassed an impressive collection of historical artifacts that are revered today as the "richest and best documented assemblage of New England material culture in the nation."[53] His strategy also evolved over time and, many of his practices laid the groundwork for contemporary preservation.

William and SPNEA pioneered a methodical approach to restoring and documenting houses.[54] Part of the association's mission was to collect images of the buildings it acquired and maintain comprehensive

[50] Alice Mary Longfellow (1850-1928) Papers (LONG 16173), Longfellow House-Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site, Alice Mary Longfellow Papers (nps.gov).
[51] "A Legacy of Preservation".
[52] "Founder and History," Historic New England, Mission and Leadership | Historic New England.
[53] "Founder and History".
[54] William Morache, "William Sumner Appleton and the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities: Professionalism and Labor" (master's thesis, Columbia University, 2012) MoracheBill_GSAPPHP_2014_Thesis_2 (1).pdf.

archives of material that proved the building's history, features, and character. Even the restoration process was documented through photographers hired by SPNEA.

SPNEA itself was a model for a new standard of preservation. The organization had a tiered system, which revolved around a Boston-based central office. This core team oversaw the work of branches that focused on specific regions of New England. The structure lent itself to fastidiousness, capacity, and standard. Processes and best practices could be shared and expected across branches, and all had the prestige of the SPNEA brand behind them—as well as fundraising support from the Boston team—but enjoyed the freedom to focus in on their own local history, needs, and opportunities.

William is sometimes referred to as an "amateur" preservationist because his entry into the field was an escalation of personal endeavors, rather than a trajectory rooted in formal education or training.[55] But this may have been part of the reason his approach was so innovative. He was not uneducated. Rather, he pursued a framework of varied coursework. He attended Harvard to study English, history, and philosophy and he also took fine art and design courses throughout his life. William drew on each of these areas of study as he began to develop himself as a preservationist.

At the time, most preservation work, particularly of buildings, was motivated by the historically significant figures who had resided there. William was more interested in the architecture and aesthetics of a building and in preserving the unique details that defined the era they were built in. He saw these houses both as works of art and archeological artifacts.

Harry Wadsworth Dana Longfellow

After Alice's death, her nephew Harry Wadsworth Longfellow Dana became Cragie House's principal resident. He, along with other Longfellow descendants, were allowed to live in the home under the terms of the Longfellow House Trust, but Harry was the only one to do so for an extended period.[56] Like Alice, he was much enamored by the home and was keen to maintain its character and memory.

Harry was particularly impactful in collecting objects, photos, correspondence, and ephemera that tells the story of his family across the generations.[57] He wrote extensively about the Dana family, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and George Washington, as well as the connection the latter two figures had to the Craigie House and other residences around the country.[58]

The results of his research were disseminated through various printed publications, and orally through his work as a lecturer.[59] His chronicles of the Dana family built on the extensive writings of Elizabeth Ellery Dana.[60]

[55] Morache, 2012.
[56] "A Legacy of Preservation".
[57] "Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Dana," National Park Service, March 24, 2023, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Dana (U.S. National Park Service) (nps.gov).
[58] Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Dana (1881-1950) Papers (LONG 17314), Longfellow House-Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site, HWLD Finding Aid.pdf (nps.gov).
[59] Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Dana (1881-1950) Papers
[60] "Dana Collected Correspondence, 1808-1938," National Park Service, October 27, 2023, Archives - Longfellow House Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site (U.S. National Park Service) (nps.gov).

Opening the Grounds to the Local Community

Alice Longfellow, Longfellow's eldest daughter, was the only heir not to build her own house on the estate after it was divided among the siblings. She lived in, and oversaw the upkeep of, Craigie House from 1888 to 1928. Her time as the estate's matriarch marked an era of particularly lively community use.

Alice hired the young and ambitious landscape architect, Martha Brookes Brown, who refreshed and redesigned the gardens.[61] The renovations restored some of the layout from the days when Henry Longfellow walked the grounds, but also made changes to better lend the area to social gatherings. When Alice traveled, which she often did, the house, porch, lawn, and gardens were all open to visitors. The space was often used for ceremonies, as a play area for children and dogs, as a baseball field, and as the grounds for an annual circus.

As the Longfellow children aged, they thought deeply about the future of the estate. They were concerned that future generations might not be well positioned to care for and preserve it. Alice was particularly articulate regarding these issues. After considering several options for preserving Longfellow's home in Cambridge, the siblings decided on an Indenture of Trust, established in 1913. The trust transferred management of the estate to the Longfellow House Trust for the immediate benefit of the Longfellow descendants and the long-term consideration of the American people. Alice and other heirs could continue to reside in the house, but if, and when they left, it would continue to be maintained.[62]

After Alice Longfellow's death, the trust became responsible for the estate and its maintenance. In the 1930s, the trust started to struggle financially and began a decades-long crusade to pass the house over to the National Park Service. The Longfellow National Historic Site was finally established by an act of Congress in 1972.[63] It was later renamed Longfellow House – Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site to preserve the memory of Washington's time there during the Revolutionary War.[64]

In the late 1800s and early 1900s the area surrounding Longfellow Park was rapidly commercialized. It was bounded by wharves, warehouses, the Cambridge Gas-Light Company, and the Cambridge Casino. The city did not begin setting aside space for municipal parks until two decades after Longfellow purchased the triangular parcel.[65] Thus, without the family's careful stewardship, it likely would have filled with the same development that was being built nearby along the Charles River.

[61] Evans, page 63.
[62] Evans, page 61.
[63] Evans, page 86.
[64] "Site Renamed Longfellow House – Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site." NPS.gov, February 23, 2011. https://www.nps.gov/long/learn/news/site-renamed-longfellow-house-washington-s-headquarters-national-historic-site.htm.
[65] LaMond, Annette. "A Lost Park: Longfellow's parklands." History Cambridge. A Lost Park: Longfellow's Parklands - History Cambridge.

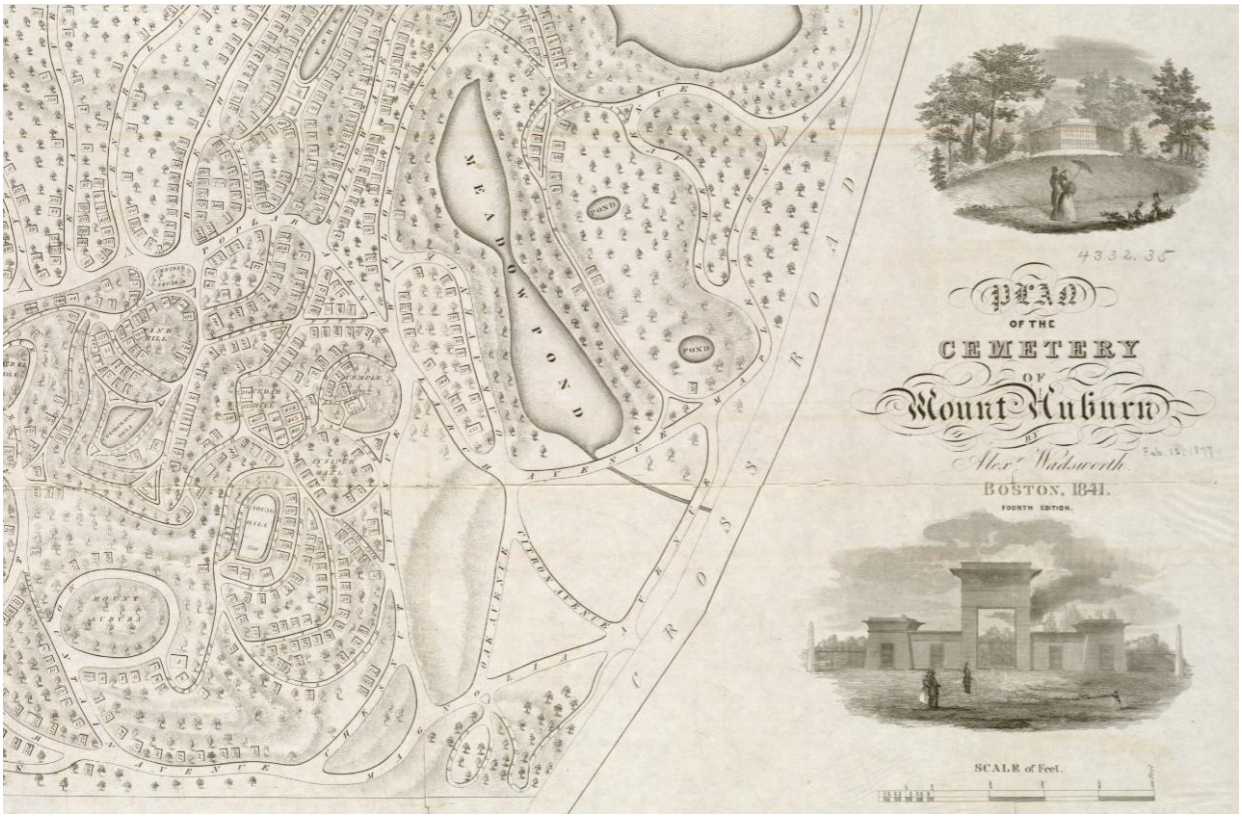
Mount Auburn Cemetery

Longfellow grave site at Mount Auburn Cemetery. Courtesy: Mount Auburn Cemetery.

Even in death the Longfellow family's connection to land and conservation innovation in Cambridge endured. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, his two wives, and all six of his children are buried at Mount Auburn Cemetery.[66] The Longfellow burial site on Mount Auburn's Indian Ridge Path—less than a mile from the Longfellow house—is still frequently sought out by Cemetery visitors from all over the world.

It was Longfellow's first cousin Alexander Wadsworth who meticulously surveyed Mount Auburn Cemetery's original property in 1831 and, working alongside Henry Dearborn, helped lay the cemetery's first paths and roadways. Subsequent surveys of the property made by Wadsworth show remarkable attention to detail.[67] Like many other Longfellow relatives, Alexander Wadsworth, who passed away in 1898 at age 91, is buried in the cemetery, along with his wife.

[66] Friends of Mount Auburn, "Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882)," Mount Auburn Cemetery, January 31, 2012, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882) | Mount Auburn Cemetery.
[67] Mount Auburn Cemetery, "A New American Landscape," Mount Auburn Cemetery, October 21, 2023, A New American Landscape | Mount Auburn Cemetery.



Detail of Alexander Wadsworth's 1841 plan of the Cemetery at Mount Auburn. Courtesy: Leventhal Center, https://collections.leventhalmap.org/search/commonwealth:x059cc34p.

Mount Auburn—well-known today for its expansive gardens, park-like design, and rich birding—was a truly novel concept when it was established in 1831.

In the 19th century, a Boston physician, Dr. Jacob Bigelow worried that crowding in urban cemeteries posed a public health risk.[68] After rallying a group of civic leaders, he captured the attention and support of a new and innovative organization—the Massachusetts Horticultural Society (MHS). Launched in 1829, MHS was the nation's first formal horticulture institution and was exploring ways to beautify Boston, while also spreading ecological knowledge and advanced horticultural practice.

In 1831, MHS purchased a site informally known as "Sweet Auburn," a wooded 72-acre parcel spanning the Watertown-Cambridge border.[69] The site was intended to address multiple objectives: setting aside publicly accessible open space, supporting ornate gardens, honoring heroes of the American experiment not buried at the cemetery, and serving as a final resting place for loved ones of a wide variety of religions and races. MHS President Henry Dearborn dove into the design, creating a city oasis

[68] "Mount Auburn Cemetery," National Park Service, Mount Auburn Cemetery (U.S. National Park Service) (nps.gov).
[69] "History: Massachusetts Horticultural Society," Massachusetts Horticultural Society, History - Massachusetts Horticultural Society | Massachusetts Horticultural Society (masshort.org).

of paths winding through shaded pocket forests, ponds, and curated gardens, with gravestones sprinkled across the landscape.

The concept was immediately attractive to the community for many reasons.[70] Families, including the Longfellows, quickly began to purchase lots in the cemetery, and folks without loved ones interred at the cemetery strolled through the gates to appreciate its tranquil acreage.

Ralph Waldo Emerson had an epiphany of sorts during a visit to Mount Auburn Cemetery in its early years. His insights, first recorded in Emerson's diary, and later included in part in Emerson's seminal book, *Nature*, were foundational to the Transcendental movement, and have helped shape the way that Americans think about nature ever since. On April 11, 1834, at the age of 30, he wrote:

> Went yesterday to Cambridge and spent most of the day at Mount Auburn… I forsook the tombs, and found a sunny hollow where the east wind would not blow, and lay down against the side of a tree to most happy beholdings. At least I opened my eyes and let what would pass through them into the soul. I saw no more my relations, how near and petty, to Cambridge or Boston; I heeded no more what minute or hour our Massachusetts clocks might indicate – I saw only the noble earth on which I was born, with the great Star which warms and enlightens it. I saw the clouds that hang their significant drapery over us. It was Day – that was all Heaven said. The pines glittered with their innumerable green needles in the light, and seemed to challenge me to read their riddle. The drab oak-leaves of the last year turned their little somersets and lay still again. And the wind bustled high overhead in the forest top. This gay and grand architecture, from the vault to the moss and lichen on which I lay, -- who shall explain to me the law of its proportions and adornments?
>
> See the perpetual generation of good sense; nothing wholly false, fantastic, can take possession of men who, to live and move, must plow the ground, sail the sea, have orchards, hear the robin sing, and see the swallow fly.[71]

By the end of the 1840s, the cemetery was attracting about 60,000 annual visitors, some of whom traveled from outside of Boston just to experience the new phenomenon.[72] Leaders, policy makers, and design visionaries took note and used Mount Auburn's story to advocate for more, similar spaces in other cities. Longfellow periodically visited the site and is likely to have approved many of its special projects, such as the construction of the 62-foot-tall tower honoring the memory of George Washington, erected atop Mount Auburn's highest point, as well as the Sphinx built following the Civil War to honor the Union struggle and the end of slavery.

This positive uptake by the public, and especially by Boston elite, opened doors across the region for further open-space initiatives, paving the way for local and regional parks and park systems.[73] Itself inspired in part by European gardening trends, Mount Auburn was one of the sparks that helped ignite

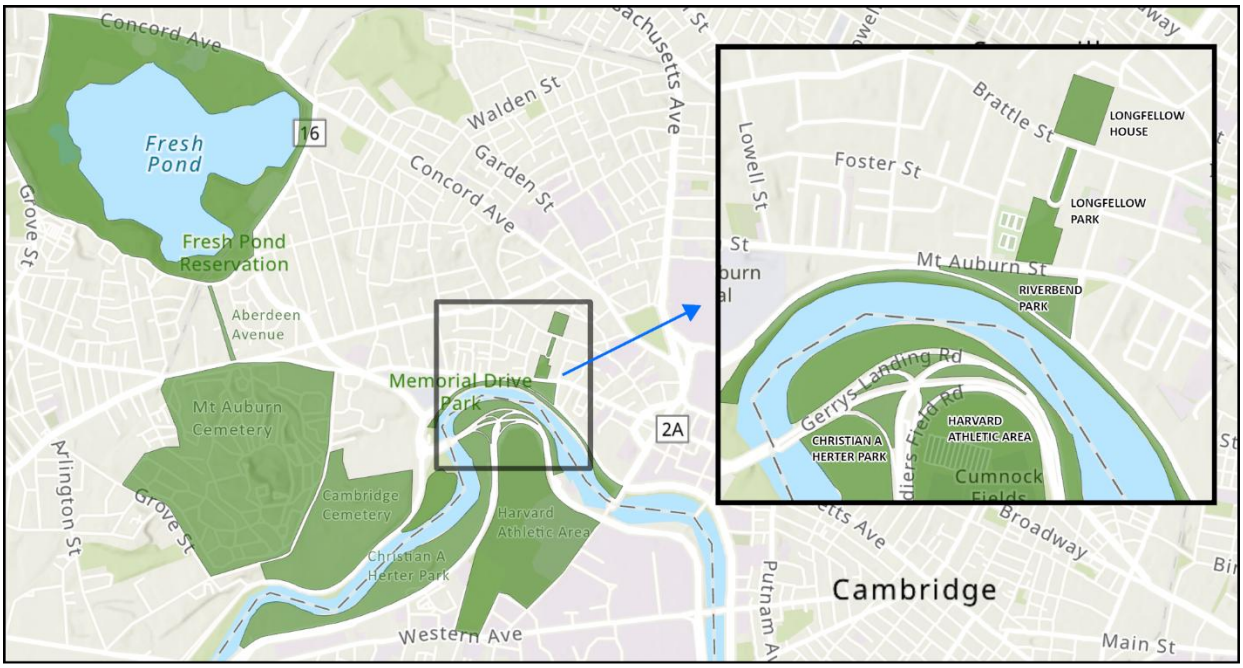
[70] "Mount Auburn Cemetery".
[71] Ralph Waldo Emerson. The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks of Ralph Waldo Emerson Volume IV, 1832-1834, Edited by Alfred R. Ferguson. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1964, pp. 272-275. See also: Peter Y. Chou, editor. Cosmic Consciousness II, Ralph Waldo Emerson: Illumined by Nature. Journal, April 11, 1834. WisdomPortal.com. Thanks to Meg Winslow, Curator of Historical Collections and Archives at the Mount Auburn Cemetery, for guidance on this quote.
[72] Sarah Stewart Taylor, "Sweet Auburn," *Humanities* 31, no. 2 (2010): Sweet Auburn | The National Endowment for the Humanities (neh.gov).
[73] "Mount Auburn Cemetery".

the United States' cemetery movement, leading the way to the development both of other "rural cemeteries" from New York to the San Francisco Bay and a flood of local, state, and national parks.[74]

What remains of Craigie House today

Today's reminder of one of America's most beloved and well-remembered poets is only a portion of what once flourished under Longfellow and his family line. However, nestled amidst the built-up Cambridge of today, it is—both historically and financially—more valuable than ever. The Longfellow House and gardens now occupy two acres on Brattle Street, flanked by the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy to the west and a campus of Lesley University to the east.

The grounds are a National Historic Site and look out over Longfellow Park, another two-acre strip stretching from Brattle Street to Mt. Auburn Street. Longfellow's cherished river view has been partially obscured by Memorial Drive on the Cambridge side of the river. Between Memorial Drive and the northern shore of the Charles River, another wedge of land escaped Cambridge's rapid urbanization thanks to the Longfellow family. A 2.5-acre triangle, its borders defined by the Charles River, Hawthorn Street, and Mt. Auburn Street, is now part of Riverbend Park.



Esri, NASA, NGA, USGS, Harvard University, City of Cambridge, Esri, HERE, Garmin, SafeGraph, GeoTechnologies, Inc., METI/NASA, USGS, NPS, USDA. Map by Kostas Gouzias.

Today, the parcel is owned by the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation and has benefitted from the city's riverbank improvement project, launched in the 1890s and the construction of the Charles River Dam a decade after. When Longfellow owned the property, that section was marshy and prone to flooding. Today, it is grassy with a bank of woody shrubs and trees that thrive in stabilized hydrologic conditions.

[74] "A New American Landscape".

Across the river, Harvard University students enjoy a sprawling athletic complex along Soldiers Field Road, partly thanks to Longfellow, who rallied friends and family to purchase and acquire 70 acres of the land in 1870 and subsequently donate it to the University.[75] Back across the river to the west, the Cambridge Cemetery and the adjacent Mount Auburn Cemetery complete, across several roadways, an arc of green that reaches from Cambridge into Boston and Watertown. With the nearby Fresh Pond Reservoir, as well as connective bike paths and the green median islands along Aberdeen Avenue, these protected landscapes form an expansive greenway in the midst of a busy modern city.

Conclusion

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, his wife Fanny Appleton, and their children, were pioneers in the fields of historic preservation and private land conservation. As biographer Charles Calhoun explains, Fanny wrote to her brother Tom that, notwithstanding a bevy of plans and projects the couple had to update the house, they had "no desire to change a feature of the old countenance which Washington had rendered sacred." This, he wrote, was a somewhat novel idea in the 1840s, when:

> Americans reverenced their brief past but had not yet imbued its architecture with any particular historical aura. The rescue of Mount Vernon by a committee of determined women – now considered the birth of historical preservation in this country – was a decade in the future, and as late as 1863 Bostonians were careless enough to allow John Hancock's Georgian mansion next to the State House to be torn down… As historical preservationists, in other words, the Longfellows were ahead of their time.[76]

Similarly, the Longfellows were, in social and literary contexts, in the vanguard of a group of Unitarians and Transcendentalists, including Ralph Waldo Emerson, James Russell Lowell, and Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr., who defined nature's central role in the philosophical, spiritual, and aesthetic lives of New Englanders.[77] In time, their influences also inspired land-conservation leaders from the United States Congress to Yosemite. The remarkable protected view of the Charles River from the Longfellows' front parlor helped to frame what might be possible, through private and public action, across the nation, and around the globe.

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[75] *Hannon, Helen. "The story of a monument, the man who built it, and the men it honors."* The Harvard Gazette*. June 9, 2005.*

[76] Charles Calhoun. *Longfellow: A Rediscovered Life.* Boston: Beacon, 2004, page 168.

[77] Longfellow, for example, participated in the meeting held in Boston in 1857 at which *The Atlantic Monthly* was conceived, along with Emerson, Holmes and Lowell, and four other men. Harriet Beecher Stowe was also scheduled to attend, but declined to join the group when she learned that wine was to be served. (Jeffery Goldberg, "How *The Atlantic* Began"). Regarding the friendship of Emerson and Longfellow, see Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and Ralph Waldo Emerson (U.S. National Park Service) (nps.gov).

Longfellow House - Washington's Headquarters in Snow. NPS photo, see: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Longfellow_House-Washington%27s_Headquarters_in_Snow.