

Longfellow House  
Boston, MA  
December 5, 1998

PHOTOCOPY  
PRESERVATION

**First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton  
Treasures Tour Remarks at the  
Longfellow House - Boston, MA  
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Thank you all. I am delighted to be here again. I came here many years ago when I was a student at Wellesley. So to come back, and to see this house and what it represents is a special personal treat. I am delighted to join the Friends of the Longfellow House and so many other supporters, most of whom could not fit into this room today, who are making sure that the poetry and the history created within these walls is told and retold and never forgotten.

I want to thank Senator Kennedy for welcoming me back home to Massachusetts, and I do feel very much at home here. I spent a lot of very happy years here. I want to thank him for his dedication and support for this project, and for so many others, his efforts to really enhance the quality of life right here in our nation. He worked tirelessly to ensure that the federal budget for 1999 includes \$1,645,000 to restore the Longfellow House.

Now he obviously has great political skills -- everyone recognizes that -- but I know that he was able to obtain that appropriation because of his poetic skills. I am told that in the meeting he had with Senator Byrd, a very important member of the Appropriations Committee in the Senate, he didn't just talk about offsets and line-items, instead he recited "Paul Revere's Ride." He was able to do this for one reason, and that is his mother made him memorize it. So I wanted the students to know that there's a real purpose in learning poetry -- in addition to the enjoyment and the history lesson that they include -- because, after all, it may help you in the work place someday. And besides, if you listen to your mother, then you'll go far.

I am also pleased to have our poet laureate and a fellow Longfellow fan, Robert Pinsky, here, who has done so much to bring poetry to the national attention that it needs and deserves in our country, and I am very grateful to him for that. I wanted to say a special word of appreciation to Susan Eisenhower, who is here with us. Her own family, as we know, has been extraordinarily important in America's history. Susan has joined our efforts as the co-chair of our Save America's Treasures campaign through the National Trust for Historic Preservation. And I personally and publicly want to thank her for her contribution and commitment to this.

And of course to Bob Stanton and all of the Park Service employees, the directors, and the site directors that are here. We owe such a debt of gratitude to these men and women. I am so amazed and impressed every time I travel around our country and I go to a Park Service site to see the love and enthusiasm that our Park Service employees bring to their tasks. This is truly a labor of love. And it is exciting to know the breadth of the sites and experiences that they interpret and relay to the public. And certainly we have our great national parks, but then we have jewels like the Longfellow House as well. I hope that everyone who visits here and learns about what we are doing here will say a word of thanks to the great Park Service employees the

next time you encounter one.

You know, as we went through this house and toured it, I just felt overwhelmed. Susan and I were privileged to be taken on a tour by Jim Shea. I thought Jim was going to levitate a few times with excitement about what was in this house, and what it represents to our history. This truly is one of the most important original sites of what it means to be an American and what it took to create the United States of America.

But there is so much else as well that has gone on in this house. The visitors through the years, people like Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Julia Ward Howes, and Charles Sumner, who came here to talk about slavery and philosophy with Longfellow. And what I especially appreciate is how the Longfellow family understood the importance of what occurred in this house, that they too set about preserving it. We could not have what we have if they hadn't understood from the very beginning that being the house of General Washington, being a place where Phyllis Wheatley, the former slave poet who was astonishing people with her writings, came to visit General Washington. So when we tour this house, we see history come alive. We see so much of what has made us the country and the people that we are.

Now, certainly, we have a lot of work to do to make sure that this house really represents and is able to convey to future generations everything that happened here. And I believe that one of the great gifts that we can give our children and our children's children is to use this millennium to celebrate how we became Americans and what our values and ideals are. That is why the President and I created the White House Millennium Council, and really wanted to ask all Americans to help us live out the national theme of "honor the past and imagine the future." Certainly what we have tried to do since the beginning was to inspire even more Americans to appreciate what we have right now in our midst. I'm sure there are many people here in Cambridge who walk by this house or drive by this house who don't get to know its significance. They may not have ever even visited it, but certainly may not know that it had so much of an impact on our history as Americans.

So my visit here, and the visit that Susan and I will make in a few minutes to the African Meeting House, are all part of trying to bring greater public awareness and attention to the treasures that we have, to honor our past, but not just to stop there, to use those treasures and that past to imagine a future that will continue the greatness of America and move us even closer to our ideals.

Now there are many who have contributed greatly to the Save America's Treasures effort -- on a tour that I took last summer and on a visit I made just last Thursday was Armstrong House and Archives in Queens, N.Y. Private citizens, corporations, foundations have stepped forward to be part of this public-private partnership that Susan and I and others are putting together to save America's treasures. Well, again we have some very exciting news and I have a feeling that Senator Kennedy and Bob Stanton and all of us are just thrilled by the announcement that I am about to make.

I am pleased to announce that more than \$300,000 of new private donations have been raised to preserve this house into the millennium. I am particularly pleased that the Fidelity Foundation of Fidelity Investments has made an extraordinary commitment of \$225,000 in care for the house and its collections. The Fidelity Foundation will give a \$75,000 grant directly to the Friends of Longfellow House to help catalogue this magnificent collection. And they are also giving you a \$150,000 challenge grant to preserve the historic wallpaper, floor coverings, furniture, and decorative art in the house. I have to say I was just overwhelmed to learn that the wallpaper in the parlor dates to 1844. Now, I don't know a house anywhere that has been able to preserve its wallpaper for more than a hundred and fifty years.

I want to thank Ned Johnson, the chair of Fidelity Investments, and his trustees. And I want to thank my Wellesley classmate Anne Marie Soullier for being the director of the foundation who personally did so much to make this possible. Thank you so much.

Now that's the first piece of good news, and the next is that six generous donors have already answered Fidelity's challenge by donating \$80,000 and matching more than half of the Fidelity grant. I want to thank Peter and Carol Lynch, Ann and Graham Gund, Barnes & Noble's Booksellers, Steve and Barbara Grossman, David Rockefeller, and an anonymous donor for their gifts, and I especially want to thank Ann Gund for all her help and encouragement.

So we are really on the way, and this is exactly the public-private partnership that Save America's Treasures was set up to do. Yes, it is important that we collectively, through our government, support the National Park Service, of course. But there is no way that we can, through the appropriations process and tax dollars, meet the needs of all of our Park Service sights. I think, Bob, the last time I looked we had about \$5 billion in deferred maintenance costs in our parks. So we have a big job just to keep up with a lot of the needs that our Park Service sites have and our millions of visitors place on our Park Service sites every year. But if we put together this partnership as we have done with the National Trust for Historic Preservation, working with the National Park Foundation in bringing it private donors as we have done today, we will make a most extraordinary gift to the millennium in our country. We will truly honor the past, but by doing so we will create sites that will always be there to help future generations imagine the future as well.

You know, I am told that when Longfellow came to Cambridge, he went by the old North Church and recalled how his grandfather had told him the story of Paul Revere when he was a child. That was passed on to him. That was not just left with one person in one generation's memory. Retelling that story inspired him to write his story. He did it not only to celebrate Paul Revere's ride, but he did it during the Civil War because he wanted the American people to remember our common past and to stay together into the future. Well, our task today is much the same. I have always loved Longfellow's poems, and I didn't know which one I wanted to quote from to end my remarks, but "A Psalm of Life" has already been referred to and I think there is so much wisdom in that poem. So just hear these few lines:

Not enjoyment and not sorrow  
Is our destined end or way,  
But to act, that each tomorrow  
Finds us farther than today.

Well today the Longfellow House, the Friends of the Longfellow House, the National Park Service, and Save America's Treasures finds us farther than we were yesterday, moving closer to a goal, in making it possible for every American to appreciate and honor our past and to help us imagine a better future with the donations you've given. Thank you all so much.