

## LONGFELLOW'S GREATEST HITS

# 19th century 'Rock Star' back on the road with the Longfellow Big Read

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SPECIAL TO THE TOWN CRIER

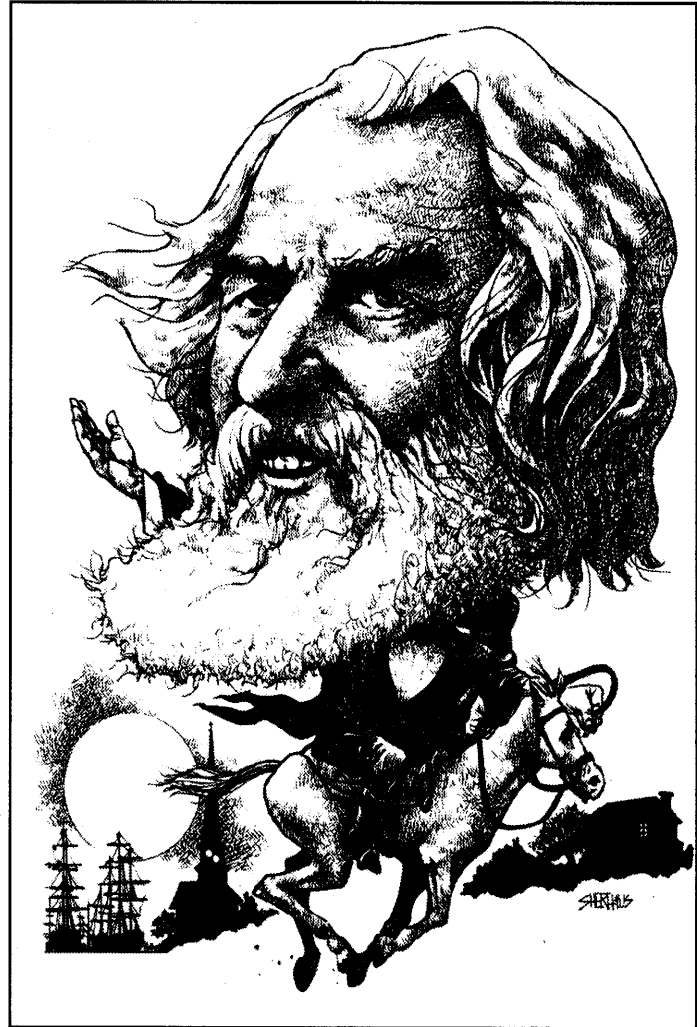
Henry Wadsworth Longfellow was the most popular literary figure of his time—the poet with a Midas touch. While it's hard to find Longfellow in any school curriculum today, his poetic reach was so strong that many of his expressions are common clichés now in English and the characters of his legends remained etched in our common cultural heritage.

At the hub of the current Longfellow revival, Longfellow's Wayside Inn will launch its second community read of Longfellow's poetry beginning on the poet's birthday, Feb. 27. For three months, book discussion groups, lectures, film screenings, and other special events will feature "Longfellow's Great Heroes and Legends"—the stories of Paul Revere, Hiawatha, Evangeline, and Miles Standish. Funded by the National Endowment for the Arts and the Sudbury Foundation, the goal of the programming is to extend the influence of the Inn as a nationally significant literary landmark. The first Longfellow Big Read in 2008 focused on educating Sudbury residents and students about Longfellow's connection to the Inn through his widely popular 1862 anthology *Tales of a Wayside Inn*. The 2010 Longfellow Big Read has broadened not only the literary themes that will be discussed but the collaborative network of organizations that will host Big Read events as well. Metrowest organizations hosting Longfellow-related activities include the Goodnow Library in Sudbury, the Marlborough Library, the Marlborough Schools, the Sudbury Senior Center, Framingham Adult ESL, and Garden in the Woods. Guest lecturers will come from the Maine Historical Society, the Maine Humanities Council, the John Alden House in Duxbury, the Paul Revere House in Boston, and the Boston Wedg-

wood Society.

The events calendar balances informational with interactive events. Working with other area organizations, the Inn has developed many first-time special events with the goal of making poetry interesting and accessible. At Hiawatha Day at Garden in the Woods children will hear the familiar "By the shores of Gitchee Gumee" while listening to Native American music. The Sudbury Savoyards are focusing their creative talents on making Longfellow's greatest characters come to life in a first-ever dinner theater performance at the Inn in March. Other theatrical performances include Michael Maglaras' *The Song of Hiawatha*, a dramatic reading he prepared for the Longfellow Bicentennial in 2007 and Sudbury actor Chuck Schwager's poetry readings during Hiawatha Day at Garden in the Woods. "The discovery of Longfellow's relevance has been a pleasant surprise. I've been touched by Longfellow's meditations, especially his thoughts about old age. I look forward to sharing the lyricism of the poems I've discovered with others," the local actor said in a recent interview. Film events include a rare screening of one of Thomas Edison's first films—"The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere."

This is the first year in which Longfellow was among the poets communities nationwide could choose to read through the NEA's Big Read program. The Inn planned its 2010 programming in conjunction with the Caldwell Public Library in Caldwell, NJ. Joint events will include a celebration of Longfellow's birthday on Feb. 27 at 3 p.m., in which a commemorative poetry reading will be teleconferenced between Caldwell and Sudbury. In addition, Boy Scouts from Caldwell will come to the Inn on May 16 to work on their historic preservation badges by performing com-



munity service on the property.

"We have had great fun collaborating with the folks at the Wayside Inn and the Caldwell Public Library," said Bill Downey, Troop 6 Chairman from Caldwell, New Jersey. "The boys are excited about visiting Boston, with all of its history... The grounds of the Inn in Sudbury hold tremendous promise for the trip and its planned activities. Because Scouting is a National movement, I always look forward to meeting and working with other Scout leaders and the leaders of the Sudbury Scout units have been very welcoming and excited as well."

Longfellow has also extended

his reach into cyberspace with this Big Read. You can follow the Big Read on its own Web site ([www.longfellow.wayside.org](http://www.longfellow.wayside.org)), Facebook (Longfellow Big Read), and Twitter (@read-longfellow). The Inn has also recently broadened its social networks to include Facebook and Twitter (@The\_Wayside\_Inn).

The Longfellow Birthday Celebration along with the lectures and book discussion groups are free and open to the public. Some events will require paid reservations. See the full events calendar at [www.longfellow.wayside.org](http://www.longfellow.wayside.org) or at [www.wayside.org](http://www.wayside.org) for more information about all events.