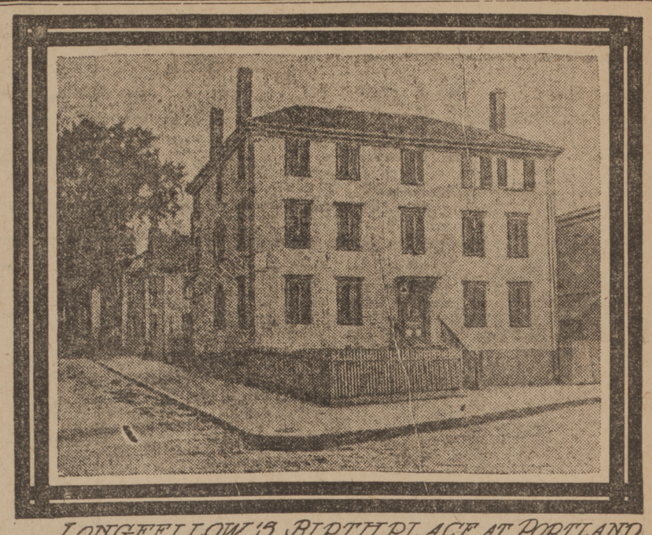
The Longfellow CENTENARY

BY GEORGE SEIBEL





LONGFELLOW'S BIRTHPLACE AT PORTLAND



LONGFELLOW AT FORTY-FOUR



LONGFELLOW STATUE AT PORTLAND

LONGFELLOW'S LAST PHOTO TAKEN SHORTLY BEFORE HIS DEATH

LONGFELLOW IN YOUTH



HOME OF LONGFELLOW'S WIFE, PITTSFIELD, WHERE STOOD THE "OLD CLOCK ON THE STAIRS"



LONGFELLOW'S HOME AT CAMBRIDGE

On Friday a hundred years will have passed since Henry Wadsworth Longfellow was born in the large, rambling house overlooking the sea at Portland, Me. The poet's fame has undergone sharp vicissitudes during this century. He rose speedily to be the most popular and best beloved of American poets; when he died, in 1882, it was considered an irreparable national calamity; today literary moguls exalt Whitman and Poe and sneer that Longfellow is good enough for children.

But the enthusiasm with which preparations have been made to celebrate the centenary, not only in Portland and Cambridge, but at many other places, seems to indicate that the pendulum of opinion is about to swing backward again, and people will realize, despite supercilious critics, that what is good enough for children is none too good for their elders.

There is one story about Longfellow, told by William Dean Howells in "Literary Friends and Acquaintance," which bodies forth better than columns of eulogy the charm and loveliness of the man and his song. It was at Longfellow's funeral. Emerson had come from Concord and stood beside the bier, looking long upon the white face of the white poet, as "dead he lay among his books." Emerson's memory was but a flickering lamp at that time, and as he gazed upon Longfellow's peaceful sleep he seemed to be pathetically struggling to recall something. A little later he said: "The gentleman we have just been burying was a sweet and beautiful soul, but I forget his name."

All of Longfellow's life and all his literary work are summed up in that simple tribute. He was "a sweet and beautiful soul." The rude Norsemen, after their conversion to Christianity, used to speak of "the white Christ," and Bjornson, in a letter to an American friend, wrote of "the white Mr. Longfellow." Though literary critics may "forget his name" the great American people will always remember him as "a sweet and beautiful soul."

DESCENDED FROM PILGRIM FATHERS.

No life was ever freer from the taint of anything mean or vile. He disproved the notion that genius must be unhealthy and erratic. The sprees of Bobbie Burns, the liaisons of Lord Byron had nothing to do with their genius; these men might have been greater poets had they lived decent and orderly lives like Wordsworth, Tennyson and our good New England bards. No wonder that Longfellow was one of Nature's noblemen; he was descended from the stern old Pilgrim stock—on his mother's side from four Mayflower families, including that of John Alden and Priscilla Mullins, whom he has immortalized in "The Courtship of Miles Standish." His grandfather's grandfather another coincidence between poetry and genealogy, was a "Village Blacksmith."

The name of Longfellow was originally written Langfellay, and the maternal surname of Wadsworth first appeared as Wordsworth, so that there may have been a distant link of relationship with the English poet Wordsworth, who was also descended from an ancient Yorkshire family. Perhaps there is no better proof of Longfellow's real poetic power than the fact that he became a poet in spite of his rather ludicrous name. Names like Shakespeare and Spenser have a fine flourish and dignity to them, but people would be inclined to laugh if a poet by the name of Shortboy put in a bid for fame. There is a great deal in a name—as Lowell has said in his essay on Keats the adjective "Keatsy" implies something contemptuous. But Longfellow has made his name the synonym for poetry—no one thinks any longer of a ludicrous connotation. His poetry has made men forget his name.

Nor is the appreciation of Longfellow confined to the young, as critical snobbery assumes. In the balloting for the Hall of Fame Longfellow's name stood tenth among 39; Emerson's was the only literary name above him, while Irving and Hawthorne were the only others chosen. The nine men who ranked ahead of Longfellow were Washington, Lincoln, Webster, Franklin, Grant, Marshall, Jefferson, Emerson and Fulton.

THE POET'S CHILDHOOD.

Like Goethe and many another great poet, Longfellow was first taught to appreciate the beauties of verse by his mother. She read Cowper, Hannah More and Ossian to the children. She was a sensible woman besides, not afraid of a thunderstorm, but "enjoying the excitement of its splendors."

Henry's first poem was published in the Portland Gazette when he was little more than 13. It runs as follows:

THE BATTLE OF LOVELL'S POND.

Cold, cold is the north wind and rude is the blast
That sweeps like a hurricane loudly and fast
As it moans through the tall, waving pines lone and drear,
Sighs a requiem sad o'er the warrior's bier.

The war-whoop is still, and the savage's yell
Has sunk into silence along the wild dell;
The din of the battle, the tumult is o'er,
And the war-clarion's voice is now heard no more.

The warriors that fought for their country, and died,
Have sunk to their rest; the damp earth is their bed;
No stone tells the place where their ashes repose,
Nor points out the spot from the graves of their foes.

They died in their glory, surrounded by fame,
And Victory's loud trump their death did proclaim;
They are dead; but they live in each patriot's breast,
And their names are engraven on honor's bright crest.

The young poet's ambition received a cruel blow the evening of the very day when he first saw himself in print. He accompanied his father to a friend's house, where the talk of the men turned upon poetry. "Did you see the piece in today's paper?" asked the host. 'Very stiff," he added, 'remarkably; moreover, it is all borrowed, every word of it." The 13-year old poet cried himself to sleep that night.

A year or so later, in 1821, Longfellow went to Bowdoin College. There Nathaniel Hawthorne was one of his classmates; another was Frank Pierce, destined to become president of the United States. Perhaps the most significant episode of Longfellow's college life was that one exhibition day, in a debate, he assumed the character and defended the course of the American Indian, which may have been the initial impulse to writing "Hiawatha" many years after.

HIS EARLY WRITINGS.

While he was in college Longfellow began sending contributions to the "United States Literary Gazette,' 'in whose columns Bryant also figured quite frequently. Along with much immature verse there appeared here the fine "Hymn of the Moravian Nuns," which still stirs our pulses, although we know Pulaski's banner was only 20 inches square, and would not have made a very good "martial cloak and shroud."

The "Letters of Sir William Jones"—who knew 28 languages, but is remembered chiefly by that classic of the Third Reader, "What Constitutes a State?"—impelled Longfellow to the study of foreign tongues after he was graduated from Bowdoin, fourth in his class. Few people are now aware that Longfellow's first printed book was a French grammar, translated from L'Homond, and his first original work to be printed was written in French, and was a "Syllabus of Italian Grammar." And even his first volume of verse was made up of translations from the Spanish osplas of Manrique. Among his collected poems we have translations from German, Swedish, Danish, Portuguese, Anglo-Saxon and Latin, besides the languages already mentioned.

"Outre-Mer—a Pilgrimage Beyond the Sea" was published in 1835, and strove to do for the Continent what Irving's "Sketch Book," had done for England "Hyperion," a romance, appeared in 1839 and was Longfellow's last prose book except "Kavanagh," 10 years later. The same year "Hyperion" was published also saw "Voices of the Night" which contained some of the poems that have made his fame worldwide. "A Psalm of Life," and "Midnight Mass for the Dying Year." Another of these poems, "The Beleagured City," provoked from Poe an ill-natured charge of plagiarism, which has been viewed as lightly as Margaret Fuller's savage criticism of the poetry as a whole.

HIS TRAVELS IN EUROPE.

To prepare himself for his poetic vocation Longfellow went abroad for a year after leaving Bowdoin. An episode of his first European pilgrimage shows how narrow and uncertain the border-line between poetic fancy and the prosaic facts of life how easily the wanderer may be pushed over the frontier into the rival realm. Among the vineyards of France he met a group of village girls. As they approached the cottages he thought of Goldsmith, and told one of the girls he had a flute in his knapsack—would she like to dance? The rustic damsel replied that she should like to dance well enough, but had no idea what a flute was. "After that," wrote Longfellow, "I though nothing but starvation would drive me to strike up at the entrance of a village, as Goldsmith did." Nevertheless, the American minister to Spain saw him "dance in the streets on holidays," so his romantic buoyancy was not altogether crushed, although he wrote home that "My poetic career is finished." Irony of youthful pessimism—it had not yet begun!

At 22 he returned home and became professor of modern languages at Bowdoin, his alma mater.

The romance he had so often missed in his foreign pilgrimage he stumbled upon shortly after his return home. One is reminded of Dante's first glimpse of Beatrice in church, and how he "never told his love," by the tradition that Longfellow saw Mary Storer Potter at church and followed her home without daring to speak, although she was an old schoolmate. The modest young poet-professor got his sister to introduce him again to the fair one, and a year or so later the wedding bells rang.

SEVERED BY TRAGEDY.

All went well with the Longfellows. The marriage was crowned with ideal happiness. No Shelleyan storms, no Byronic escapades marred its calm and joy. Prosperity at $900 a year salary, and fame, in the form of an appointment at Harvard, to succeed the learned Ticknor, rounded the circle of domestic felicity. The appointment at Harvard carried with it permission of a year's residence abroad before entering upon his new duties, and Longfellow availed himself of this permission, taking his young wife with him. After they had journeyed hither and thither for six months, meeting the Carlyles and other celebrities, Mrs. Longfellow died at Rotterdam.

Longfellow felt his grief deeply, but bore it bravely. Going to Heidelberg he plunged into the study of German literature. And so he came to be the one who opened for Americans the rich treasure-house of German song and thought.

When he returned to take up his work at Harvard he found residence in the Craigie House, at Cambridge, which has ever since been one of America's literary shrines. The mansion had been Washington's headquarters during the siege of Boston; the room that became Longfellow's study used to be Washington's office, and Washington's bedroom was the apartment first occupied by the poet. George William Curtis has told most amusingly how Mrs Craigie conducted the young professor through the old mansion, showing him room after room, with the Barmecide words "You can't have that," until at last she came to the Washington room, overlooking the river, when she omitted the negative and made the homeseeker happy

A NEW ENGLAND WEIMAR.

This house was the poet's home all the rest of his life, and became the centre of Cambridge's literary society. Cambridge was then the literary capital of America—except Weimar in the days of Gothe, and Athens, in the age of Pericles, probably no city ever harbored so many illustrious literary men at one time. As Bret Harte said to Howells, who moved there in 1866: "Why, you couldn't fire a revolver from your front porch anywhere without bringing down a two-volumer!" Among those who lived in Cambridge were Lowell, Agassiz, Fiske, Child, Dana, Norton, the Jameses (father and son), along with many others not forgotten. Holmes often ran over from Boston, Emerson sometimes came from Concord, and Whittier from Amesbury.

In Washington's old council-room met the Dante Club, under whose inspiration and with whose aid Longfellow produced his version of "Divine Comedy," a version not so highly acclaimed by critics, but rising in the unbiased reader's estimation as he compares it with Charles Eliot Norton's prose version. Norton, along with Lowell, was the most prominent figure in the Dante Club, and is probably the only survivor except Howells. He will read a paper on Longfellow at the Cambridge celebration this week.

For 18 years Longfellow was a professor at Harvard, 18 years of duty faithfully performed and literary laurels honestly earned. During these years he had written "Hyperion," The Spanish Student," "Evangeline," "Kavanagh," "The Golden Legend" and "Hiawatha." He had risen to be the first of American poets, both in popular esteem and in foreign appreciation.

A SECOND DOMESTIC TRAGEDY.

But the year 1861 brought another great sorrow to the poet. He had maaried a second time—Fannie Elizabeth Appleton, whom a friend of Kossuth's described as "a lady of Junonian beauty and the kindest heart," praise confirmed by the memory of all who saw and knew her. Their marriage in 1843 was followed by nearly 20 years of serene happiness, mirrored in such poems at "The Children's Hour."

I hear in the chamber above me
The patter of little feet,
The sound of a door that is opened
And voices soft and sweet.

From my study I see in the lamplight,
Descending the broad hall stair,
Grave Alice and laughing Allegra
And Edith with golden hair.

From this poem, with its picturesque adjectives, everybody knows the Longfellow children. We can see their mother, too, by the light of the poet's phrase about her "deep, unutterable eyes," and by the lines in his pathetic sonnet, "The Cross of Snow:"

Soul more white
Never through martyrdom of fire was led
To its repose.

Mrs. Longfellow was burned to death by a shocking accident. For a second time the poet's life was desolated, and again he went on his way in faith and fortitude, like the mountain "wearing his cross of snow upon his breast." The sonnet upon her death was never shown to the world, and reposed in his own portfolio until after his death. It was one of those poems of which he told William Winter, "poems that were for himself alone, that he should not care ever to publish because they were too delicate for publication."

A NOBLE AND GRACIOUS SOUL.

So he went on to the close of his life in 1882, undiminished in poetic sweetness, a noble and gracious soul, full worthy of Emerson's pathetic tribute. Some of his ripest and richest work belongs to those declining years. "Tales of a Wayside Inn" appeared in 1863; "Christus," perhaps his high-water mark, in 1872; The Hanging of the Crane" in 1874. "The Bells of San Blas," in 1882, was the last important poem he wrote.

But was not his whole life, so clean and tender and sunny, the sweetest of all his poems. One is reminded of Bjornson's phrase, "the white Mr. Longfellow," by his simple imitation of the Master's words, "Suffer little children to come unto me." No other witness is needed to reveal the beauty of his spirit. When the "spreading chestnut tree" was felled which shadowed the village smithy in Brattle street a great arm chair for the poet was fashioned from its wood by the subscriptions of school children. Longfellow gave orders that any child should be allowed to see the chair at any time, and Mr. Higginson records that "the tramp of dirty little feet through the hall was for many months the despair of housemaids."

Another evidence of his unfailing kindness was his attitude toward the autograph fiend. Onec he reords in his diary that "yesterday I wrote, sealed and directed 70 autographs." Just before his seventy-fourth birthday a lady sent him a hundred blank cards, asking him to write his name on each, as she was going to give a party and wished each guest to have a souvenir.

His hospitable home was always open to every newcomer, and at most we find him wishing, when engaged upon some particularly absorbing work, "O for a good snowstorm to block the door!" And once when there was trouble at Harvard betwen students and faculty one of the young ringleaders said: "Let us go to Profesor Longfellow. He always treats us like gentlemen."

A TRULY NATIONAL POET.

Sush was the man, lovable and large-souled, whom America this week, on the completion of a century since his birth, honors as one of her representative national poets, and the first to win for American poetry abroad that recognition which Irving had forced for American prose. By his choice of national subjects, by his unerring taste and scholarship, by his simplicity and poise, he compelled the world to look our way. And, as Barrett Wendall has pointed out, he "comes near a world-old definition of literary greatness, which has sometimes been held the virtue of those who think the thoughts of the wise and who speak the language of the simple."

Besides teaching the world to look our way, he opened for us gates of song throughout the world. He made Americans familiar with Tegner and Uhland and Manrique and Jasmin and Michael Angelo as a poet. He was, perhaps, the most skillful translator of verse that English literature has seen, and he has been repaid in kind by being the most translated of American poets. Some interesting facts are connected with these translations. Freiligrath, Longfellow's friend and Germany's revolutionary poet, translated "Hiawatha" beautifully into German; Dom Pedro, emperor of Brazil, translated "The Sicilian's Tale" into Portuguese; Elihu Burritt, the "learned blacksmith," rendered the "Psalm of Life" into Sanscrit.

Longfellow's popularity, far from waning, seems on the increase. During the first 16 years that he wrote, over 325,000 copies of his books were sold—293,000 poetical and 32,000 prose. It is impossible to make any computation since. There are few American homes without a copy of Longfellow — there should be none. I have even found one in the waiting-room of a dentist, and seen a shop-girl reading "The Courtship of Miles-Standish" in a street car quite as absorbed as if it were a novel by the great Corelli. The learned pay him their tribute as ungrudgingly as the unlearned. Mr. Higginson found in the British Museum more books about Longfellow than about any other modern poet except Tennyson. Browning and Emerson came next; Lowell, Whittier, Pope, Swinburne averaged about one-third as many.

The words he addressed to Alfred Tennyson in the fine sonnet "Wapentake" may be applied to himself on [illegible] hundredth birthday festivel:

No 3 npl
Not of the howling dervishes of song,
Who craze the brain with their delirious dance,
Art thou, O sweet historian of the heart;
Therefore, to thee the laurel-leaves belong,
To thee our love and our allegiance,
For thy allegiance to the poet's art.
GEORGE SEIBEL.

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Congest the Kidneys
Start Rheumatic Pains.

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CURED COLDS AND RHEUMATISM

Mr. J. [illegible] Whitley, of Stanwood, P. O., Ont., knows the merits of Dr. Hamilton's Pills, [illegible] says:—"I wouldn't be alive today had it not been for Dr. Hamilton's Pills. Last winter I was sick with grippe, and when spring came I was weak billous and rheumatic. I used enough medicine to cure twenty times, but I didn't get any help till I tried Dr. Hamilton's Pills. They purified my blood, took the yellow color out of my face, put new tone in my stomach, and increased my appetite. The billous attacks and rheumatic pains gradually departed, and Dr. Hamilton's Pills made a new man of me. I proved their merit, and proclaim them a medicine for all men.

If better health and prompt recovery are important, get Dr. Hamilton's Pills of Mandrake and Butternut today. At all dealers, 25c. per box, or five boxes for $1.00.

OBITUARY

Halifax, Feb. 27.—J. J. Stewart, editor of the Halifax Herald and president of the Herald Publishing Company, died at 3 o clock this morning as a result of burns sustained some days ago when a lamp was accidentally overturned in his room.

Miss Mary J. McFarlane

Following close upon the death of her mother, Miss Mary J. McFarlane passed away yesterday morning, after an illness of bronchial pneumonia, lasting only three days. Eight days ago Miss McFarlane came home hurriedly from Massachusetts to nurse her mother, who died a few days later. On Saturday evening Miss McFarlane felt ill, but her death was totally unexpected. Three brothers—Henry, Asa and Archibald, survive.

Thomas J. O'Brien

The death of Thomas J. O'Brien, son of the late Joseph O'Brien, harbor inspector for a number of years, took place yesterday morning at the home of his mother, St. John West. He was about forty-five years of age, and had been suffering from consumption for about two years. He leaves his mother, three sisters, and two brothers. Mrs. Patrick Walsh, of West End, is a sister.

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