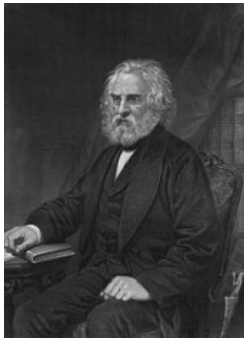


Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

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Henry Wadsworth Longfellow



Born: February 27, 1807
Portland, Maine, United States

Died: March 24, 1882
Cambridge, Massachusetts, United States

Occupation: poet

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (February 27, 1807 – March 24, 1882) was an American poet whose works include "Paul Revere's Ride", "A Psalm of Life", "The Song of Hiawatha" and "Evangeline". He also wrote the first American translation of Dante Alighieri's "Divine Comedy" and was one of the five members of the group known as the Fireside Poets. Longfellow was born and raised in the Portland, Maine, area. He attended university at an early age at Bowdoin College in Brunswick, Maine. After several journeys overseas, Longfellow settled for the last forty-five years of his life in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

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Early life and education



Birthplace in c. 1910

Longfellow was born on February 27, 1807, to Stephen and Zilpah (Wadsworth) Longfellow in Portland, Maine, and grew up in what is now

known as the Wadsworth-Longfellow House. It has been said that he was one of the most beloved poets. His father was a lawyer, and his maternal grandfather, Peleg Wadsworth, Sr., was a general in the American Revolutionary War. He was descended from the Longfellow family that came to America in 1676 from Yorkshire, England, and

from Mayflower passengers Priscilla and John Alden, William Brewster, Henry Samson, John Howland, and Richard Warren on his mother's side, as well as Rev. John Lathrop. ^[1]

Longfellow's siblings were Stephen (1805), Elizabeth (1808), Anne (1810), Alexander (1814), Mary (1816), Ellen (1818), and Samuel (1819). Longfellow was enrolled in a dame school at the age of only three, and by age six, when he entered the Portland Academy, he was able to read and write quite well. He remained at the Portland Academy until the age of fourteen and entered Bowdoin College in Brunswick, Maine, in 1822. At Bowdoin, he met Nathaniel Hawthorne, who became his lifelong friend.

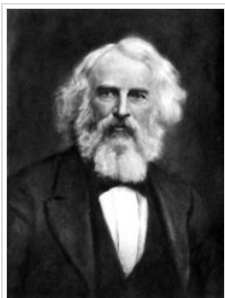
First European tour and professorship at Bowdoin

After graduating in 1825, he was offered a professorship at Bowdoin College with the condition that he first spend some time in Europe for further language study.^[2] He toured Europe between 1826 and 1829 (visiting England, France, Germany, Holland, Italy and Spain) and upon returning went on to become the first professor of

modern languages at Bowdoin, as well as a parttime librarian. During his years at the college, he wrote textbooks in French, Italian, and Spanish and a travel book, *Outre-Mer: A Pilgrimage Beyond the Sea* ^[3]. In 1831, he married Mary Storer Potter of Portland.

Second European tour and professorship at Harvard

Longfellow was offered the Smith Professorship of French and Spanish at Harvard with the stipulation that he spend a year or so abroad. His 22-year old wife, Mary Storer Potter, died during the trip in Rotterdam after suffering a miscarriage in 1835. Three years later, he was inspired to write



Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

"Footsteps of Angels" about their love.

When he returned to the United States in 1836, Longfellow took up the professorship at Harvard University. He settled in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where he remained for the rest of his life, although he spent summers at his home in Nahant. He began publishing his poetry, including "Voices of the Night" in 1839 and *Ballads and Other Poems*, which included his famous poem "The Village Blacksmith", in 1841.

Marriage to Frances "Fanny" Appleton

Longfellow
began courting

Frances "Fanny" Appleton, the daughter of a wealthy Boston industrialist, Nathan Appleton. During the courtship, he frequently walked from Harvard to her home in Boston, crossing the Boston Bridge. That bridge was subsequently demolished and replaced in 1906 by a new bridge, which was eventually renamed as the Longfellow Bridge.

After seven years, Fanny finally agreed to



Fanny Appleton Longfellow

marriage, and they were wed in 1843. Nathan Appleton bought the Craigie House, overlooking the Charles River as a wedding present to the pair. The house was occupied during the American Revolution by General George

Washington and his staff.^[4]

His love for Fanny is evident in the following lines from Longfellow's only love poem, the sonnet "The Evening Star", which he wrote in October, 1845: "O my beloved, my sweet Hesperus! My morning and my evening star of love!"

He and Fanny had six children:

- Charles Appleton (1844-1893)
- Ernest Wadsworth (1845-1921)

- Fanny (1847-1848)
- Alice Mary (1850-1928)
- Edith (1853-1915), who married Richard Henry Dana III, son of Richard Henry Dana
- Anne Allegra (1855-1934)

When the younger Fanny was born on April 7, 1847, Dr. Nathan Cooley Keep administered the first obstetric anesthetic in the United States to Fanny Longfellow.

Longfellow retired from Harvard in 1854, devoting himself entirely to writing. He was awarded an honorary doctorate of Laws from Harvard in 1859.

The death of Frances

Longfellow was a devoted husband and father with a keen feeling for the pleasures of home. But his marriages ended in sadness and tragedy.

On a hot July day, while putting a lock of a child's hair into an envelope and attempting to seal it with hot sealing wax, Fanny's dress caught fire causing severe burns. She died the next day, aged 44, on July 10, 1861. Longfellow was devastated by her death and never

fully
recovered.
The strength
of his grief is
still evident
in these lines
from a
sonnet, "The
Cross of



Longfellow and his good friend
Senator Charles Sumner

Snow" (1879), which he wrote eighteen years later
to commemorate her death:

Such is the cross I wear upon my breast
These forty five years, through all the
changing scenes
And seasons, changeless since the day she
died.

Death

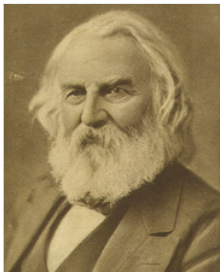
Longfellow died on March 24, 1882, after suffering from peritonitis for five days.

He is buried with both of his wives at Mount Auburn Cemetery, Cambridge, Massachusetts. In 1884 he was the first American poet for whom a commemorative sculpted bust was placed in Poet's Corner of Westminster Abbey in London.

Longfellow's work

Longfellow was such an admired figure in the United States during his life that his 70th birthday in 1877 took on the air of a national holiday, with parades, speeches, and the reading of his poetry. He had become one of the first American celebrities.

His work was immensely popular during his time and is still today, although some modern critics consider him too sentimental. His poetry is based on familiar and easily understood themes with simple, clear, and flowing language. His poetry



Longfellow

created an audience in America and contributed to creating American mythology.

Longfellow's poem "Christmas Bells" is the basis for the Christmas carol "I Heard the Bells on

Christmas Day".

Longfellow's home in Cambridge, the Longfellow National Historic Site, is a U.S. National Historic Site, National Historic Landmark, and on the National Register of Historic Places. A two-thirds scale replica was built in Minneapolis, Minnesota, at Minnehaha Park in 1906 and once served as a centerpiece for a local zoo.

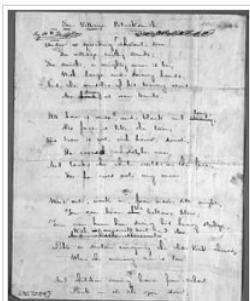
List of Longfellow's Works

- Coplas de Don Jorge Manrique (Translation from Spanish) (1833)
- Outre-Mer: A Pilgrimage Beyond the Sea (Travelogue) (1835)
- Voices of the Night: Ballads; and other Poems (1839)
- Hyperion, a Romance (1839)
- Ballads and Other Poems (1842)
- Poems on Slavery (1842)
- The Spanish Student. A Play in Three Acts (1843)
- Poets and Poetry of Europe (Translations) (1844)
- The Belfry of Bruges and Other Poems (1845)
- Evangeline: A Tale of Acadie (Epic Poem) (1847)
- Kavanagh: A Tale (1849)
- The Seaside and the Fireside (Poetry)(1850)
- The Golden Legend (Dramatic Poem)(1851)
- The Song of Hiawatha (Epic Poem) (1855)
- The Courtship of Miles Standish and Other Poems (1858)
- Tales of a Wayside Inn (Poetry)(1863)
- Household Poems (1865)
- Flower-de-Luce (Poetry)(1867)
- Dante's Divine Comedy (Translation)(1867)
- The New England Tragedies (1868)
- The Divine Tragedy (1871)

- Christus: A Mystery (1872)
- Three Books of Song (1872)
- Aftermath (Poem)(1873)
- The Masque of Pandora and Other Poems (1875)
- Kéramos and Other Poems (1878)
- Ultima Thule (1880)
- In the Harbor (Poems)(1882)

Quotations and manuscript

- "ships
that pass
in the
night"
- "Love is



The Village Blacksmith
(manuscript page 1)

sunshine, hate is shadow, life is checkered
shade and sunshine."

- "It takes less time to do a thing right than explain why you did it wrong."
- "A torn jacket is soon mended; but hard words bruise the heart of a child."
- " The grave is but a covered bridge Leading from light to light, through a brief darkness!"
- "Into each life some rain must fall," "The Rainy Day", *Voices of the Night*
- "Give what you have to somebody, it may be better than you think."
- "It is difficult to know at what moment love begins; it is less difficult to know that it has begun."
- "Christ save us from a death like this, On the reef of Norman's Woe!"

Trivia

- A number of schools are named after him in various states, including Maine, Illinois, Iowa, Michigan, Wisconsin, California, Minnesota, Montana, Pennsylvania, New York, Virginia, Texas, and South Dakota.
- "Longfellow Serenade" is a pop song by Neil Diamond.
- In March 2007 the United States Postal Service made a stamp commemorating him.

- Longfellow was reportedly the first man with running water in the United States.
- The Bowdoin College Longfellows, an all male a capella group, uses Longfellow as their inspiration.

Bibliography

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- McClatchy, J. D. ed. *Poems and Other Writings*, New York: The Library of America, 2000. ISBN 978-1-88301185-7.
- Monterio, George. Introduction to Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth, *The Poetical Works of Longfellow*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1975. ISBN 0395184878

Notes

1. ^ [Henry Wadsworth Longfellow - A Maine Historical Society Web Site - Wadsworth-Longfellow Genealogy - http://www.hwlongfellow.org/family_genealogy.shtml]
2. ^ Monterio. p. xx
3. ^ Monterio. pp. xx - xxi

4. ^ Craigie House. Longfellow birthplace

External links

- Poems by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow at PoetryFoundation.org
- Works by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow at Project Gutenberg
- Audio - Hear the Village Blacksmith
- Maine Historical Society Searchable poem text database, biographical data, lesson plans.
- Longfellow National Historic Site, Cambridge, Massachusetts

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