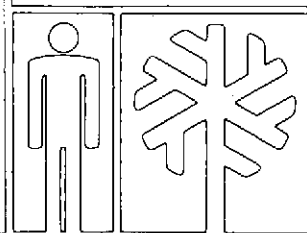


historic structure report

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LONGFELLOW



NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE / MASSACHUSETTS

HISTORIC STRUCTURE REPORT

LONGFELLOW HOUSE

HISTORICAL DATA

LONGFELLOW NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

MASSACHUSETTS

Prepared by

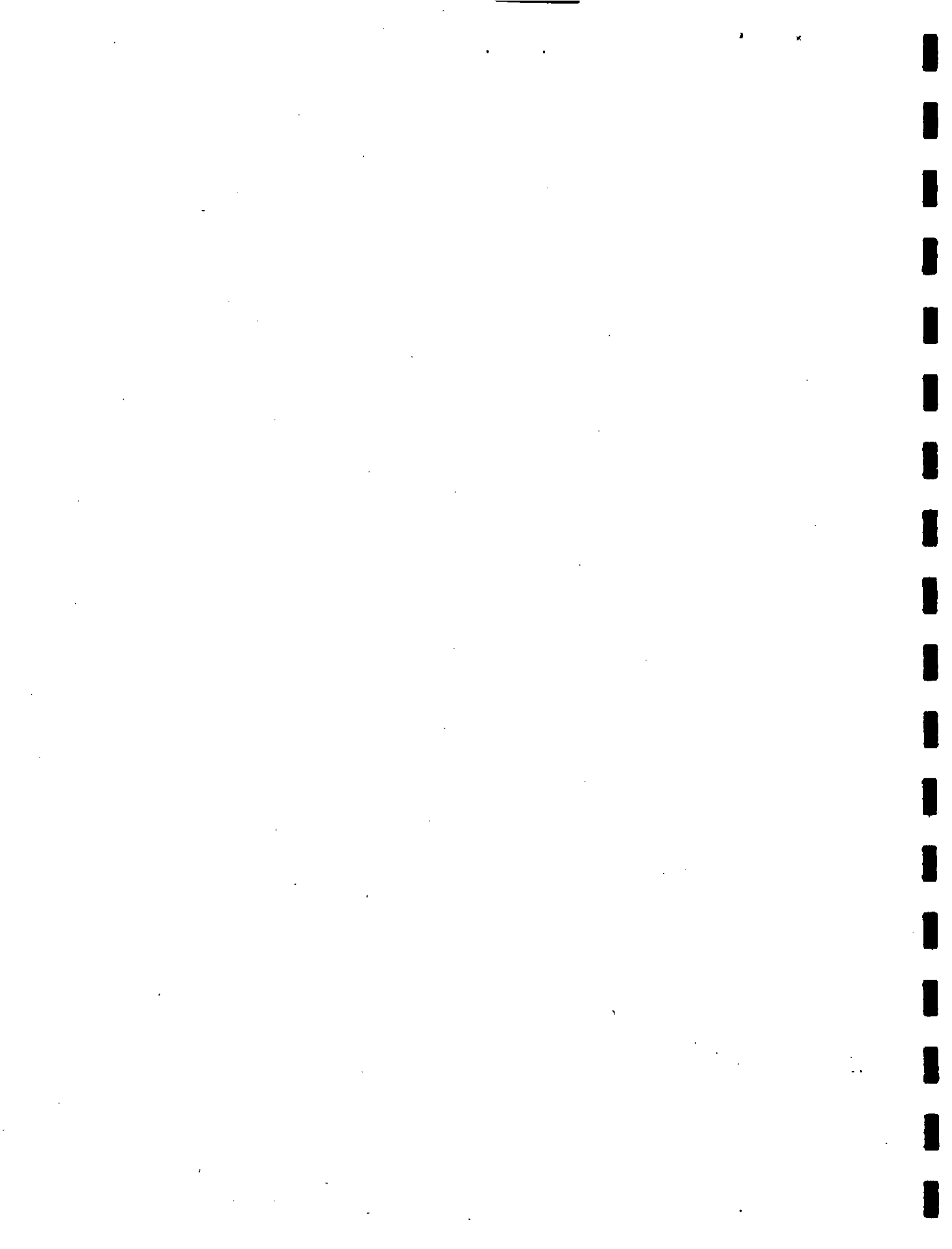
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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
DENVER, COLORADO

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PREFACE

This report attempts to provide a brief historic account of the Longfellow House up to the time of the poet's death in 1882. The account was not extended to the present because the house remained in the family after Longfellow died, and later in the possession of the Longfellow Trust, (and underwent no major alterations, except for the addition of a sun deck on the piazza), and also because time limitations did not permit including later years in the study.

The Longfellow House structure has not had a very exciting history. Few changes were made after the house was enlarged by Craigie, but it does possess a charm that accurately reflects the values of the poet who lived there, and the age of which he was an accurate spokesman.

For the preparation of this study I owe a great deal to Mr. de Valcour, the house's knowledgeable and cultured curator, who made my visit to the house one of my most enjoyable recent experiences.

I. ADMINISTRATIVE DATA

Development and visitor use of the Longfellow House site is focused primarily on the house and the objects inside, and secondarily on the formal garden and grounds. At present the house functions as a historic house museum, and generally a visitor is shown only the main floor, although the second floor also contains furnishings contemporary with Longfellow. At present the second floor serves a dual purpose: two rooms serve as the curator's office, and two apartments are occupied by tenants, one of whom is a senior at a nearby seminary and rents the apartment on a yearly basis. The trustees feel that someone occupying the house affords it a degree of protection.

The Longfellow site presents only minor development problems. Because of the limited acreage available, off-street visitor parking is not recommended. Provision for 10 cars however, could be made directly in front of the house where there is 246 feet of street frontage, and some visitors could park their cars on Brattle Street.

A walkway to the house from Brattle Street provides direct access. Also, there is convenient visitor circulation and control throughout the immediate grounds, especially in the formal garden, although some stabilization of the walks and some regrading of the driveway is necessary. The 30-foot right-of-way along the western boundary of the site does not

appear to present a major problem because it is apparently not used by the residents of Lots 1 and 3.

The lawns and plant materials are in good condition and are well-maintained. Some work, however, is now required on two of the older trees. Future additions or alterations (to the site and buildings needed to accommodate visitors or to satisfy administrative requirements) should be unobtrusive. Every effort must be made to protect and preserve the basic integrity and authenticity of the site, and any future adjustment should reflect the basic taste envisioned by Mr. Longfellow.

Therefore, it is suggested that the heating system replacement, the rest facilities provisions, and the administrative requirements be incorporated within the carriage house situated to the rear of the Longfellow House. A visitor center is not considered a requirement for the site because of its limited area. The house would continue to operate and function much as it does at present, but would utilize the second floor as an extension to its interpretive use.

II. HISTORICAL DATA

A. The Vassall House

Among the prominent and wealthy families of eighteenth-century Massachusetts were the numerous Vassalls. One member of this family, John Vassall, was born in Jamaica, British West Indies, in 1713. His parents were Leonard and Ruth Vassall. Three of his sons, Lewis, John, and William, moved to Boston, probably attracted to that town by its commercial and cultural advantages.¹ John graduated from Harvard College in 1732. Two years later he married Elizabeth Phips, daughter of Lt. Gov. Spencer Phips who owned extensive properties in Cambridge. Three children were born to this marriage: Ruth, born July 16, 1737; John, born June 12, 1738; and Elizabeth, born September 12, 1739. The mother died ten days after Elizabeth's birth. The father subsequently married Lucy Barron of Chelmsford.

Col. John Vassall assumed the position in provincial affairs that his birth and wealth implied; he was engaged in the West Indian trade and served on the General Court (legislature) of Massachusetts Bay. When he died in 1747, his estate in Massachusetts was valued at £ 8,080.²

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1. Edward Doubleday Harris, "The Vassalls of New England," New England Historical and Genalogical Register, 17:56, 113.
 2. Will of John Vassall, Sr., Middlesex County Probate, Middlesex County, Mass.

John Jr.'s inheritance included land on the Watertown Road, now Brattle Street, across from the Vassall home. For several years, John lived with his grandfather and guardian, Spencer Phips. He graduated from Harvard in 1757, the same year the Lieutenant Governor Phips died. Two years later, in 1759, he had the house that is the subject of this report erected on his land.

The unknown designer of John Vassall's house probably worked from a classical architectural handbook and tried to copy what he believed to be the current English Palladian style, popularized more than a century earlier by Inigo Jones. The location of the house conformed to the criteria set forth by Andrea Palladio in his The Four Books of Architecture in which he suggested the following sites: in the middle of an estate "so that the owner may view it and improve it on every side"; on a river for convenient transportation; and on an elevation away from stagnant water.³

Erected on an elevated site, the house was reached by steps that ascended two terraces to the crest. The building was designed upon a loose interpretation of Palladian symmetry in which windows and walls

3. Andrea Palladio, The Four Books of Architecture (New York and Dover, 1965), 1:41.

were placed mechanically, but the symmetry is marred by irregular construction. Either because precision was considered unimportant, or because it was impossible, a number of defects--including a crooked left-hand chimney, a slanting front hall, an awkward placement of windows and balustrade, an incorrect alignment of walls and pilasters, and uneven flooring and paneling in the dining room--compromise the classic design.⁴

The house was sided with beaded clapboards and had ample fenestration to admit the maximum amount of sunshine. The main door opens into a central hall, behind which is a small side hall. Two flights of stairs, the front one for the family and the rear one for the servants, are located in the hall. The hall is divided by the stairs and a doorway that leads into a small front reception room and a rear service area. The second floor duplicates the first floor plan.⁵

Dolores Hayden wrote in discussing the Palladian character of the Vassall House:

4. Dolores Hayden, "A Comparison of the Villa Emo at Gonzalo and Vassall House in Cambridge, Massachusetts," essay, found in Longfellow House Trust files, hereafter cited as Hayden, "A Comparison of the Villa Emo."

5. Ibid.

In the Vassall House design, the proportions intended by the Architect were probably not more subtle than 2:1:2 ratio between the widths of the large rooms on the left side, the central halls, and the large rooms on the right. Faulty construction detracts a great deal. It is a strain to discover that the exterior proportions reflect the interior, in that the distance between the first pilasters, measured at pedestal level, seems to be about doubled in the outside edge of the facade, because the interior walls and the pilasters are not all properly aligned, either in themselves, or in relation to the rest of the architectural elements. Horizontal divisions are made as well as vertical ones; the three storeys of the structure appear to influence the composition of the facade as the sum of three equal distances from doorsill to door cornice, door-cornice to roof-cornice, and roof cornice to peak. Order is a bit difficult to perceive because counters to the vertical and horizontal divisions have been created. Dormer windows have been placed (slightly misplaced, in the case of the left front dormer) above the spaces between the lower storey windows and below, but not directly below, the large chimneys. In addition, the lower storey windows are placed almost two feet below the line of horizontal symmetry passing throughout the top of the door.

The Vassall House facade presents much less exterior emphasis than the Emo facade,⁶ and achieves correspondingly less monumentality and unity. On a raised section of the house front, two pilasters form a decorative door and are crowned by a smallish pediment adorned with a semicircular window. The interior central movement is very strong, however, because of a splendid use of light. Large arched windows on the first and second floors, between the front and back stair landings, carry light into and through the hall from both front and rear windows aligned with the exterior ones. A long north-south vista emphasizes the central movement of light in the Villa Emo, but vistas in the Vassall House were utilized only in contrast with the central use of contained light. They shoot outward in all directions and can be enjoyed from spacious window seats in the three public rooms on the main floor. The window glass may have been an aristocratic luxury; the windows provided a noble way of ordering the interior spaces and establishing the house as a lookout point at the same time.

6. A Palladian house with which comparison was made.

Many Architects from the Renaissance to the present day have felt that the finishing touch necessary to a facade is a variety of classical orders and ornaments used for adornment. Palladio did not think that way and the Emo Villa is an extremely successful example of a little ornament used suggestively but not decoratively. . . .

The Architect of the Vassall House was not so original in his conception of ornament. . . . He adorned the door with a flat cornice and included carved scrolls, vines, and birds, as a few local flourishes. The four Ionic pilasters of white wood were added. Their shafts are equal to the width of the central section of the facade; their full-length is equal to the side of a square formed with another pilaster; but they are rather awkward because they rest on pedestals up to the heights of the lower window sills and then stretch (one or two a bit crookedly) into the capitals which are topped by odd slices of an architrave without a frieze. Above the architrave the cornice juts out over each pilaster, and the mutules emphasize the breaks occurring in the jutting sections, particularly those in the central pediment . . . above this area tiny pediments over the cornice dormers (pediments and a segment at the rear) lead the eye to an ornamental balustrade composed of half balusters⁷ and punctuated with posts along the skyline below the two large chimneys. All the aforementioned trim has been white; as a final touch, nine pair of dark green shutters wing the facade's windows, and when opened in the central section, they rest uneasily on the raised section of the center, seemingly chopped off by the difficult angle at which they must be viewed.⁸

In conclusion, the result of these ornamental divisions and diversions can be described as decorative and genteel, but neither unified or strong nor particularly graceful.⁹

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7. The balustrade does not sit evenly on the angle between the hip and gable sections.
 8. Because the windows have interior shutters, and the exterior blinds do not fit the size of the windows, the blinds are probably later additions.
 9. Hayden, "A Comparison of the Villa Emo," pp. 10-14.

Along with six other mansions, the Vassall House stood in the aristocratic part of Cambridge that came to be called "Tory Row." The owners were bound by close ties of consanguinity and enjoyed a high standard of social and intellectual life. John Vassall's home reflected his tastes, as well as his positions as justice of the peace and major in the provincial militia. In 1761 he married Elizabeth Oliver, whose brother, Thomas, had married Elizabeth Vassall, and for 15 years they lived in their Cambridge house, where seven of their children were born.

Like most of his relatives and friends, John Vassall was a loyal supporter of the King and his ministers. In the summer of 1774, a mob forced him to resign his offices and flee with his family to Boston.¹⁰ Incapacitated in an accident, John was ineligible for active duty, and he sailed to Halifax when Gen. William Howe evacuated Boston on March 17, 1776. Exiled by the provisions of the Act of 1778, and with his Massachusetts property confiscated, he sailed for England on June 10, 1778, where he died at Clifton, Bristol, in the autumn of 1797.¹¹

10. Craigie-Longfellow House Collections, Notes on the Vassall Family. These papers are located in the Longfellow House in Cambridge, Mass.

11. Gentleman's Magazine, 69:898

His house stood vacant for several months until it was used as a hospital after the battles of Concord, Lexington, and Bunker Hill. It subsequently served as Col. John Glover's headquarters during the late spring and early summer of 1775.

On July 2, 1775, Gen. George Washington arrived at Cambridge to take command of the new Continental Army. Upon his arrival in Cambridge, the Provincial Congress provided quarters in the President's house (presently the Wadsworth House) on the college ground. He and Maj. Gen. Charles Lee remained there for less than a fortnight, when they then moved to the Vassall House. Lee soon moved to the Royall House in Medford, but Washington spent 10 months, critical in the history of the American Revolution, at the Vassall House. From the house he not only directed the siege of Boston, but he also presided over the formation of the Continental Army and planned the first major campaign of the war--the American invasion of Canada.¹²

Although a detailed account of Washington's occupancy of the house is outside the scope of this report, one important event that took place

12. Journals of the Committee of Safety, July 8, 1775, Massachusetts Archives, Boston, Mass.; Allan French, The First Year of the American Revolution (Boston, 1934). This work is a scholarly account of the period Washington spent in Cambridge.

within its walls is worth noting. Although successfully coping with many of the problems that attended the creation of the Continental Army, General Washington addressed a letter to the Continental Congress on September 21 in which he enumerated the remaining difficulties: enlistment, supply, pay, and problems related to preparing for winter required immediate attention; and finally, every department of the army lacked money. In fact, the situation was so serious that Washington feared the troops were "in a state not far from mutiny."¹³

Washington's letter was read in Congress on September 29, and a committee was authorized "to repair immediately to the camp at Cambridge to confer" with the general and the executives of the New England colonies "touching the most effectual method of continuing, supporting, and regulating a continental army." On September 30, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Lynch, Sr., and Benjamin Harrison were appointed members. On October 2, they received instructions to reenlist the Connecticut men until December 31, to inform Washington that Congress left to his discretion, the feasibility of an attack on Boston, and to bring back to the Congress

13. Washington Papers, MSS. Div., Library of Congress, Washington to President, Continental Congress, Sept. 21, 1775.

recommendations for correcting the conditions of which the general complained. The committee arrived in Cambridge on October 15, and began deliberations in Washington's office on October 18.¹⁴

For 5 days, the committee, the executives of Massachusetts Bay, Connecticut, Rhode Island, and New Hampshire, and General Washington met, held long discussions, and made few decisions. But those discussions were significant. An army of not less than 20,372 men was recommended, consisting of 28 regiments of 728 enlisted man and officers. Each regiment would contain 8 companies and an 8-man staff. Companies would consist of 1 captain, 2 lieutenants, 1 ensign, 4 sergeants, 4 corporals, 2 drummers or fifers, and 76 privates. One regiment was of artillery and one was of riflemen.¹⁵ This new army would be formed at the beginning of 1776. If the required numbers could not be raised from among the men already on duty, Washington was to recruit from the colonies, but it was expected that the four New England governments combined could raise, by the next March, more than 32,000 men. Recommendations were made for regularizing the pay schedule, and for providing arms, clothing, and

14. Journals of the Continental Congress, Sept. 29, Sept. 30, and Oct. 2, 1775, National Archives.

15. Peter Force, ed., American Archives . . . A Documentary History . . . the American Colonies (Washington, 1837-53), ser. 4, 3:1155 ff.

blankets. The committee and executives departed, and Washington remained to begin the months-long struggle to enlist the new national army.

In December Mrs. Washington joined the general and spent the winter in the Vassall House. During those months, the house was the scene of a fairly active social life, as well as a military headquarters. Several festivities, including a Twelfth Night party that also celebrated the Washingtons' wedding anniversary, enlivened the winter months, at least for those fortunate enough to enjoy an entrée to headquarters. There was a slight broadening of this privilege (that probably pleased a few of the troops stationed in Cambridge) when General Orders for September 6, 1775 read: "The Field Officer of his own guard, and the Adjutant of the day, consider themselves envited to dine at Head Quarters, and this invitation they are desired to accept accordingly."¹⁶

General Howe evacuated Boston on March 17, 1776 and Washington left Cambridge on April 4 to move south toward New York City and its environs. The colony of Massachusetts Bay ceased being a military theater.

The most important document relating to the physical history of the Vassall House during Washington's occupancy is Jonathan Trumbull's note to Jared Sparks that identified the first floor rooms.¹⁷

16. Washington Papers

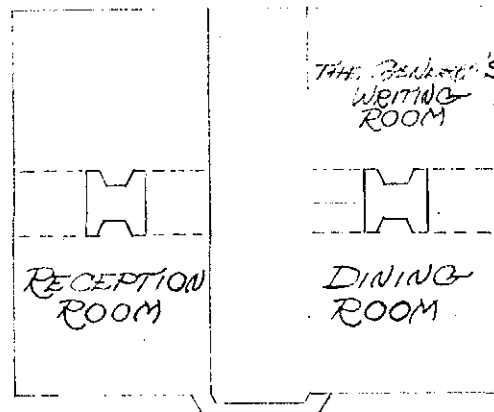
17. Jared Sparks Papers, Houghton Library, Howard University, Appendix I.

WASHINGTON'S HEADQUARTERS

Cambridge, 1775

According to letter from Colonel John Trumbull to Jared Sparks, June 12, 1843

Arrangement of Rooms



"his Bedroom &c. I never knew."

"I occupied a chamber at the back of the house."

B. The Craigie House

In 1778, the province of Massachusetts Bay confiscated John Vassall's property, including his mansion. Nathaniel Tracy, a wealthy Newburyport merchant, purchased the house in 1781 and lived there lavishly until he became bankrupt in 1786. Another wealthy merchant, Thomas Russell of Boston, acquired the house and owned it until 1791.¹⁸

The next owner was Andrew Craigie, who had been Apothecary General of the Continental Army and a successful war profiteer. Speculation in land and government certificates had made Mr. Craigie wealthy enough to aspire to social eminence. Early in 1791, he purchased the Vassall properties in Cambridge that included both the old Henry Vassall and the John Vassall houses.¹⁹

Andrew Craigie made his home in the John Vassall House, and it came to be known as the Craigie House, or humorously as "Castle Craigie." To this house he brought his bride, Elizabeth "Betsy" Shaw, daughter of a Nantucket clergyman. Romantic legends persist that Betsy had a blighted early romance that placed Craigie in second place for his wife's affections.

18. Middlesex County Deeds, Middlesex County Court, Middlesex County, Mass.

19. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, MSS notes on Craigie House, Houghton Library, Howard University, hereafter cited as Craigie House Notebook, pages are unnumbered.

Andrew Craigie was not only wealthy, he was an avid practioner of conspicuous consumption; his home in Cambridge soon reflected that characteristic. According to the Reverend Samuel Longfellow, he made extensive additions to the house, building the "western wing of the house, with its kitchen and dependencies; and being a giver of dinners, enlarged the square northeastern room to its present spacious dimensions, and adorned it with columns, to serve as grand dining-room."²⁰

The Craigie parties were legendary. Josiah Quincy wrote that they "sometimes entertained over a hundred guests at the brilliant commencement festival."²¹ Samuel Longfellow claimed that Craigie "entertained the merchant princes of Boston; and once, according to tradition, a prince of diplomats, Talleyrand, with whom Mrs. Craigie, much better educated than her husband, could converse in his native French."²²

Andrew Craigie's final years were not happy ones, and he was deeply in debt when he died in 1819. Because he died intestate, his wife inherited only her widow's dower--one-third of his property--that included her residence, the Craigie House. Mrs. Craigie, proud, intelligent woman

20. Samuel Longfellow, Life of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, 2 vols., (Boston, 1886), 1:262.

21. Justin Winsor, Memorial History of Boston, 4 vols., (Boston, 1880-81), 4:15.

22. Longfellow, Life of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, p. 262.

who was eccentric enough to be a local institution, supported herself by renting the upstairs rooms of the original portion of the house. Several of her tenants were interesting person, including three men who became presidents of Harvard: Josiah Quincy, Edward Everett, and Jared Sparks.²³ One of the lodgers in 1837 was Nathaniel Collins McLean, a law student from Cincinnati, Ohio, who occupied the southeastern chamber. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, who had recently assumed his duties as Smith Professor of Modern Languages at Harvard, visited him while looking for lodging. In an account he wrote of that visit, he said that "The first time I was in the Craigie House was on a beautiful summer afternoon in the year 1837. I came to see Mr. McLane [sic] a law-student, who occupied the south-eastern chamber. The window blinds were closed but through them came a pleasant breeze and I could see the waters of the Charles gleaming in the meadows."²⁴

McLean was preparing to leave Cambridge, and Longfellow, favorably impressed by the house, wanted to live in it. He especially wanted McLean's room and a vacant room behind it. Accordingly, he called upon the redoubtable Mrs. Craigie in an interview that he described in the following manner:

23. Craigie House Notebook.

24. Ibid.

At first Mrs. Craigie refused to let me have the rooms. I remember how she looked as she stood, in her white turban, with her hands crossed behind her, She said she had resolved to take no more students into the house: but her manner changed when I told her who I was. She said she had read Outre-Mer, of which number one was lying on the side-board. She then took me all over the house and showed me every room in it, saying as we went into each, that I could not have that one. But she finally consented to my taking the rooms mentioned above, on condition that the door leading into the back entry should be locked on the outside.²⁵

Three months later, in August, he moved into Mrs. Craigie's house. The southeast chamber became his library, and the room behind it became his bedroom.²⁶

During the next 3 years he lived in those rooms. Behind the carefully locked door of his bedroom was a landing approached by the rear stairs. Mrs. Craigie's bedroom was off the landing on the northwest side, with her dressing room behind. Mrs. Craigie's gardener, "a meek little man," and his domineering wife, "Miriam, the giantess," lived in the ell in the rear of the house. This engaging creature looked after Longfellow's rooms and prepared and served his meals. The poet wrote his father concerning her ministrations, "I have made arrangements for my breakfast and dinners with Miriam, the giantess of whom Mrs. Craigie says 'Take her by and large, she is a good critter.'" At the

25. Ibid.

26. Ibid.

sound of a bell, she is to bring me my breakfast; at the sound of the same bell, later in the day--namely at five o'clock--my dinner."²⁷

Miriam liked to dominate, not only her henpecked husband, but Longfellow as well; the poet noted that: "She was a giantess, & very pious in words: and when she brought in my breakfast, frequently stopped to exhort me. The exorbitant rate at which she charged my board was rather at a variance with her preaching. Her name was Miriam & (Cornelius Conway) Felton used to call her 'Miriam the profit-ess'."²⁸

That the young professor was very pleased with his new lodging is clear from a letter to his sister:

Cambridge September 21, 1837

My dear little Annie, dear,

In my new abode I dwell like an Italian Prince in his Villa. A flight of stone steps, with flower-pots on each hand, conducts you to the door, and then you pass up a vast stair-case and knock at the left hand door. You enter, and the first thing, that meets your admiring gaze is the author of Outre-Mer reclining on a sofa, in a stupid calamanco morning gown:--slippers, red. It is morning; say, eight o'clock. The sun shining brightly in at one long window. In answer to the bell which was rung a few minutes before - enters a fat woman, bearing a tray, with tea and toast, and a plate of waffles.--This breakfast. After breakfast begins the Massacre of the Innocents - namely flies. Bloody work. Thousands fall beneath the blows of a red silk handkerchief, used like a sling. Their poor souls depart to Beelzebub--King of flies.--

27. Longfellow Papers, Houghton Library, Howard University, Longfellow to his father, Aug. 23, 1837.

28. Craigie House Notebook.

Thus died the Emperor Domitian amuse himself in days gone by.
Thus do I in September '37.

After this, a walk in the great gardens--appertaining to the domain. Then the day goes about its business, till five o'clock, when the same fat woman appears again, bearing in dinner.

Slowly and solemnly the dinner disappears; I sitting near the window, so as to behold all who pass to and fro from Mount Auburn, which is much frequented at this hour.

In the evening--visits till nine.

At nine--return home. Vast entry lighted. Read.²⁹

For 3 years after Mrs. Craigie's death, Longfellow lived in the house as a tenant of the lexicographer, Joseph Emerson Worcester, who had purchased a fourth of the Craigie estate. Men who were, or would become, famous visited him in his lodgings, including Conelius Conway Felton, Charles Sumner, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Charles Dickens.³⁰ In a letter to Sam Ward, "King of the Lobby," Longfellow wrote:

It is a rainy Sunday, I am writing on the small round table near the window. Behind me sits Charles Sumner, reading the "Shitel Book," and exclaiming ". . . what a beautiful writer Irving is!"--Felton is also sitting by the stove,

29. Ibid.

30. Longfellow Journal, Longfellow Papers, Oct. 10, 1829, and Apr. 4, 1840.

reading an article on Greece in the Democratic Review.
What would I not give if I could
your boots on the stairs and your inspiring voice sing-
ing, "Was Kommét dort von de Höhe?"³¹

Ward liked to tease Longfellow about the comfortable life he led in Cambridge, comparing him to a well-fed tiger: "A Poet with the sweetest and most precious gifts can look upon the world--its censures & its applause--with indifference--provided he lie in a jungle like the Craigie House."³² He also wrote this parody of Longfellow's "God's Acre" and sent it to his friend, who was preparing a trip to Germany:

THE CRAIGIE HOUSE

I like that fashion new in which
you date your letters from the
Craigie House; it is right to own
the roof that shelters one's grey
pate. And whence proceed the
"Voices of the Night."

The Craigie House! That ancient name recalls the memories
of those Heroic days when Trenton's victor slept within the Walls,
He whom a nation crowned with civic bays!

Upon thy threshold let my footsteps wake once more the
echoes which shall wain the ear of him to whom this shyness I
dedicate. That the long-wished-for, longing friend is near.
Then shall his faded cheek with pleasure bloom and warmly press
. . . while hand seeks hand; then shall as warm an impulse waken
the perfume. O choice cigars from Cuba's distant strand.

31. Henry Marion Hall, "Longfellow's Letters to Sam Ward," Putnam's Monthly, 3 (Oct. 1907): 42.

32. Craigie-Longfellow House Collection, Ward to Longfellow, June 20, 1840.

With thy restoring power Oh! renovate
Hygeia! One in whom the Sacred Nine
Have breathed the quickening breath
exhilarate That fans the flance of
poesy divine.

Green Hills of Germany! receive the
friend We fondly launch upon the
troubled Sea: Blythely begin and
blythe his journey end and may he
owe new life and youth to ye!³³

Longfellow spent the year 1842 in Europe, and returned to Cambridge with improved health and spirits. Within a few months, on July 13, 1843, he married Frances Elizabeth ("Fanny") Appleton.³⁴ This second marriage was an especially happy one. After spending 2 weeks in Cambridge, the newlyweds made a month-long trip to Portland, Maine, and Pittsfield, Massachusetts, visting their families. At the end of this holiday they returned to the Craigie House, and Fanny wrote to her mother-in-law in a letter dated September 4, 1843:

We returned to Cambridge the day before Commencement and were most happy to be again in our dear old mansion, to which we are becoming too much attached to think of resigning it for a modern house with limited views and no associations. We hope to persuade my father to purchase it for us, as we find it in very good condition and is roomy enough to be made very comfortable. To possess the rooms in which Washington lived so long is

33. Craigie-Longfellow House Collection.

34. Longfellow's first wife died in Europe.

no slight temptation, and to me they have more recent associations equally interesting.³⁵

Fanny's father, Nathan Appleton, did purchase the house and the five acres on which it stood for his daughter and her husband,³⁶ and Longfellow wrote to his German friend, Ferdinand Freiligrath, on November 24, 1843:

We have purchased an old mansion here, built before the Revolution, and occupied by Washington as his Headquarters when the American Army was at Cambridge. It is a fine old house and I have a strong attachment from having lived in it since I first came to Cambridge. With it are five acres of land. The Charles River winds through the meadows in front and in the rear I yesterday planted an avenue of Linden trees, which already begin to be ten or twelve feet high. I have also planted some acorns and the oaks grow for a thousand years, you may imagine a whole line of little Longfellows, like the shadowy monarchs in Macbeth, walking under their branches for countless generations, 'to the crack of doom,' all blessing the man who planted the oaks.³⁷

For 11 months following Mr. Appleton's purchase, the Longfellows shared the house with the Worcesters under a somewhat confused arrangement. Worcester rented the entire house and sublet half of it to the Longfellows. Longfellow recorded: "I took half the house, as Mr. Worcester's tenant. When we purchased the house in the autumn of

35. Longfellow Papers, Frances Longfellow to Mrs. Longfellow, Sept. 4, 1843.

36. Craigie House Notebook.

37. Longfellow Papers, Longfellow to Freiligrath, Nov. 24, 1843.

this year, I was at once Landlord and sub-tenant."³⁸ Describing the division, he said, "We occupied the eastern side of the house only. The lower front room served as parlor and dining room; the long room was a kind of servants' hall or pantry. Our bedroom and library were the chambers above, as before my marriage."³⁹

The Worcesters vacated the western half of the house in May 1844, when they moved into their newly built home nearby.⁴⁰ Once they were in complete possession of the property, the Longfellow's began to think about making repairs. Most of their attention was directed toward the grounds; they limited work on the house to the minimum necessary to keep it in a livable condition. Longfellow's entry in his journal for April 9, 1844, reflected this attitude: "Dexter the architect came to look upon the field of battle and contemplate the pulling down of old barns and the general change of house and grounds. In these repairs I shall have as little done as possible. The Craigie house is decidedly conservative; and will remain as much in its old state as comfort permits."

38. Craigie House Notebook.

39. Ibid.

40. Longfellow Journal, Apr. 9, 1844.

Almost two months later he recorded: "Troubled in mind about this old castle of a house and the repairs. He who undertaketh a great house, undertaketh a great care."⁴¹

One part of the house--the roof--received almost immediate attention perhaps because it was in urgent need of repair. The poet recorded in his journal for August 9, 1844: "On taking off the old shingles we found on the roof 5045 pounds of lead. This would have been worth know- in in Washington's day. when they melted the pipes of the church organ for bullets; and here over his very head were nearly three tons of lead, concealed under the shingles."⁴² At the same time, the "widow's walk" balustrade was replaced. Longfellow noted that "The balustrade around the piazza at the back of the house was originally on the roof, but at the time of the repairs, being found rather decayed, was replaced by a new one, and what remained of the old one was put below in 1844."⁴³

Mr. Longfellow's interest in the house and its historical associations deepened as he planned the repairs on both the building and its grounds. The Vassalls and the Craigies and the lives they led in the old house

41. Ibid., June 4, 1844.

42. Ibid., Aug. 8, 1844.

43. Craigie House Notebook.

interested him, and in his notebook he recorded events that involved the house. But it was Washington's association with the house that most intrigued him. He took particular pleasure in reading the letters that Washington wrote during his stay in Cambridge, and working in the spirit that he believed characterized the general's conduct during the early months of the Revolution. This sentiment found expression in the following lines from the poem "To a Child," written for his son, Charles, on October 12, 1845:

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.⁴⁴

With the entire house finally available to them, the Longfellows could adapt it to their needs and desires. One of the first changes effected was moving the poet's study from the southeastern chamber--where he had written Hyperion, Voices of the Night, Ballads and Other Poems, The Spanish Student, and Poems on Slavery--to the room immediately

44. Craigie-Longfellow House Collection.

below. During the 7 years that the chamber served as a study, Mr. Longfellow had arranged it to suit his tastes, and the furnishings were placed in the same relative positions in the downstairs room. In this room, where he received a steady stream of visitors, he composed the later works that enhanced and internationalized his reputation.⁴⁵

The room behind the study is the largest in the house. It had been used as an office during Washington's occupancy, and Andrew Craigie, after enlarging and embellishing it, turned it into a ball-room. Longfellow made it his library and music room. Here talented guest, including the Norwegian violinist Ole Bornemann Bull, performed for private gatherings.⁴⁶ In November 1846 an Italian marble mantel-piece, with carved bas-reliefs of lions and griffins, was removed from the old Batt House in Bowdoin Square, Boston, and installed in the library.⁴⁷

The rear door of the library opens into a long room named the "Blue Entry" because of its blue walls. This room opens into the

45. This discussion of the domestic arrangements of the house is derived from Henry W. L. Dana's manuscript in the Craigie-Longfellow House Collection.

46. Longfellow Journal, June 3, 1846, and Dec. 4, 1855.

47. Craigie House Notebook.

the dining room, which opens into an outer room, which, in turn, opens into the rooms that served the Vassalls, the Washingtons, and now the Longfellows as a parlor.

The parlor's front door opened into the entrance hall. Upstairs were the bedrooms. Mr. Longfellow's former study became the nursery, behind which was a bedroom. The room opposite the nursery and directly over the parlor was the guest room. Behind it was the Longfellows' bedroom, with an adjoining smaller room where their younger son, the delicate Ernest, slept.

Mr. Longfellow's dressing room is located between the main house and the "ell." A shower bath was installed here before the summer of 1846.⁴⁸ The "ell" included other bedrooms, a kitchen, and servants' quarters.

Repairs throughout the years, such as the installation of a slate roof in 1854 and the addition of a billiard room behind the house, kept it comfortable and in good condition.⁴⁹

The family's idyllic life was shattered by the Civil War, Charles Longfellow's enlistment in the Union Army, and Mrs. Longfellow's death.

48. Longfellow Journal, June 14, 1846.

49. Ibid., May 24, 1854.

On July 9, 1861, while the poet worked in his study, his wife and daughters were in the library, near an open window, wrapping curls cut from one of the girl's hair in sheets of paper and sealing them with wax. A breeze from the window caused a flame, heating the wax, to ignite Mrs. Longfellow's dress; her burns were so severe that she died the next morning.

Mrs. Longfellow's untimely death was a profound shock to her husband who was left with the care of three small daughters, aged 5, 7, and 10, and two sons, aged 15 and 17. For several weeks the bereaved husband could not discuss his wife's death, but as time passed, he was forced by his responsibilities to pick up the strands of life and continue with his work.

His personal tragedy was not diminished by the effects of the Civil War on his young family. Charles, the older son, was an adventurous youth who had already lost his right thumb in a hunting accident. Charles was eager to join the army, but his father refused to give his consent, arguing that he was too young. The son, who knew that many boys younger than he were serving in both armies, was determined to enlist. On Tuesday, March 10, 1863, Charles disappeared, and the following Saturday his father received an undated letter telling him that the son had volunteered for service in the Artillery. He later was commissioned second lieutenant in the 1st Massachusetts Cavalry. The young officer was seriously wounded

at New Hope Church on November 27. Mr. Longfellow and his younger son traveled to Washington and Virginia and brought Charles home to Cambridge, where the members of his family nursed him back to health.

Although his wound caused him discomfort the rest of his life, Charles remained active and adventurous. In the summer of 1866, he crossed the Atlantic in his sloop Alice one of the smallest craft that had ever made that voyage. He then traveled to Russia, and in 1869 he passed through the newly opened Suez Canal to India, China, and Japan. Souvenirs of his journeys are still part of the furnishings of the home in Cambridge, and his room was converted into a "Japanese Room" so filled with mementos that no space was left, giving the room a curiously ornate character.

One of the major literary events associated with the Craigie-Longfellow House was Longfellow's translation of Dante's works and the resultant founding of the Dante Society. Work on the translation began during the winter following Mrs. Longfellow's death, and the project had great emotional significance to the grief-stricken poet. Mr. Longfellow did not undertake this labor of love unaided. His former student and successor as Smith Professor, James Russell Lowell, frequently came from his home at Elmwood to listen to the translations and make suggestions. Charles Eliot Norton was another student and a

current lecturer at Harvard. He had already translated Dante's Vita Nuova, and he gave of his time and knowledge in helping his old mentor with his translation of the Divina Commedia. The two friends met with Longfellow each Wednesday, and these meetings gradually developed into an informal Dante Club.

By April 16, 1863, Longfellow had completed a draft translation of the Divine Comedy. The task of correcting his translation and preparing the voluminous editorial notes was the next undertaking. To facilitate this, he began, during the following November, to have his translation printed on large sheets that gave him space for corrections and notes. With the help of his learned friends, Mr. Longfellow made such good progress that he was able to publish the first installments of his translations in the January 1864 issue of the Atlantic Monthly.⁵⁰

The 600th anniversary of Dante's birth was celebrated in Italy in May 1865. Longfellow had 10 advanced copies of the Inferno printed, and on February 11 he sent these to his close friend, Sen. Charles Sumner, in Washington, for presentation to the Italian Minister to the United States. This limited edition was inscribed: "In Commemorization del Secentesimo Anniversario della Nascita di Danti Aleghiere."⁵¹ The

50. Craigie House Notebook.

51. Ibid.

City of Florence responded by presenting Longfellow with a medal bearing a bas-relief of Dante, and Reavenna sent the poet fragments from Dante's office.

In addition to Norton and Lowell, other Dante enthusiasts composed the Dante Club. These came to include: James T. Fields, Longfellow's publisher; George Washington Green, his old friend from the days in Germany; Tom Appleton, his brother-in-law; Dr. Oliver Wendall Holmes, Sr.; William Dean Howells, who had been U. S. Consul in Venice, and later assistant editor and editor-in-chief of the Atlantic Monthly; and Louis Agassiz.⁵²

Meanwhile, the translation of the Divine Comedy continued. The Inferno was published in 1865, the Purgatio in 1866, and the Paradiso in 1867; the notes and commentaries, more voluminous than the text, were prepared so that the entire translation, with the editorial materials, became available in 1867, along with the six "Sonnets on Translating Dante's Divina Commedia."

Mr. Longfellow revisited Europe during 1868-69. After his return home, he prepared a large number of additional notes on the Divine Comedy

52. Longfellow Journal, Mar. 28, 1866; Longfellow Papers, Longfellow to Freiligrath, May 24, 1867.

that he intended to incorporate into a later edition. Professor Norton published these notes several years after Longfellow's death.

The Dante Club gradually evolved into the Dante Society, and Mr. Longfellow became its first president.

Longfellow's final years were spent in the Craigie-Longfellow House, reading the classics and enjoying the fruits of his work. Old friends, like Felton, Agassiz, and Senator Sumner died, prompting the poet to recall the nights the senator spent in the Craigie-Longfellow House:

Good night! Good night! as we so oft have said
Beneath this roof at midnight, in the days
That are no more, and shall no more return.
Thou hast but taken thy lamp and gone to bed;
I stay a little longer, as one stays
to cover the embers that still burn.⁵³

The poet's powers were waning. His failing eyesight closed his beloved books to him, and he wandered through his home unable to read from the volumes that filled the bookcases lining the walls. On December 27, 1881, less than 3 months before his death, he wrote My Books, his last sonnet.

Sadly as some old medieval knight
Gazed at the arms he could no longer yield,
The sword two-handed and the shining shield
Suspended in the hall, the full in sight,
While secret longings for the lost delight

53. Longfellow Papers; MS, Three Friends of Mine: Sonnet IV, June 15, 1874.

of touring or adventure in the field came
over him, and tears but half concealed trembled
and fell upon his beard of white, So I behold
these books upon their shelf, My ornaments and
arms of other days; not wholly useless, though
no longer used, for they remind me of my other
self, younger and stronger, and the pleasant ways
in which I walked, now clouded and confused.⁵⁴

In the last lines Longfellow wrote, penned 9 days before he died,
he faced away from the darkness that was engulfing him toward the future:

O Bells of San Blas, in vain
Ye call back the Past again!
The Past is deaf to your prayer;
Out of the shadows of night
The worlds roll into light;
It is daybreak everywhere.⁵⁵

The poet died in his room on March 24, 1882, and 2 days later,
private funeral services were held in his home.

54. Ibid.; MS, My Books, Dec. 27, 1881.

55. Ibid.; MS, The Bells of San Blas, the final verse of which was
dated Mar. 15, 1882.

ILLUSTRATIONS

Illustration No. 1

SOUTH FACADE OF THE LONGFELLOW HOUSE

105 Brattle Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts
General Washington's Headquarters in 1775 and 1776.



SOUTH FACADE OF THE LONGFELLOW HOUSE
105 Brattle Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts
General Washington's Headquarters in 1775 and 1776.

Illustration No. 2

REAR VIEW OF THE LONGFELLOW HOUSE AS SEEN FROM THE GARDEN

Formal garden first laid out in 1845, later enlarged twice
Home of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow from 1837 to 1882
Home of Miss Alice Longfellow from 1850 to 1928



REAR VIEW OF THE LONGFELLOW HOUSE AS SEEN FROM THE GARDEN
Formal garden first laid out in 1845, later enlarged twice
Home of H. W. Longfellow from 1837 to 1882
Home of Miss Alice Longfellow from 1850 to 1928.

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