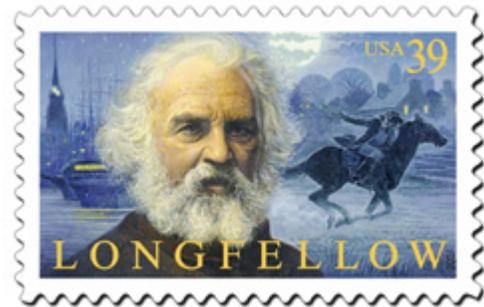


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Contact: Community Relations  
Leisha Palmore-Drummond 202-268-2191  
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**LONGFELLOW'S BICENTENNIAL HONORED**  
**ON U.S. POSTAGE STAMP**  
*23rd Honoree in the "Literary Arts" series*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The U.S. Postal Service will celebrate the 200th birthday of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow March 15 with the issuance of the 39-cent *Henry Wadsworth Longfellow* commemorative stamp. Longfellow becomes the 23rd honoree in the popular Literary Arts commemorative stamp series. He joins other honored literary legends including Ernest Hemingway, T.S. Eliot, Herman Melville and John Steinbeck.



The first-day-of-issuance ceremony, which is free and open to the public, will take place tomorrow at the American Stamp Dealers Association Mega Show—Madison Square Garden Theater, New York, N.Y., at noon. The stamp art by Kazuhiko Sano features a portrait of Longfellow based on a circa 1876 photograph. Background art evokes scenes from *Paul Revere's Ride*. Behind the ships' masts is a glimpse of the steeple of the Old North Church, where "a second lamp in the belfry burns" to indicate the arrival of the British by sea. To the right of the stamp, Paul Revere rides through the moonlit night, as dramatized by Longfellow's poem.

"Longfellow was a giant in his time and he is a model for our time, a scholar and poet who loved his family, his nation, his fellow human beings and the pursuit of excellence throughout his life," said Katherine Tobin, member, U.S. Postal Service Board of Governors. Joining Tobin in dedicating the stamp will be National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) Chairman Dana Gioia, an acclaimed and award-winning poet, literary anthologist, and influential critic whose essay *Longfellow in the Aftermath of Modernism* is seen as one of the best defenses of the poet. "Longfellow is not only a great poet, he also did as much as any author or politician of his time to shape the way 19th-century Americans saw themselves, their nation and their past," said NEA Chairman Dana Gioia.

Other speakers include Eric Jackson, President, American Stamp Dealers Association (ASDA); and Peter Mastrangelo, Executive Director, American Philatelic Society (APS); David Failor, Executive Director, Stamp Services, U.S. Postal Service, will emcee the event.

Two state champions from the *Poetry Out Loud National Recitation Contest* will take part in the March 15 ceremony. Massachusetts 2006 *Poetry Out Loud* state champion Vinh Hua and New Jersey 2006 Poetry Out Loud state champion Teika Monai Chapman each will recite a poem by Longfellow. Created by the National Endowment for the Arts and The Poetry Foundation, *Poetry Out Loud* encourages the study of great poetry by offering educational materials and a dynamic recitation competition to high schools across the country. For more information, visit [www.poetryoutloud.org](http://www.poetryoutloud.org).

The ASDA Mega show provides an opportunity to buy and sell philatelic material. Represented there are national and international stamp dealers, postal administrations, agencies, societies and clubs from across the country.

Starting March 15, the stamp will remain on display and for sale at the ASDA Exhibition until March 18, be

available online at the Postal Store on [www.usps.com/shop](http://www.usps.com/shop), by calling toll-free 800-STAMP-24, at philatelic centers nationwide and local Post Offices.

### **Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Backgrounder**

Born in 1807 in Portland, Maine—then part of Massachusetts—Longfellow is considered the “uncrowned poet laureate” of 19th-century America. He wrote more than 400 poems and is remembered for narrative poems such as *Paul Revere’s Ride* and *The Song of Hiawatha*.

Longfellow’s poetry is rooted in European traditions and forms, but often the subject matter is uniquely American. He attended Bowdoin College, where his academic talents earned him a professorship in modern languages when he graduated in 1825. To prepare for the position, Longfellow made his first trip to Europe, traveling for three years and mastering several languages. In 1837, he became a professor at Harvard and held that position until 1854. His further European travels and studies resulted in several textbooks and translations for classroom use.

### **Longfellow’s Career**

Throughout his career, Longfellow wrote many short lyrical poems, including popular works such as *A Psalm of Life and Excelsior*. Although few of Longfellow’s poems are starkly personal, his life was punctuated by significant family tragedies, including the deaths of two wives. His first wife, Mary, died in Europe in 1835 at the age of 23 because of a miscarriage and infection. His second wife, Fanny, died in 1861 after a spark ignited her clothing. Longfellow suffered burns while attempting to aid her, leaving scars on his face that he concealed with a beard for the rest of his life. He left *The Cross of Snow*, an 1879 sonnet about his anguish over the death of his wife Fanny, to be published posthumously.

In addition to numerous shorter works, Longfellow also composed several long poems. Inspired by *The Kalevala*, the national epic of Finland, he sought to create an American poem that drew on the folklore of Native Americans. The resulting poem, *The Song of Hiawatha*, was based on a mélange of Native American traditions and legends as they were understood at the time. Today, *The Song of Hiawatha* is remembered for its hero’s adventures “by the shores of Gitche Gumeé” and for its singsong meter reminiscent of the Finnish epic. The poem was a popular success when it was published in 1855 and was translated into several European languages.

Between 1863 and 1874, Longfellow wrote a series of narrative poems collectively known as *Tales of a Wayside Inn*. Issued in three parts and recalling *The Canterbury Tales*, by 14th-century English poet Geoffrey Chaucer, *Tales of a Wayside Inn* takes place at a tavern in Sudbury, Mass., where characters based on Longfellow’s colleagues and acquaintances narrate various stories. Many of the tales are derived from European sources, including medieval Norse and Italian works, with some based on notable American material as well.

*Tales of a Wayside Inn* begins with one of Longfellow’s most famous narrative poems, *Paul Revere’s Ride*. The poem was originally published in the *Atlantic Monthly* in January 1861, and its opening lines are still well known:

“Listen, my children, and you shall hear  
Of the midnight ride of Paul Revere,  
On the eighteenth of April, in Seventy-Five,  
Hardly a man is now alive  
Who remembers that famous day and year.”

Like other Longfellow poems, *Tales of a Wayside Inn* also added a new phrase to the American vernacular: “ships that pass in the night,” from a famous passage in *The Theologian’s Tale*.

Longfellow struck distinctly American notes in his longer poems. His 1847 poem *Evangeline: A Tale of*

*Acadie* follows the title character as she wanders America in search of Gabriel, her lost lover. Based on an historical event — the English eviction of French settlers from Nova Scotia in 1755 — the poem includes vivid descriptions and a sense of mythology that earned it great popularity in the United States and around the world. Similarly, *The Courtship of Miles Standish*, published in 1858, deals with the intermingled history and legends of New England. Set in Plymouth, Mass., the poem tells the story of how John Alden wooed Priscilla Mullins on behalf of Captain Miles Standish even though Alden loved her himself.

### **Longfellow the “Translator”**

A prolific translator, Longfellow translated Dante’s *Divine Comedy* from Italian into English verse, and he also translated numerous poems of varying lengths from Spanish, German, Swedish, Danish, French and other languages. His voluminous writings also include several prose works, among them *Outre-Mer*, a collection of European travel anecdotes; *Hyperion*, an autobiographical work of fiction about an American in Germany; and *a*, a novel.

During his later years, Longfellow was a venerable figure not only in the United States, where he was invited to dine with presidents, but also internationally. While visiting England in the late 1860s, he was awarded honorary degrees from both Oxford and Cambridge and was received by Queen Victoria. He was also an honorary member of such international scholarly organizations as the Russian Academy and the Royal Spanish Academy. In 1884, he was posthumously honored with a bust in Poets’ Corner at Westminster Abbey in London.

After a writing career that spanned more than 60 years, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow died on March 24, 1882, at the age of 75. He is buried in Cambridge, Mass., where he spent most of his life. His former home in Cambridge is now the Longfellow National Historic Site, administered by the National Park Service.

### **Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Philatelic Fact Sheet**

#### **Philatelic Products**

There are two philatelic products available for this stamp issue:

Item 460961: First Day Cover, \$0.77

Item 460993: Cancellation Keepsake, \$8.57

#### **How to Order First-Day Covers**

Stamp Fulfillment Services also offers first-day covers for new stamp issues and Postal Service stationery items postmarked with the official first-day-of-issue cancellation. Each item has an individual catalog number and is offered in the quarterly USA Philatelic catalog. Customers may request a free catalog by calling

1-800-STAMP-24 or writing to:

INFORMATION FULFILLMENT  
DEPT 6270  
US POSTAL SERVICE  
PO BOX 219014  
KANSAS CITY MO 64121-9014

#### **How to Order the First-Day-of-Issue Postmark**

Customers have 60 days to obtain the first-day-of-issue postmark by mail. They may purchase new

stamps at their local Post Office™, by telephone at 1-800-STAMP-24, or at the Postal Store® Web site at [www.usps.com/shop](http://www.usps.com/shop). They should affix the stamps to envelopes of their choice, address the envelopes (to themselves or others), and place them in a larger envelope addressed to:

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW STAMP  
POSTMASTER  
421 EIGHTH AVE RM 2029B  
NEW YORK NY 10199-9998

After applying the first-day-of-issue postmark, the Postal Service will return the envelopes through the mail. There is no charge for the postmark. All orders must be postmarked by May 14, 2007.