



COMPILING A WRITER'S "MAGAZINE"

Introduction

Longfellow believed artistic expression to be an essential part of being human, and art to be one of the most important ways that people communicate. Longfellow not only practiced this precept in his everyday life, but with his wife Fanny, strongly supported and encouraged the artistic expressions of their children. The Longfellow children wrote poems, stories, and plays; drew and painted; and created word-plays and riddles. For a period of time they created and "published" their own magazine, *The Secret*, which contained some of their work.

In this lesson, students will examine excerpts from *The Secret* and use them as models to create and compile a classroom "magazine" containing samples of their own work. There are a variety of activities from which to choose. Each activity focuses on one particular kind of creative work (poetry, story writing, word puzzles & riddles, and drawing). Select those that fit the time, interests, and educational needs of your class. We suggest that students select a name for their publication and that at least one piece of work from each class member be included in it. The magazine may also include work produced in other *Poetry and the Imagination* activities or related lessons.

Intended Learning Outcomes (Understandings)

1. Students will understand that Longfellow believed artistic expression to be an essential part of being human, and art to be one of the most important ways that people communicate.
2. Students will understand that Henry and Fanny Longfellow strongly supported and encouraged the artistic expressions of their children.
3. Students will understand that the Longfellow children created and "published" their own magazine called *The Secret*, which contained their poems, riddles, stories, and drawings.

Intended Learning Outcomes (Skills)

1. Students will be able to create a "magazine" using *The Secret* as a model.
2. Students will be able to write & illustrate poems & stories for their magazine.
3. Students will be able to create rebuses and other riddles to include in their magazine.

Lesson Length

Variable

Teacher Preparation

1. Familiarize yourself with the excerpts from *The Secret*.

Materials

Note: Materials listed in *italics* are provided with this lesson.

1. Copies of covers from *The Secret* from May and June, 1865 on pages 47-48
2. Copies of the poem "May" by Edith Longfellow on pages 49-50 (original & transcript)
3. Copies of Edith Longfellow's drawing illustrating her play "Margary Daw" on page 51
4. Copies of Alexander Wadsworth Longfellow, Jr's. *sketch* on page 52
5. Copies of three rebuses on page 53
6. Copies of the rebus solutions on page 54
7. Copies of the "transposition" riddle on the name Longfellow on page 55 (original & transcript)
8. Copies of the story "Our Dogs," by Alexander Wadsworth Longfellow, Jr. on pages 56-59 (original & transcript)
9. Writing and drawing materials

Activities

I. Looking at *The Secret*

A. Explain that:

1. Longfellow believed artistic expression to be an essential part of being human, and art to be one of the most important ways that people communicate.
2. Longfellow and his wife Fanny encouraged their children to express themselves in many artistic ways. The children wrote poetry, stories, and plays (which they put on); drew and painted; and created a variety of word puzzles and riddles.
3. The Longfellow children also created their own "magazine," *The Secret*, to share samples of their creative work.
4. Students will be creating a creative magazine of their own.

- B. Distribute the two cover pages from *The Secret*. Ask students to read them. Note the information included on the pages [*title, explanation of what The Secret is (a magazine), volume number, month, year*].
1. Discuss why the Longfellow children might have named their magazine *The Secret*. What does the name mean? What does it make you think about?
 2. Ask for suggestions for names for the classroom magazine, and ask each student making a suggestion why they think it would be a good name. Post the suggestions on the board.
 3. Tell students that they may continue to add suggested names to the list, and that they will be voting for the title they like best later. [*Note to teacher: Set aside time for the voting after the students have completed their written work.*]
 4. Discuss what information students think should be included on their magazine cover page. Record this.

II. Writing Poetry

- A. Distribute the poem *May*, by Edith Longfellow, from *The Secret*. Explain that Edith was eleven years old when she wrote this. Read (or ask a student to read) *May*. Briefly discuss the poem, examining the rhythm, rhyme, and descriptive imagery.
- B. Using poem writing techniques, have students write a poem for the magazine using the steps outlined below.
1. Select an object or a topic. [*Note: You may do this for the whole class or ask students to select their own.*]
 2. Ask students to suggest a word or a short phrase that describes something about the object or topic. Write these on the board. Continue until you have at least five different words or short phrases describing the object or topic. [*Note: Prompt students to use words that describe all the characteristics of the object or topic, including what it looks, sounds, smells, and feels like.*]
 3. Next, ask students to suggest things they can compare with some quality of their object or topic. [*as hard as iron, as warm as toast, etc.*] Write these on the board also.

4. Now have students suggest feelings or memories they might associate with the object. *[It reminds me of a hot summer afternoon...It gives me a warm feeling, etc.]* Write these on the board near the other two lists.
5. Instruct students to write a poem including at least two four-line stanzas using any of the descriptions, comparisons, feelings, and/or memories they choose. The poem must rhyme, have a pleasing rhythm, and use descriptive imagery. *[Note: Include any other writing characteristics or elements of poetry you choose in the assignment requirements. For example, you might require students to use a simile, assonance, consonance, etc.]*
6. Review and comment on the poems (or have students do a peer review) and ask students to edit and revise their poems. Students copy the final version onto clean sheets of paper.
7. Distribute the drawing by Edith Longfellow which accompanied her play called "Margary Daw," and the sketch by Alexander Longfellow (HWL's nephew and contributor to *The Secret*.) Note that drawings like these were sometimes included in *The Secret*. Ask students to illustrate their poems.
8. Be sure students' names appear on their poems.

III. Writing Rebuses and "Transposition" Riddles

- A. Explain that a rebus is a puzzle in which pictures and symbols are used to suggest words.
- B. Distribute copies of rebuses from *The Secret* to students. Have students try to solve some of them. Give them the solutions after they have worked on the riddles for a while.
- C. Write this simple letter rebus on the board and ask students to solve it:

I C D B.
D U C D B?
[I see the bee. Do you see the bee?]

- D. Instruct students to write illustrated rebuses that use pictures and letters or numbers. Ask them to write the solutions to their rebuses on another page.

1. Divide students into pairs.

2. Ask students to trade rebuses (but NOT the solutions) with their partners and to try to solve their partner's puzzle.
 3. After a few minutes, students should show their solutions to their partners.
- E. Distribute copies of the "transposition" riddle from *The Secret*. [A transposition is a conundrum that uses a play on words.] Have students try to solve the riddle [Answer is: Longfellow]. After they have struggled with it for a while, help them solve it by giving them the following vocabulary:
- fell = to finish a seam by sewing the edge down flat
low = to make the sound that cattle make ("moo-ing")
- F. Ask students to write their own "transposition" riddle using a name. If this is difficult for them, suggest that they do a different riddle using the name Longfellow.
- G. Be sure students' names appear on their rebuses and riddles.

IV. Writing a Story

- A. Distribute and read (or ask students to read) the story called "Our Dogs" by Alexander Wadsworth Longfellow, Jr. from *The Secret*. [Note: We have modernized some of the spelling and grammar in the transcription of "Our Dogs" to make it easier for students to read and understand.] Explain that Alexander, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's nephew who often contributed to *The Secret*, was 11 years old when he wrote this story.
- B. Instruct students to write short stories for the magazine about one of the following suggested topics (or others of your/their choice):
- * A pet
 - * A family member
 - * An interesting event or adventure in their life
- C. Select and instruct students to incorporate the writing characteristics and skills you choose for this assignment.
- D. Review and comment on the stories (or have students do peer review) and ask students to edit and revise their work. Have students copy the final version onto clean sheets of paper (stories may be hand-written or typed).

- E. Ask students to illustrate their stories. Be sure students' names appear on their stories.

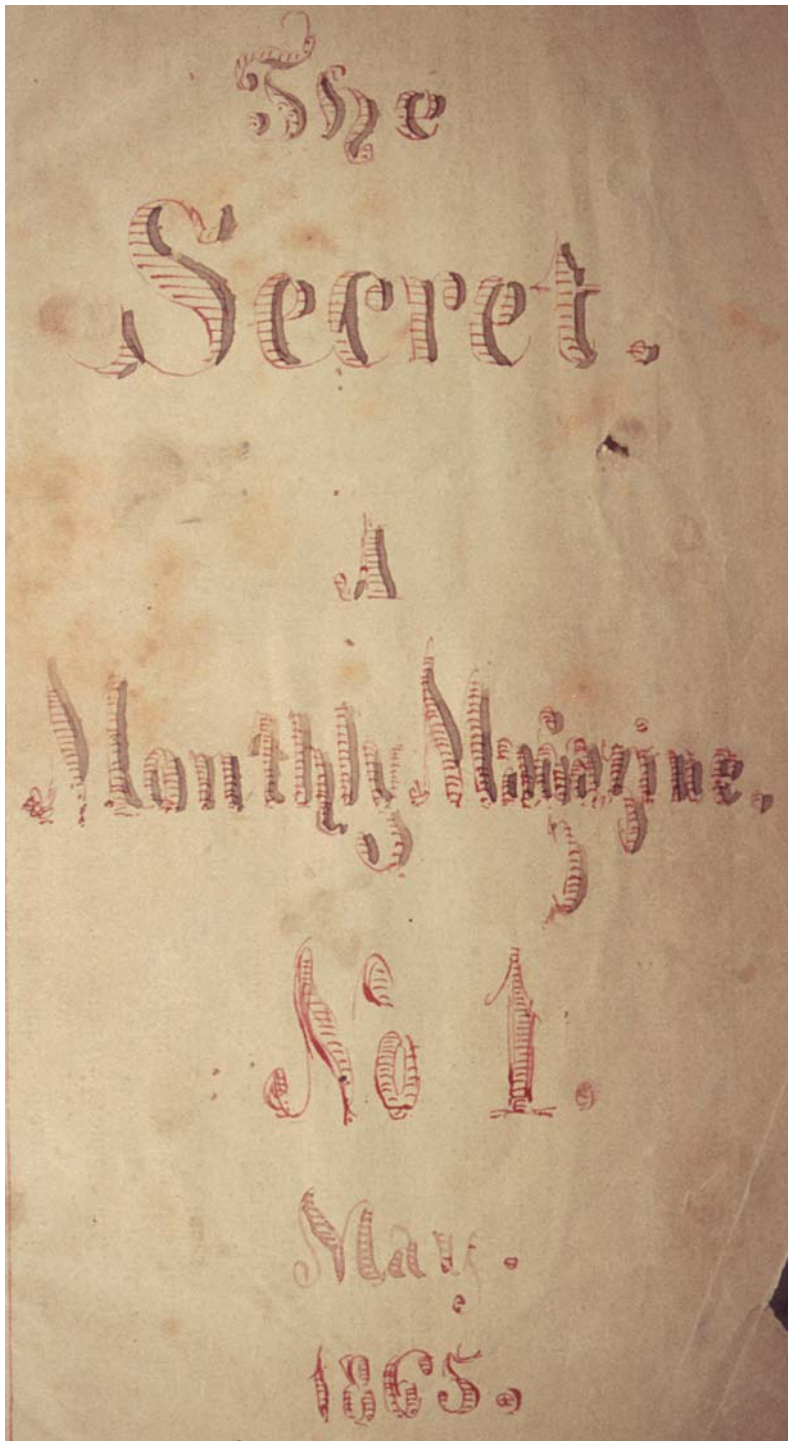
V. Assembling the Magazine

- A. Have students vote to select a name for their magazine.
- B. Review the information that will appear on magazine cover page.
- C. Ask all students to create a cover page for the magazine with all the necessary information. *[Note: These may be done with crayons, markers, or other tools, or, they may be done on the computer.]*
- D. Ask each student to select either a poem or story and a rebus or riddle (from their own work) for inclusion in the magazine. Copy these for everyone. Have students assemble their magazines using their own covers.

Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks Standards

English Language Arts:

- Language Strand/Standard 2: Questioning, Listening, and Contributing
Students will pose questions, listen to the ideas of others, and contribute their own information or ideas in group discussions and interviews in order to acquire new knowledge.
- Reading and Literature Strand/Standard 10: Genre
Students will identify, analyze, and apply knowledge of the characteristics of different genres.
- Reading and Literature Strand/Standard 14: Poetry
Students will identify, analyze, and apply knowledge of themes, structure, elements of poetry and provide evidence from the text to support their understanding.
- Reading and Literature Strand/Learning Standard 15: Style and Language
Students will identify and analyze how an author's words appeal to the senses, create imagery, suggest mood, and set tone, and provide evidence from the text to support their understanding.
- Composition Strand/Standard 21: Revising
Students will demonstrate improvement in organization, content, paragraph development, level of detail, style, tone, and word choice (diction) in their compositions after revising them.
- Composition Strand/Standard 22: Standard English Conventions
Students will use knowledge of standard English conventions in their writing, revising, and editing.



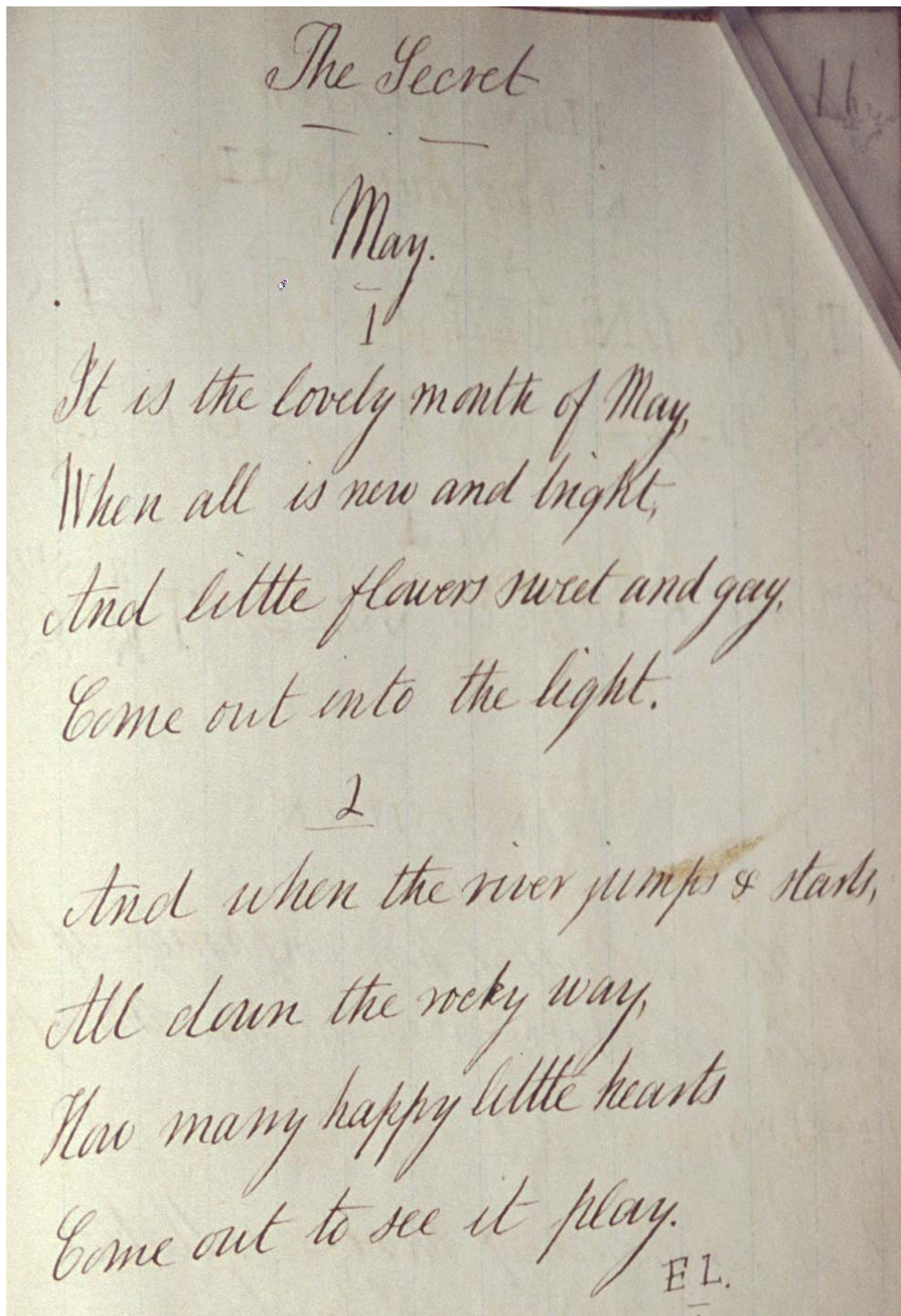
Courtesy National Park Service, Longfellow National Historic Site

Cover to *The Secret*, May 1865



Courtesy National Park Service, Longfellow National Historic Site

Cover to *The Secret*, June 1865



"May" by Edith Longfellow from the May 1865 issue of *The Secret*

The Secret, May 1865

May

1

It is the lovely month of May,
When all is new and bright,
And little flowers sweet and gay,
Come out into the light.

2

And when the river jumps and starts,
All down the rocky way,
How many happy little hearts
Come out to see it play.

EL

(Edith Longfellow)



Courtesy National Park Service, Longfellow National Historic Site

Drawing by Edith Longfellow. The drawing was in Edith's scrapbook along with a play she wrote called "Margery Daw." The play was put on by the Longfellow children, their cousins, and friends.



Courtesy National Park Service, Longfellow National Historic Site

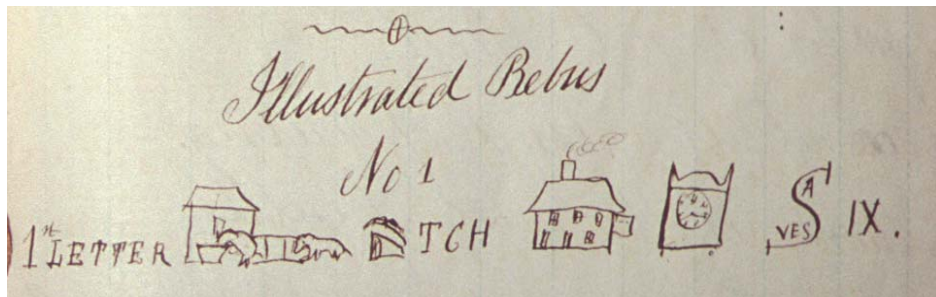
Sketch by Alexander Wadsworth Longfellow, Jr., nephew of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. The sketch was in Edith Longfellow's scrapbook. Alexander Longfellow, Jr. wrote for *The Secret*. When he grew up, Alexander became an architect.

Longfellow Rebuses

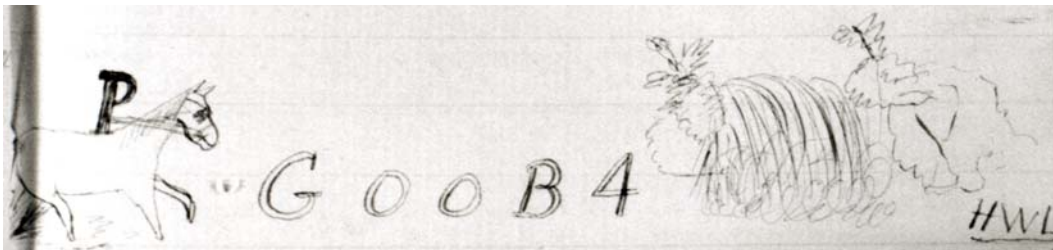
1. By Alexander Wadsworth Longfellow, Jr.



2. Author Unknown



3. By Henry Wadsworth Longfellow



REBUS SOLUTIONS

1. By Alexander Wadsworth Longfellow, Jr.:

HANDSOME PENMANSHIP IS NOT ALWAYS PLAIN (easy to read)

[HAND-SUM-PEN-MAN-SHIP-IS-KNOT-AWL-WAYS-PLANE]

2. Author unknown:

A STITCH IN TIME SAVES NINE

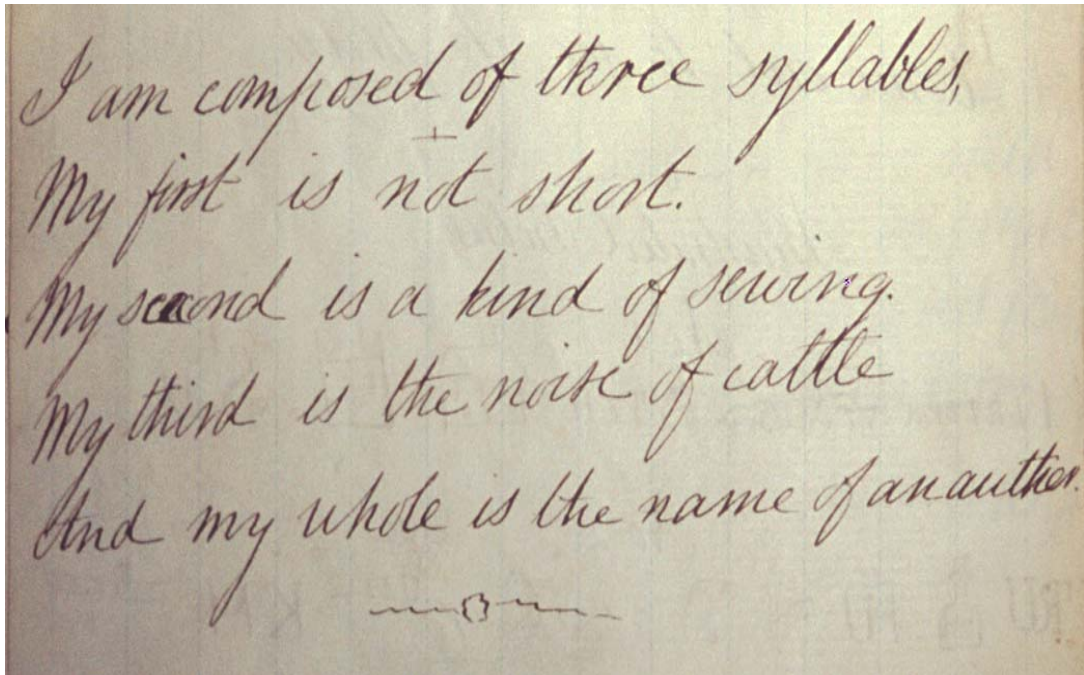
[A-STY-EYE-TCH-INN-TIME-SAVES-NINE (Roman Numeral nine)]

3. By Henry Wadsworth Longfellow:

PRIDE GOES BEFORE A FALL

[P-RIDE-G-OS-B-FOUR-A-FALL (water fall)]

Transposition Riddle
(from *The Secret*)



I am composed of three syllables,
My first is not short.
My second is a kind of sewing.
My third is the noise of cattle
And my whole is the name of an author.

Our Dogs.
I am going to write a story about
our dogs, all of which is true.
Once we had a large St. Bernard
dog, he seemed to know every thing
you said to him, he was yellow and
black, his only fault was too great a
fondness for visiting, in one of his

"Our Dogs" (page 1) by Alexander Wadsworth Longfellow,
Jr., age 11. From the June 1865 issue of *The Secret*.

The Secret

visits to town there was a law all dogs should be muzzled, a friend put a muzzle on to him and then he came home and would not go to town again.

A gentleman had him before we did, he was a surveyor and one night when he was coming home he found he had left his account book, Brave, for that was the dog's name, turned round and went back and brought it in his mouth to him.

At one time we had a little dog named Spot, that Brave treated with great contempt, one day Spot came in with muddy feet and tracked up the floor, the cook said "Spot if I had a stick I would whip you". Brave got up slyly shook himself, walked out, and brought a large stick in his mouth and laid it down at the cooks feet, then went and laid down in his old place

"Our Dogs" (page 2) by Alexander Wadsworth Longfellow, Jr., age 11. From the June 1865 issue of *The Secret*.

The Secret

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behind the stove. He was very fond of riding in the cars, and often went to the Depot and took passage by himself. Once he went in the cars to a friend of the surveyors, and while there, seemed sick, he asked him what he had been eating? he went to a horsechestnut tree and brought a bud in his mouth and gave it to him. Horsechestnuts are poisonous to dogs. He was very fond of roving and died at a good old age

To be continued

A. W. L.



Courtesy National Park Service, Longfellow National Historic Site

"Our Dogs" (page 3) by Alexander Wadsworth Longfellow, Jr., age 11. From the June 1865 issue of *The Secret*.

Our Dogs

I am going to write a story about our dogs, all of which is true.

Once we had a large St. Bernard dog. He seemed to know every thing you said to him. He was yellow and black. His only fault was too great a fondness for visiting. On one of his visits to town there was a law [that] all dogs should be muzzled. A friend put a muzzle onto him and then he came home and would not go to town again.

A gentleman had him before we did. He was a surveyor and one night when he was coming home he found he had left his account book [behind]. Brave, for that was the dog's name, turned round and went back and brought it in his mouth to him.

At one time we had a little dog named Spot that Brave treated with great contempt. One day Spot came in with muddy feet and tracked up the floor. The cook said, "Spot, if I had a stick I would whip you." Brave got up slyly, shook himself, walked out, and brought a large stick in his mouth and laid it down at the cook's feet, then went and laid down in his old place behind the stove.

He was very fond of riding in the [railroad] cars, and often went to the Depot and took passage by himself. Once he went in the cars to a friend of the surveyor's, and while there seemed sick. He asked him what had he been eating? He went to a Horse Chestnut tree and brought a limb in his mouth and gave it to him. Horse Chestnuts are poisonous to dogs. He was very fond of roving and died at a good old age. To be continued.

A.W.L.

(Alexander Wadsworth Longfellow, Jr.)