

# Longfellows of Maine

By Russell C. Farnham, CG

Having spent an enormous amount of time on the Longfellow family over the past several years, I am committed to provide members of the New England Historic Genealogical Society some brief mention of people and relationships I was able to develop in my research of this family. There are many "faces" worthy of repeating, but owing to space restrictions greater detail can be found in my book, *A Longfellow Genealogy*. It is the first published opus of the family.

## William the Immigrant

It was the immigrant William, of Newbury, Massachusetts, who set the litigious tone for the family, by virtue of consistent court appearances in Essex County.<sup>1</sup> He enjoyed his spirits at the Blue Anchor tavern in Newbury, where he had acquired a reputation as one who took his time when it came to paying his tavern bill. His father-in-law, Henry Sewall, spent upwards of "a hundred pounds" to get him out of debt, and William also approached the Sewall family to pay his passage to England when it became necessary to return there in 1687, a result of his brother Nathan's death. William was hopeful he would receive his "patrimony" from Nathan's estate. However, an uncle [a son of William's grandfather, Henry Sewall] in England apparently agreed to pay the passage, but only if his niece Anne, wife of William, agreed. William's father-in-law, Henry Sewall, back in Newbury, urged him to get what was to come to him through the estate process, and not become involved in frivolous lawsuits that would only end up wasting his money.

## William the Second

From William<sup>1</sup> was spun the second William<sup>2</sup>, who has been offered [erroneously] as progenitor of the Maryland Longfellows.<sup>2</sup> That could not be, as William married Mary Davis in Charlestown, Massachusetts in 1705, and they left no issue. Therefore he could not have been father of Joseph, whose earliest appearance in Maryland is 1710, when he witnessed the will of Elizabeth Browne. There is now however definite proof of two progenitors of the Longfellow name in America. There is currently no proof of the English link between the two families, although more research needs to be done in English archives.

It was Stephen<sup>2</sup>, the Newbury blacksmith and younger sibling of the second William<sup>2</sup>, who would later marry Abigail Thompson. They were great-great-grandparents of the poet, Henry<sup>6</sup> Wadsworth Longfellow (HWL). Stephen was the first of four consecutive Stephens in the poet's line back to the immigrant. HWL would later pen the poem "[The Village Blacksmith](#)," as a tribute to his great-great-grandfather.

## Stephen Longfellow<sup>5</sup> and the Wadsworth Sisters

Zilpah Wadsworth was the daughter of the famous Revolutionary War patriot, General Peleg Wadsworth and Elizabeth Bartlett, formerly of Duxbury, Massachusetts. Zilpah's sister Elizabeth had caught the eye of one Stephen<sup>5</sup> Longfellow, noted Portland attorney, congressman, and respected citizen of Falmouth (Portland). Tragically, Elizabeth would succumb to her death from consumption on August 1, 1802. Zilpah was devoted to caring for her younger sister, who required drinking and soaking in solutions of potash.<sup>3</sup> On her deathbed, Stephen Longfellow held her hand until long after she expired, as members of her family watched.

After Eliza Wadsworth was buried, Stephen Longfellow, father of the poet, remarked to Zilpah and her sister Lucia: "You will still be my sisters."<sup>4</sup> As events unfolded, it was Zilpah, who Stephen would marry [in the same room that Elizabeth had died]. Younger sister Lucia Wadsworth, who was seven years younger than Stephen Longfellow, would spend her life caring for their children, perhaps because of her affection and desire to be close to him. Lucia would tend to the many chores of keeping house at Portland for Stephen and Zilpah. She "ran the house, cooking, sewing, knitting, and in general managing the entire family."<sup>5</sup>

## Nathan Longfellow<sup>2</sup>

The second William<sup>2</sup> had a brother Nathan<sup>2</sup>, who would marry Mary Green. Nathan<sup>2</sup> would continue his father's legal habits by often going to the Common Plea Court, held at Portsmouth, New Hampshire, to settle differences with siblings, neighbors, and friends. His wife Mary was the daughter of the respected Judge (Capt.) Jacob Green of Hampton Falls and his wife Sarah, the earliest owners of the mills at Hampton Falls. The mills would burn, but were

rebuilt by Capt. Jacob despite the objections of Nathaniel Weare, who operated a mill further up the Falls River. When Nathan<sup>2</sup> died, leaving an estate of £2,630, his widow Mary married Joseph Macress of Salisbury. This marriage led to more legal skirmishes in the Portsmouth court that would not be resolved among this family for many years. The nine children of Nathan and Mary (Green) Longfellow were:<sup>6</sup>

Jonathan, born May 23, 1714  
Samuel, born May 8, 1716  
Ann, born August 2, 1719  
Mehitable, born December 18, 1720  
Jacob, born July 20, 1722  
Sewall, born October 6, 1724  
Abigail, born February 5, 1727  
Nathan, born June 8, 1729  
Green, born April 3, 1731

The repetition of the given name "Green" found in later Longfellow families can be traced back to Nathan's wife Mary. The name, which was also frequently used by families of Palermo and Kennebec counties, was popular until about the mid-nineteenth century. It was from Nathan<sup>2</sup> that the progenitors of the Longfellow name in Maine would spring.

### **Jonathan Longfellow<sup>3</sup>**

Nathan's oldest son Jonathan<sup>3</sup> was the judge of the first court in Machias, Maine. From him would come the largest Longfellow settlement (Machias) of the colonial era. Jonathan was a young man of seventeen when he married Mercy Clark, who was age sixteen. Both grandparents of Jonathan and Mercy would lose their lives on the disastrous expedition to Quebec led by Sir William Phips in 1690. Although Jonathan was wealthy, he frequently ignored creditors and refused to pay his own promissory notes. He was assaulted on several occasions and participated in a flurry of litigation unsurpassed in Longfellow history. It took twenty-two years to settle his estate.

### **Nathan Longfellow<sup>3</sup>**

Jonathan's brother Nathan<sup>3</sup> also spent his early years at the Hampton Falls settlement of New Hampshire. It is not certain when he departed from the area, but it may very well have been the same time his older brother Jonathan<sup>3</sup> left for Cornwallis in 1764. Nathan<sup>3</sup> was a resident of Lincoln County, Maine in 1776 when he served in Colonel Poor's New Hampshire Regiment.<sup>7</sup> He married Susanah Healey about 1749 and they had eleven children, seven of which were born in Hampton Falls, New Hampshire. The remaining four children were born in Whitefield, Lincoln County, Maine. Nathan's seven sons, Stephen<sup>4</sup>, Samuel<sup>4</sup>, Sewall<sup>4</sup>, Jacob<sup>4</sup>, Nathan<sup>4</sup>, Green<sup>4</sup>, Levi<sup>4</sup>, and daughter (Sarah) would settle in Maine, and leave large families. Another daughter, Betsy, remained in New Hampshire having married Joseph Wadleigh 3d. The sons would settle at Great Pond (Palermo, Waldo County) and Hunts Meadow (Whitefield, Lincoln County). The Hunts Meadow settlement was on the western edge of what is now known as Whitefield. The first settlers of Hunts Meadow were Silas Hunt, the Abraham Preble family, and Sewall Longfellow. It was named after Silas Hunt, the brother of Benoni, who was married to Sewall's sister Nancy.<sup>8</sup>

The Whitefield settlement got its name from the British evangelist George Whitefield, who inspired the colonists before the town was settled in 1770.<sup>9</sup> The early settlement was in the parish of Saint Denis, located on a hill in the Irish section of town, an area reminiscent of the countryside of Ireland. Headstones tell of origins in the Emerald Isle.<sup>10</sup> Jonathan and Levi Longfellow lived there in 1803 on lots 19 and 20. Sewall was at Ballstown (Jefferson) at the time of the 1800 census with Nathan and Nathan Longfellow Jr., and Jacob. In 1810 Green, Levi, Nathan, Nathan Jr., and Samuel Longfellow were also living there.

The fertile and wooded river valley provided sustenance and energy to woodsmen, farmers, millers, sawyers, and their families for decades. Those who plied their trade and practiced their craft were thankful for the power and beauty of the Sheepscot River. The Longfellows lived in the same general region. They built homes for their families while fishing, hunting game, and growing wheat and corn. Levi, Stephen, and Samuel were part of the Sheepscut [sic] Great Pond land settlement that split as part of the Kennebec Purchase from the late colony of New Plymouth of 1802-1803. They were among the families who were "quieted" and granted possession of 100 acres of land.<sup>11</sup>

Much more detail can be found in my book, *A Longfellow Genealogy, comprising the English ancestry and*

descendants of the Immigrant, William Longfellow of Newbury, Massachusetts and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (WALRUS Publishers, Inverness, FL, 2002).

<sup>1</sup> Russell Clare Farnham, CG *A Longfellow Genealogy, Comprising the English Ancestry and Descendants of the Immigrant, William Longfellow of Newbury, Massachusetts and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow* (WALRUS Publishers, Inverness, Florida, 2002):47-55.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid; Article, "The Longfellows of Maryland: Were They Cousins of Those of Maine?" *The Maine Genealogist* 22 [Feb 2000]:1:31-36.

<sup>3</sup> "Longfellow's Portland and Portland's Longfellow," *Maine Historical Society Quarterly*, 14[1987]:

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, pg 4.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, pg 27.

<sup>6</sup> Russell Clare Farnham, CG *A Longfellow Genealogy, Comprising the English Ancestry and Descendants of the Immigrant, William Longfellow of Newbury, Massachusetts and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow* : 47-55.

<sup>7</sup> Nathan was about age 45 [sic] when he appears on a roll of the sick, who were absent from Col Poor's Regt from January 1, 1776 - July 1776 as shown in Isaac W. Hammond, A.M., *The State of New Hampshire Rolls of the Soldiers in the Revolutionary War, 1775, to May, 1777 with an Appendix, embracing diaries of Lieut. Jonathan Burton* (Concord, N.H.: Parsons B. Cogswell, State Printer, 1885): pg 309.

<sup>8</sup> Russell Clare Farnham, CG *A Longfellow Genealogy, Comprising the English Ancestry and Descendants of the Immigrant, William Longfellow of Newbury, Massachusetts and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow* : 310.

<sup>9</sup> Map, County Commissioners, Lincoln County, Maine, *Vacationland at Its Best*, n.d.; "Longfellow's Portland and Portland's Longfellow," *Maine Historical Society Quarterly*, 27[1987]:4.

<sup>10</sup> Map, County Commissioners, Lincoln County, Maine, *Vacationland at Its Best* , n.d.

<sup>11</sup> Lincoln County deeds 55:6, and 55:9.

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## "The Village Blacksmith

by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

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Under a spreading chestnut-tree  
The village smithy stands;  
The smith, a mighty man is he,  
with large and sinewy hands;  
And the muscles of his brawny arms  
are as strong as iron bands.  
  
His hair is crisp, and black, and long;  
his face is like the tan;  
His brow is wet with honest sweat,  
He earns whate'er he can,  
And looks the whole world in the face,  
For he owes not any man.  
  
Week in, week out, from morn till night,  
You can hear his bellows blow;  
You can hear him swing his heavy sledge  
With measured beat and slow,  
Like a sexton ringing the village bell,  
When the evening sun is low.  
  
And children coming home from school  
Look in at the open door;

They love to see the flaming forge,  
And hear the bellows roar,  
And catch the burning sparks that fly  
Like chaff from a threshing-floor.

He goes on Sunday to the church,  
And sits among his boys;  
He hears the parson pray and preach,  
He hears his daughter's voice  
Singing in the village choir  
And it makes his heart rejoice.

It sounds to him like her mother's voice  
Singing in Paradise !  
He needs must think of her once more,  
How in the grave she lies;  
And with his hard, rough hand he wipes  
A tear out of his eyes.

Toiling, - rejoicing, - sorrowing,  
Onward through life he goes;  
Each morning sees some task begin,  
Each evening sees it close;  
Something attempted, something done,  
Has earned a night's repose.

Thanks, thanks to thee, my worthy friend,  
For the lesson thou hast taught!  
Thus at the flaming forge of life  
Our fortunes must be wrought;  
Thus on its sounding anvil shaped  
Each burning deed and thought.

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[1]*The Poetical Works of Longfellow*, Oxford edition (London: Oxford University Press, 1917):61.