



# Dawn Lesley Stewart



## **Longfellow's Wayside Inn**

### **The Wayside Inn – Picturesque Historic Landmark, Inn, and Dining!**

By Dawn Lesley Stewart

I have been regularly visiting **Longfellow's Wayside Inn** in Sudbury, Massachusetts for over 15 years. This historic landmark is the oldest operating Inn in the country. The Wayside Inn has retained its quaint atmosphere, and the people who work there welcome visitors with a warm smile.

### **The Inn**

This 18<sup>th</sup> Century Inn is a sprawling building that is filled with larger dining areas and smaller rooms. The wooden floors creak as they are trod upon, and the Inn is decorated in a homey style to reflect olden times. There is handicapped access to get inside the Inn. However, there is no elevator inside the building. The upper floor must be reached by climbing wooden stairways located in several areas throughout the Inn. Public restrooms are available on the ground floor.

The entire ground floor is dedicated to dining. There are two larger eating areas, and a series of smaller rooms with quaint names such as the "Innkeepers Room", "Ford Room", and "The Old Kitchen". Several of the smaller rooms can only be accessed by walking through other rooms to reach them. The "Ford Room", for example, is located by walking through three other rooms and then walking down a set of stairs. The Ford Room is where special events are often held, such as group dinner meetings, or engagement or holiday parties. The tables and chairs are wooden; not designed for comfort but go well with the Inn's atmosphere. A fireplace is located in every dining area, though they are rarely lit with a real fire.

There are ten upstairs rooms where guests can stay. Each room is tastefully decorated in period style and includes a private bath and air conditioning. Even though this is an 18<sup>th</sup> Century building, there is a telephone in each room and wireless internet access. Sometimes special packages are offered where one night and breakfast cost around \$85.00 per person. I've been fortunate that those working at the Inn offered me a tour of the various rooms, and even showed me a secret door leading to a small hidden room. Even though I have not stayed the night, I have a friend who regularly makes reservations to stay overnight when visiting friends in the area. I once asked her if she has ever seen one of the ghosts reputed to haunt the Inn ... and she has ... twice. Once while sleeping, she awoke to feel a hand running through her hair though no one was in the room. The other time she saw a shadowy figure at the end of the bed watching her, but she felt no menace from it and went back to sleep. She loves the feel of the Inn and always feels welcome there.

A gift shop is located on the ground floor. It's an inviting area where all manner of items are sold, everything from Longfellow related merchandise such as books to t-shirts,

sweatshirts, jewelry, souvenirs, collectibles, artwork, and even flour made from the Wayside Inn's Grist Mill. It's a fun place to browse.

### **Dining at the Wayside Inn**

I have eaten at the Wayside Inn many times, always with friends. Our groups have been as little as four people and as many as thirty for parties. All of the servers have treated me well, and several of them recognize me from my previous visits. There is also a Tavern area where one can order drinks from the bar and enjoy idle conversation with the barkeep.

The Inn offers both a lunch and dinner menu. The lunch and dinner menu share many of the same offerings, except serving sizes and prices vary. On average, lunch can cost between \$10 - \$15 a person; dinner between \$20 - \$30 a person (these prices do not include drinks or desserts). A more reasonable dinner option is to choose from the Dinner Specials menu (offered Monday through Friday) where one can choose a soup or salad, entrée, and dessert for \$19.95.

I have ordered the Lobster Salad Roll several times. On a whole it is good, however, the lobster mix is drier than I prefer. The Atlantic Filet of Sole with shrimp and crabmeat filling is tasty. (I'll be going to the Wayside Inn with friends soon and plan to order it again.) I especially enjoy the mashed potato as a side. The desserts are filling, too. Note: This is not my first choice for dining. The meals I've mentioned are the ones that stick in my mind. Considering the prices charged, I find the food mediocre. However, there are those I know who will disagree with me. What my friends and I enjoy is the atmosphere of the Inn, the cozy rooms, the historic flavor. Some other menu selections include: Prime Rib of Beef, Oven Roasted Breast of Chicken, Salmon Dijonnaise, Grilled Block Island Swordfish, Fresh Native Scallops, Black Angus NY Sirloin Steak, Filet Mignon, Lobster Pie, and there is a Yankee Surf & Turf that my friends love.

### **Events at the Inn & Sights**

The Wayside Inn opens its doors and grounds to a variety of hospitable events. There is an annual craft fair in the Spring, sometimes poetry readings, music both in and out of the building whether it's a folk singer in the Tavern, or the roving Colonial Fife & Drum Corps who play their music from April through September during Wednesday evenings. (The Fife & Drum Corps is loud when strolling the rooms in the Inn, but the music is memorable.) Often there are art exhibits on the second floor. Also, walking through the Inn, you will see placards and historic displays.

*The Pond & Garden* are beautiful attractions located at the side of the Wayside Inn. There are benches beside the pond for sitting. A variety of birds can be seen darting from the trees and across the water during warmer days. A large grassy area is ideal for having a canopy erected for an outdoor event (as I have often seen). Unfortunately, the roses have been removed from "Longfellow's Rose Garden". Other perennials have been planted there. Sitting in an alcove is a beautiful bust of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (this is a replica of the bust that resides in the Poet's Corner at Westminster Abbey in London).

*The Red Stone Schoolhouse* is a one-room school dating to the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century. Perhaps its greatest claim to fame is the controversy that says the poem "Mary Had a Little Lamb" was written about a girl attending this school.

*Martha-Mary Chapel* is a building I've only been in once, but it's a visit I'll remember. This non-denominational chapel has a white clapboard exterior with a beautiful tall steeple. The inside of the chapel features wooden pews on either side of an aisle, and a lovely crystal chandelier. If you are thinking of a wedding, services can be performed here.

*The Grist Mill* is a lovely stone building with a water-powered grist mill. This is a working grist mill that grinds the wheat used for items baked at the Wayside Inn. The Grist Mill has a great history including ties to the King Arthur Flour Company. Grinding demonstrations are available on the weekends, but I highly recommend calling the Inn to see whether a demonstration is actually going to happen the day you wish to visit. I know several artists who have "parked" their easels near the mill to capture its charm on canvas.

*Henry Wadsworth Longfellow* wrote a book titled "Tales of a Wayside Inn," which features this Wayside Inn in Sudbury and an imaginary set of characters. Ironically, Longfellow only visited the Wayside Inn once, but his book was so popular that people to this day still visit Longfellow's Wayside Inn to see where the story took place.

### Where Longfellow's Wayside Inn is Located

The Wayside Inn is off of Route 20 in Sudbury, Massachusetts. It's at 72 Wayside Inn Road. Parking is plentiful. There is a large parking lot across the road from the Inn as well as some parking behind the Inn, and there is another parking lot next to the Inn.

The main road in front of the Wayside Inn is paved. However, the roads leading off the main road are dirt and gravel. Drive slowly as there are always dips and bumps that will jar a car and its passengers. The parking lots are not paved either. They can be dark at night, so make sure to bring a flashlight if your footing is uncertain.

### Summary

If you are traveling near Sudbury, Massachusetts, I recommend stopping at **Longfellow's Wayside Inn**. Whether for a stroll around the property, a visit to the chapel or grist mill, overnight stay or meal ... the Wayside Inn offers plenty of beauty and a glance into times gone by. It's well worth a visit, or two, or more!

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