

JONES, R.F. HOUSE
(Longfellow House)
4001 Minnehaha Parkway
City of Minneapolis
Hennepin County
Minnesota

HABS No. MN-136

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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R. F. JONES HOUSE
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Location: The R. F. Jones House (Longfellow House) is located at 4001 Minnehaha Parkway, Minneapolis, Minnesota. It is in the sw1/4 ne1/4, section 18, T28N, R24W. The legal description of the property is Lot 1, Block 3, Dunsmoor's 7th Addition to the City of Minneapolis (St. Paul West Quadrangle, Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: 15 /482970 / 4973450).

Present Owner: The present owner is the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, 310 South Fourth Avenue, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Present Use: The building is presently vacant.

Significance: The Longfellow House is significant as the largest surviving structural remnant of the once-thriving Longfellow Gardens, a zoo and amusement park that attracted thousands of visitors a year during its active life of 1908-1936. The Longfellow Gardens was the property of Robert Fremont (Fish) Jones, one of the most colorful characters and entrepreneurs in the history of Minneapolis. The house is a 2/3 size copy of the Henry Wadsworth Longfellow House in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. **Date(s) of construction**

City of Minneapolis Building Permit #70596, dated March 30, 1907, was issued for the construction of a 30 foot by 40 foot frame dwelling and other buildings at 4001 Minnehaha Parkway. The dwelling listed on the permit is probably the Longfellow House, indicating a construction date of 1907.

2. **Architect**

According to one source, Jones sent architects to get plans of the original Longfellow House in Cambridge, Massachusetts (Johnson 'Park Department'). The building permits filed with the city list the W. J. Keith Co. as architect for a frame barn, frame bird house and frame dwelling built in 1907 (Building Permit #70596).

Walter J. Keith was born in Minneapolis in 1866 and began his professional career in 1890 as a principal in the firm of Dodge and Keith. For the

next 30 years, Keith was in and out of at least 8 business partnerships, sometimes incorporating as a company (The Keith Company 1901-1911; Keith's Architectural Service 1912-1914) and sometimes working in partnership. Notes in the Keith biographical file in the Northwest Architectural Archives at the University of Minnesota indicate that Keith maintained a "plan factory," where a stock of hundreds of building plans was made available for sale to clients for a fee.

Keith was the architect for a number of buildings in Minneapolis, as well as buildings in outstate Minnesota, North Dakota and Colorado. In addition to his design work, Keith was the founder of Keith's Magazine and wrote Historical Architecture for the Home Builder.

There is some confusion as to the identity of the architect for the 1937 alteration of the residence to a library. The building permit lists the City of Minneapolis as architect, with day labor to complete the job contributed by the Works Progress Administration (Building Permit #247640). The Northwest Architectural Archives record lists "Johnson and Backstrom" as architects, while a "Mr. Johnson" was credited at the library's opening as the architect (Gale address).

According to records at the Northwest Architectural Archives in Minneapolis, Clarence Johnson was a principal in the firm Johnson and Backstrom from 1936 until 1947. Johnson was born in Minneapolis in 1892 and, after a brief period enrolled at the University of Minnesota Extension School, began his career in 1912 as a draftsman for C.A.P. Turner, the noted Minneapolis engineer and architect. After eight years with Turner, Johnson continued working for a number of firms as a draftsman and engineer in Minneapolis. The written record of his career ends with his 1947 application for membership in the American Institute of Architects (Clarence Johnson vertical file, Northwest Architectural Archives, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis).

3. Original and subsequent owners

The 1918 Guide to the Longfellow Gardens indicates that R. F. Jones bought the land from "the estate of the earliest settler" in the area. An abstract

for title to the property in the files of the Minneapolis Park Board confirms that Jones bought the land from a group of heirs of Franklin Steele for \$3000 on December 1, 1906 (Abstract of Title, Minnehaha Park files, Minneapolis Park Board).

Jones owned the land outright, except for various mortgages and mechanics liens on the property, until 1924. Jones deeded the land to the Minneapolis Park Board in August of that year, with the condition that he or his heirs be allowed to operate the zoo for 10 years. His contract called for the city to acquire the land and for Jones to remove any structures, equipment, or animals unless the Board of Park Commissioners purchased them (Minnehaha Park files, Minneapolis Park Board).

In 1934 Jones's daughter, Marian Rowell, went to court to have the city's agreement with her father voided. When that attempt failed, she and her husband sold the house to the Minneapolis Library Board, the Park Board retaining title to the land as per the 1924 contract and leasing the property to the Library Board. In 1937 the Library Board paid the Rowells \$1500 for the house, with \$500 raised by the public and \$1000 contributed by the Library Board.

Upon expiration of the Library Board's lease with the Park Board, the former group did not renew its lease because a new library in the area was being built. The house was, in effect, abandoned when the Library Board's lease expired, and ownership of the house reverted to the Minneapolis Park Board.

4. **Builders, contractors, suppliers**

There is no directly recorded information regarding the builders, contractors, or suppliers for the original construction of the Longfellow House. However, the Abstract of Title in the files of the Minneapolis Park Board lists mechanics liens filed against R. F. Jones by craftsmen and contractors who worked for him. There are literally dozens of these liens, as well as other claims against the property, beginning in August 1907, just five months after construction started on the house and the first outbuildings. A careful trace of the lienholders and their specialties such as plumbing or electrical work would give a precise indication of who worked on the Longfellow Gardens property,

although exact connection to the house would probably have to remain speculative.

5. **Original plans and construction**

No definite information is available concerning the original plans and construction. Extensive searching has not uncovered original plans, and, as a private residence not yet associated with a zoo, the construction of the house seems to have escaped notice in the local newspapers.

6. **Alterations and additions**

a. Changes during the period of significance

There appear to have been very few deliberate changes made in the house during the period of Jones's occupancy. Apparently, it did begin to deteriorate toward the end of this period, though. One resident of the neighborhood, writing years later in Longfellowship, recalled helping Jones's daughter care for the Gardens and the house after the elder Jones died, and wrote "It was a sad day to see the house and zoo in such a deplorable state. The furniture was still beautiful, but the house was crumbling about it" (Longfellowship vol. 1 no. 4). Photographs HABS-MN-136-18 and HABS-MN-136-19 show the house in 1936, during this period of decline immediately before its sale by the Rowells.

b. Alterations by the WPA

Substantial modifications were made to Jones's "Longfellow House" in 1937 when it was remodeled for use as a public library. The most notable structural alteration made by the WPA in converting the house to a library was the enclosure of the two porches into reading rooms (Vitz to Gale). Historic photographs of the building taken in 1936 {
; show stairs leading down from both porches; those were removed when the porches were enclosed. The photographs also show the porches as supported by piers. Current examination shows the porch supports to be enclosed.

Vitz describes the cost to the Library Board of the conversion of the building and summarizes the project as spending \$1500 for

the building and \$5117.48 for the cost of materials, for the construction of equipment and for "light fixtures, venetian blinds, furnace, plumbing, . . ." (Vitz to Gale). Vitz's letter to Gale notes that all the work on the building, and the installation of its equipment, was done by WPA labor. Figures indicate that the WPA contributed \$11,500 worth of goods and services to the project (Gale address, vertical files, Libraries: Minneapolis: Longfellow, in Minneapolis Public Library Special Collections). Photograph HABS-MN-136-20 shows the building just after this remodeling.

- c. Changes while a library, 1937-1968
No information could be obtained concerning structural changes that may have taken place during the period the building was used as a library.
- d. Neglect, 1969-1983
The building received substantial damage in the period immediately after its use as a library. Two fires in the late 1970s were especially damaging to the west porch (Furst, 'Heartbreak house'). When the Multiple Sclerosis Society created a "Halloween House" in the building, it sawed through a support beam upstairs and rearranged upstairs spaces by cutting through walls and installing 2 x 4s and pressed board to create a maze (Wood).
- e. Restoration efforts, 1983-present
The building's use as a haunted house ended in 1983 after the formation of the Longfellow House Restoration Group (LHRG) demonstrated community interest in saving the building. Most of the money raised by the LHRG has gone toward stabilization, including a new roof (Ceplecha, Villager). A new cedar shingle roof was raised in 1985 by Navy Seabee labor in conjunction with LHRG; doors were repaired after a break-in during 1985 (Longfellowship Oct/Nov. 1985). During 1985 and 1986, Seabee construction projects included replacing siding, stabilizing porches, installing new glass in the second floor windows, completing the bay window area, securing the building.

The building was painted in 1986
(Longfellowship).

B. Historical Context

1. **Minnehaha Falls, Minnehaha Park, and their association with Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.**

The land around Minnehaha Falls was first suggested as a state park in 1875, but nothing substantial happened to advance the plan for the next decade. In 1885, the Minnesota Legislature authorized the establishment of Minnehaha State Park and established a commission to perform the necessary land acquisition and planning. The commission designated and appraised 173 acres of land around the falls and between the falls and the mouth of the creek at the Mississippi River, but disputes with the landowners over price delayed acquisition. By 1889, when prices had been agreed to, the state legislature found itself unable to fund the acquisition. The City of Minneapolis agreed to advance the acquisition funds and take title to the lands of "Minnehaha State Park" once title had been cleared (Wirth, 49-51).

Minnehaha Falls had been associated in the public mind with the poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow since the publication of "Song of Hiawatha" in 1855. Warren J. Upham's Minnesota Geographic Names notes that the falls were known in the 1820s as "Brown's Falls" and were probably not widely termed "Minnehaha" until the publication in 1849 of Mrs. Mary Eastman's Dakotah, or Life and Legends of the Sioux around Fort Snelling. She gives the name "Minnehaha" to these falls, but Upham argues that the term combines generic Dakota terms for "water" (minne) and "a fall" (haha) and is thus probably a coinage of white settlers in the area (Upham 230). Longfellow never visited Minnesota; the descriptions in Eastman's book and in Henry Schoolcraft's accounts of his explorations provided enough background for the romantic epic he wrote.

Whatever the name's origin, Longfellow's poem so captured the imagination of readers that the association between the poet and the creek he had never seen was firmly established. A "Longfellow motif" can be seen in the names of features and streets around the present park, and has surely been a large part of the area's continued

attractiveness. The park area was popular from its earliest days and 1890s photographs show people enjoying a generally rustic landscape. Schoolchildren and other lovers of the romantic epic contributed funds for a bronze statue of "Hiawatha" and "Minnehaha" that was erected in 1912 on an island in the creek above the falls. The park soon featured an auto tourist camp and a variety of other amenities.

2. **R.F. Jones**

Robert Fremont Jones moved to the Minnehaha area in 1907, building a house on land he had bought from the heirs of Franklin Steele, a prominent Minneapolis pioneer, miller, and land speculator. Jones, his wife, son, and daughter, were to live on this site until the 1930s and transform the quiet woodland to a bustling amusement park (Wood, "Longfellow House"). At the time he moved to the Minnehaha Falls area, Jones was already well-known throughout Minneapolis. Subsequent articles about him, both in historical journals and in the contemporary press, agree on the basic facts of his life and re-tell many of the same stories about his life and career. More "objective" confirmation of some of these is not possible; however, it seems clear that Robert Fremont (Fish) Jones was one of the most colorful figures in early Minneapolis history.

Jones was an entrepreneur and gifted publicist. Arriving in Minneapolis in 1876 in his mid-20s, he opened a fish market that was soon enormously successful. Some say that he earned the nickname "Fish" from his days with the fish market, others disagree, arguing that it came from an earlier employment as a fishmonger. Whatever the case, "Fish" Jones he became, a name which he hated, but which he turned to publicity purposes, like many other things he did. Upon placing an especially large order with a Chicago merchant, he was rewarded with a high silk hat. For the rest of his life, he wore no other type of hat, and soon affected a Van Dyke beard and Prince Albert coat to complete the ensemble.

By 1885, Jones was out of the fish business, and had begun assembling the animals and birds that were to make him an enduring character in Minneapolis history. Again, accounts of the

precise beginnings of this phase of his career differ. According to some sources, he bought a seal to advertise his fish business; other accounts say he kept a bear chained outside his shop. Most sources agree that he began to keep animals on the third floor of the building in which he had his shop. When he sold out in 1885, he moved the menagerie to his home and grounds on Hennepin Avenue, there to keep adding to the collection. During these years he edited a newspaper for horsemen, managed two driving tracks, and made what is arguably the most famous purchase of a racehorse in Minnesota's history. In 1903, after watching the trotter Dan Patch race a mile, Jones bought him for M. W. Savage. The horse set a record for the mile that stood for several decades.

Around the turn of the century, though, Jones's menagerie began to annoy his neighbors. The sounds and smells of the growing collection began to seem less and less appropriate to a developing residential area. Looking around for a suitable piece of land on which to house his many pets, Jones purchased land near Minnehaha Creek, across the road from Minnehaha Park. As a later Guide to Longfellow Gardens was to put it, the zoo Jones established derived its name from a pattern already established in the neighborhood: "Mr. Jones, inspired by the fame given Minnehaha Falls by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, dedicated the Gardens to the far famed and much loved writer. . ." (Guide to Longfellow Gardens, Minneapolis Public Library Special Collections).

3. **The Longfellow Gardens (1907-1936)**

In his new location, Jones built the collection of buildings and grounds that would become enormously popular as Longfellow Gardens. He supplemented his already extensive animal collection by traveling to Europe to acquire animals for a zoo that was being planned by the Twin City Rapid Transit Company. When those plans fell through, he got into the business himself full time. Coincidentally, the Minneapolis Park Board decided to close the Minnehaha Park zoo in 1907, so he acquired most of those animals as well. The grand opening of the Longfellow Gardens, including the reading of a congratulatory letter from the poet's daughter and the unveiling of a statue of the poet commissioned

from local sculptor Andrew Gemont, took place June 25, 1908.

After a few years, Jones and his staff began to train the animals themselves and the sight of the top-hatted Jones walking over his grounds, followed by seals or sometimes with a tiger on a leash, became a highlight of visits to the Longfellow Gardens.

According to some accounts, thousands attended the gardens annually; the 1918 Guide claimed 1,000,000 visitors since the park's opening. Whatever the numbers, Jones apparently became quite wealthy as a result of his proprietorship. Here he kept lions, tigers, bears, an elephant, camels, sea lions and other wild animals as well as large numbers of birds and other creatures. It was said by some that Jones had the largest and finest private collection of wildlife in North America and that the Longfellow Gardens ranked second only to the Bronx Zoo among American zoos.

But the city grew to overtake Jones at this location as well. In 1922, after numerous complaints about the noise and the smell, the Minneapolis Park Board instituted condemnation proceedings against Jones with the view toward making his land part of adjacent Minnehaha Park. Jones resisted for a time, then in 1924 agreed to deed the property to the city with the stipulation that he and his heirs be allowed to operate the gardens for ten more years. Jones died in 1930 and his daughter operated the gardens for several years thereafter. In 1934 she initiated a lengthy court action to overturn the agreement with the city, but the courts ruled against her.

The final disposition of the property came in 1936, when the Park Board took possession, cleared the land of all structures except the Longfellow statue and the Longfellow House, and graded it for future development. The house was allowed to remain standing because public sentiment wanted it saved for a branch library.

4. **After the Longfellow Gardens (1937-1993)**

a. Branch Library

After the Park Board was deeded the land, the question remained as to the disposition of the

house. Use of the house as a public library was a preferred alternative, but if the Library Board did not want the house, it would have to be moved or demolished ('R. F. Jones Home Site'). In 1936 a decision was made to purchase the house from Jones' daughter for \$1500 and convert it into a library.

b. Neglect and restoration

After the Library Board ceased using the building as a library in 1969, it began a period of mixed use, most of which was harmful to the building. It was at various times a skating warming house, teen-age drop-in center sponsored by a nearby church, target for arsonists and Halloween 'haunted house' to benefit the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Minneapolis (Wood, "Longfellow House"). Two fires in the late 1970s caused extensive damage to the west porch. Creation of the "haunted house" maze has caused substantial spatial reconfiguration to the upstairs and may have resulted in structural damage as well.

Since 1983, the house has been the subject of a neighborhood grass roots preservation effort.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. **Architectural character**

The R. F. Jones house is a reproduction of the Vassall-Craigie-Longfellow House in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Although currently in poor condition, the house retains its basic late Georgian character with its symmetrical fenestration and simple massing.

2. **Condition of fabric**

The fabric of the house is in poor to fair condition. The original clapboard sheathing remains, but all of the windows have been boarded up to thwart vandalism. The roof, which was mostly replaced in 1985, leaks badly.

3. **Summary Description**

The R. F. Jones House is a two story wood frame Georgian house with two attached, enclosed wood frame porches. Its north elevation has five ranks of symmetrically

arranged fenestration, centered on the entry door, now largely boarded up to thwart vandals. The roof is hipped, with a flat rectangular area in the center. There are two chimneys, one connected to the fireplace and one constructed for decorative purposes only. The clapboard siding is painted yellow, which contrasts with the white trim.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. **Overall dimensions**

The overall dimensions of the house are 62 feet 10 inches by 28 feet, with a central two story section of 40 feet 4 inches by 28 feet, and an enclosed porch on each end. The west porch measures 13 feet by 27 feet 4 inches. The east porch measures 8 feet 8 inches by 27 feet 4 inches.

2. **Foundations**

The foundation of the central, two story part of the house is Platteville limestone. The porch foundations are of concrete block with stucco facing.

3. **Walls**

The walls are sheathed in wood clapboard siding. The three bays of the north elevation are separated by Ionic pilasters, arrayed symmetrically from the corners of the building. The east and west bays have two windows on each story; the center bay contains the main entry door and a second story window.

4. **Structural system, framing**

The house is a balloon frame two story structure composed of 2 x 4 wood studs spaced 16 inches on center. The joists for the first and second floor support are 2 x 10 studs spaced 16 inches on center.

5. **Porches, stoops, balconies, bulkheads**

The two attached porches, on the east and west ends of the house, are wood framed one story structures. They were enclosed when the building was converted for use as a library.

6. **Chimneys**

There are two brick chimneys, which project above the flat section of the roof. The east chimney is decorative only, being supported by wood framing in the attic. The west chimney extends through the house to the basement and serves the first floor fireplace.

7. **Openings**

The three bays of the north elevation are separated by Ionic pilasters, arrayed symmetrically from the corners of the building. The east and west bays have two windows on each story; the center bay contains the main entry door and a second story window. Fenestration on the south elevation is essentially five bays organized around a centered door and second story ribbon window. The west two bays have single windows on each floor, while the east two bays have single windows on the second floor over a large bay window on the first floor.

a. Doorways and doors

There are two doorways into the house. The primary entrance is in the center of the north elevation. A secondary entrance is into the basement in the center of the concrete block and stucco basement wall on the south elevation.

b. Windows and shutters

Most of the windows on the two story main section of the house are 12-light double-hung wood frame sash windows.

The north side of the house has a moon-shaped window opening into the attic and four well windows into the basement. These openings, like all other windows on the house, have been covered with plywood to thwart vandalism.

The east and west elevations have two second story windows each, spaced well apart. The east elevation has an additional smaller window centered on the second story.

8. **Roof**

a. Shape, covering

The roof is hipped, with a flattened rectangular area in the center. There was formerly a balustrade around this top part of the roof. The roof was covered in cedar shingles in 1985.

The roof on the two end porches is low-pitched and hipped, with a pyramid shape on the west porch roof and a flat top on the east.

b. Cornice, eaves

Prominent dentils exist under the eaves around the circumference of the house and under the central dormer on the north elevation.

c. Dormers, cupolas, towers

Three pedimented dormers are on the south side of the roof and two pedimented dormers are on the north side. There is a large gable dormer in the north side of the roof centered over the main entry to the house.

C. Description of Interior:

1. **Floor plans**

The first floor consists of two rooms separated by a central hallway and front and rear vestibules. The east side of the first floor consists of two rooms separated by a large wall opening. Each of these rooms opens onto an enclosed porch through double French doors. The southern (back) of these two rooms has a bay window in its south wall. The west side of the first floor consists of one large room with a central fireplace on the east wall. A double French door leads to the enclosed west porch.

The second floor has been extensively partitioned in recent years. The second floor central hallway leads to four rooms. The west two open off the central hall and are separated by a closet. The east two open from a smaller hall and have a bathroom between them. Remaining evidence does not reveal the original room configuration of the second floor.

The original basement under the two-story section of the house has been divided. A large central space opens onto the door in the south wall of the basement. There are mechanical rooms in the northwest and in the southwest parts of the basement and men's and women's toilets in the southeast part of the basement. Porch basements, at the east and west of the main basement area, were apparently added subsequent to the original construction of the house.

The attic is an open space with six dormers. A brick chimney extends through the floor and on out the ceiling to the flat section of the roof. A centrally located ladder extends to a rectangular hatch onto the roof.

2. **Stairways**

There is an open stair to the second floor in the central hallway on the first floor. The stair appears to be intact, although some of the turned balusters are missing or have been replaced with square members.

The stairway from the first floor to the basement has been removed and the floor opening blocked off.

The stairway from the second floor to the attic is on the north side of the house, slightly off center to the east.

3. **Flooring**

The floor joists on the first and second floors are sheathed with 1 inch wood board subflooring and 1 x 4 tongue-and-groove finish flooring.

4. **Wall and ceiling finishes**

The walls and ceilings are finished in plaster over wood lath. There is extensive plaster damage in all rooms, although original wood work and trim appear largely intact.

5. **Decorative features and trim**

Although the decorative trim in the house is largely intact, subsequent damage has made it very difficult to determine the original appearance of the decorative elements of the house.

A clue to the interior appearance of the house at one point in its history can be found in a letter from Carl Vitz, librarian at the Minneapolis Public Library, to E. C. Gale, president of the library board. Writes Vitz:

The building is unusual for its use of color, i.e., mahogany finish, black trim on bookcases; colorful battleship linoleum, black bordered; the blue-green backgrounds for the bookcases; for its considerable use of glass on fixtures, as shelves and on the tops of some of the bookcases; the informal atmosphere created by floor lamps, window chairs, blinds and hangings, and in general the homelike atmosphere (Vitz to Gale).

It has not been recorded how many of these features were added in the renovation undertaken by the library and how many date from the period of occupancy by the Joneses. The only clues as to the original interior appearance of the house come from recollections by area residents, published in a variety of sources, that the house was a replica of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's house in its furnishings as well as its exterior details.

6. **Hardware**

No original hardware appears to remain in the house.

7. **Mechanical equipment**

The house currently has no mechanical systems for heating, lighting, ventilation, or plumbing. Due to the extensive damage the house has suffered, the original systems cannot be determined.

D. Site:

1. **General setting and orientation**

The R. F. Jones house faces generally northerly on the north side of an irregularly-shaped lot bounded by Minnehaha Parkway on the north, Hiawatha Avenue on the east, and Minnehaha Creek on the west and south. There are several shade trees around the house, and a few scattered across the rest of the site. The site slopes to the south at the north end of the property near the house, with the result that the walk out basement is built into the hill. The rest of the site is roughly level.

2. **Historic landscape design**

Nothing is definitely known about the original design intent of the historic landscape. Guide books to the Longfellow Gardens emphasize the rustic design and mention the "formal garden effects" sought for by the design (1926 Guide to Longfellow Gardens, Minneapolis Public Library Special Collections). Historic photographs indicate that Longfellow Gardens was laid out with some deliberation; paths wound gracefully through grassy areas and along a lagoon created by impounded Minnehaha Creek (HABS-MN-136-15 and HABS-MN-136-16). The guide book descriptions indicate that Jones designed the site himself, but there is no indication as to what, if any, role formal landscape site design played in the site's configuration.

The Andrew Gemont sculpture of Longfellow that was a focal point of the landscape design remains, albeit in deteriorating condition. The sandstone statue was formally unveiled June 25, 1908 at a ceremony that included a letter from the poet's daughter Alice.

Some landscaping work was completed as part of the conversion of the site to use as a library. Carl Vitz' letter to E. C. Gale notes that "The Park Board's cooperation in the matter of grading and sodding has been unusually fine; the promised landscaping, planting of shrubbery and trees will still further enhance the appearance of the building" (Vitz to Gale).

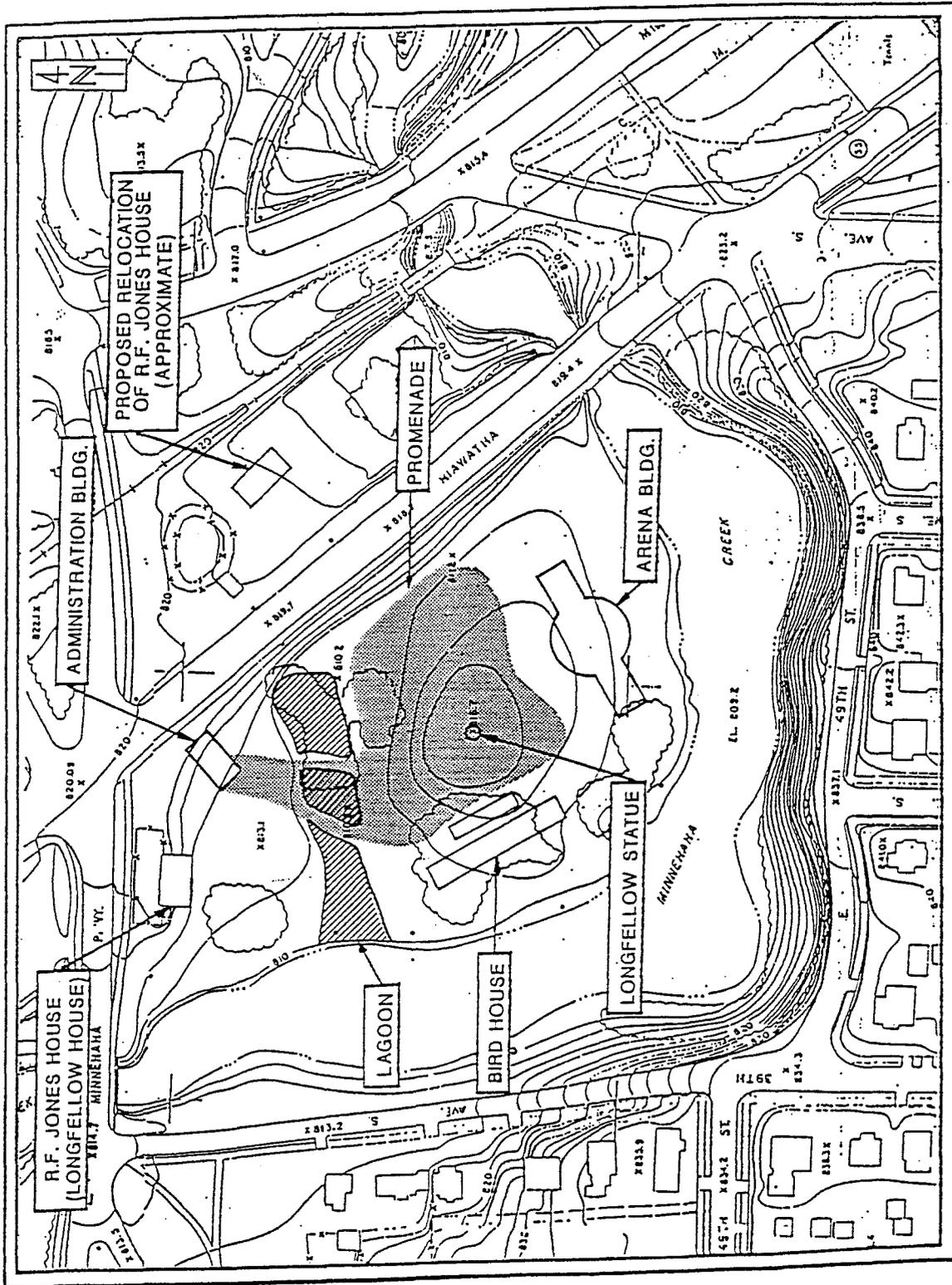
3. **Outbuildings**

The site of the Longfellow House and Gardens contains roughly 4.6 acres. Of the buildings that were a part of the Longfellow Gardens, only the house remains. During the period of significance, the site contained, in addition to the house, an administration building that served as an entrance and concession stand, an arena where the animal shows were held, a bird house, a pavilion with room for a thousand people to sit and watch animal performances, and various other structures and objects (See map, HABS MN-136 page 17 and HABS-MN-136-14, HABS-MN-136-15, HABS-MN-136-16, HABS-MN-136-17).

Guidebooks to the Longfellow Gardens indicate that Jones designed the buildings on the grounds himself. The rustic quality of their construction, and their blending into the "woodland wall" of trees that separated the Gardens from the surrounding city are emphasized in the guidebooks. The building permit records indicate that a 25 foot by 30 foot frame barn and a 22 foot by 122 foot frame bird house were constructed in 1907 at the same time the Longfellow House was built. The 110 foot by 200 foot frame arena was built in the fall of 1908, with the administration building/entrance (designed by Hewitt and Brown rather than Jones) following in the summer of 1912 (Building Permits # 70596, 78537, 98240). The administration building is pictured in HABS-MN-136-14. All of the buildings except Jones's residence were demolished when the Park Board took over the site in 1936.

A later construction of note was the 1927 addition of a brick pump house and artesian well built by the Minneapolis Park Commission on the grounds of the Longfellow Gardens to control the flow of water over Minnehaha Falls. The pump house was demolished some time subsequent to 1978. Evidence of this dating is that it appears in a newspaper photograph published that year. Its foundations remain on the grounds southwest of the Longfellow House.

In addition to the Andrew Gemont sandstone sculpture of Longfellow that provided a visual focal point of the Gardens, a number of other significant objects were scattered about the grounds. Guidebooks describe a totem pole, said to be the largest ever shipped out of Alaska. More in keeping with the Longfellow theme of the park was a sculpted bas-relief of Hiawatha, created in sandstone by Andrew Gemont, that was placed in a cavity of a large



oak tree. These objects also were presumably removed when the Park Board assumed control of the site.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Original Architectural Drawings

No original architectural drawings, either of the original construction or of subsequent alterations, could be found.

B. Early Views

A number of early photographs reveal important information about the original decoration of the house and the arrangement of the grounds. For the most part, these views are contained in copies of guides to the Longfellow Gardens that Jones published annually. Copies of these guides are in the vertical file holdings of the Minneapolis History Collection, Minneapolis Public Library. Copies of some of the photographs are in the holdings of the Hennepin County Historical Society as well. The Minneapolis Park Board files on Minnehaha Park also contain valuable early photographs.

C. Interviews

D. Bibliography

1. **Primary and unpublished sources**

Building Permits, City of Minneapolis, issued for 4001 Minnehaha Blvd., permit #70596 (March 30, 1907), permit #78537 (September 24, 1908), permit #98240 (May 8, 1912), permit #247640 (February 27, 1937), Office of Housing and Inspection, City of Minneapolis, Minneapolis, MN. Provide date and basic dimensions of building construction and renovation on the site.

Doell, Charles E., to Joseph Zalusky, July 17, 1961, "Longfellow House" file, Hennepin History Museum, Minneapolis, MN. Discusses the transfer of Longfellow Gardens to Minneapolis Park Board.

E.C. Gale address, typescript dated October 28, 1937, vertical files "Libraries: Minneapolis: Longfellow" in Minneapolis Public Library Special Collections, Minneapolis, MN. Address from the president of the Minneapolis Library Board upon the opening of the Longfellow Branch Library.

Grossman, John, "National Register Nomination: Minnehaha Park Historic District," 1969. Architecture/History Inventory, State Historic Preservation Office, Minnesota

Historical Society, St. Paul, MN. Contains basic information on Longfellow House.

Hennepin History Museum, Minneapolis, MN. Vertical files: "Parks: Minnehaha--Minneapolis"; "Zoos: Longfellow Gardens--Minneapolis"; "Jones, Robert F." Collection of newspaper and magazine articles, historic photographs.

Johnson, Clarence, biographical vertical file, Northwest Architectural Archives, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN. Summarizes Johnson's early career.

Keith, Walter J., biographical vertical file, Northwest Architectural Archives, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN. Summarizes Keith's career.

Longfellowship, typescript newsletter published by the Longfellow House Restoration Group, publication date varies, assorted copies in the "Minnehaha Historic District" file, Architecture/History Inventory, State Historic Preservation Office, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, MN. Updates readers on the progress of restoration work and fund raising. Some issues have recollections of the house and Longfellow Gardens.

Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, Minneapolis, MN. Files on the Longfellow House and Minnehaha Park. Contain historic photographs, legal papers including an abstract of title and the contract between Jones and the City of Minneapolis.

Minneapolis Public Library, Special Collections, Minneapolis, MN. Vertical files: "Biography: Jones, Robert F. (Fish)"; "Zoos: Minneapolis: Longfellow Gardens"; "Libraries: Minneapolis: Longfellow."; "Houses: Jones, Robert F." Extensive collection of newspaper and magazine articles on Jones, the Longfellow Gardens, and the use of the building as a library. Of special note are four copies--published in 1909, 1918, 1926, and 1928--of the Guide to Longfellow Gardens and detailed records on the conversion of the building to a library.

Sabongi, F. J. "Historic Structures Report: R. F. Jones House (Longfellow House) [draft]." Minneapolis Park Board. Minneapolis, MN. 1993.

2. **Secondary and published sources**

Allen, Martha S., "Neighbors want Longfellow House work begun," Minneapolis Star and Tribune, July 26, 1982, p. 1C. Announces the formation of the Longfellow House Restoration Group.

Ceplecha, Paul, "Longfellow House renovation sees light at end of tunnel," Highland Villager, July 19, 1992. Discusses continued progress of fund-raising and planning for restoration of the Longfellow House.

Davidson, Diane, "The story of 'Fish' Jones and his wonderful Longfellow Gardens," Highland Villager, July 14, 1982, p. 16. General history of Jones and the Gardens.

Furst, Randy, "The heartbreak house: Waiting for costly TLC," Minneapolis Star and Tribune, July 16, 1991, p. 1B. Overview of the deteriorated condition of the house.

Gwinn, Sherman, "Jones Catches 'Em Young But He Doesn't Treat 'Em Rough," American Magazine, November 1925, pp. 60+. Feature story on Jones discusses his career as animal trainer.

Johnson, Walter, "Park Department Hopes to Save Old 'Longfellow Home,'" Minneapolis Star, August 29, 1968. General account of the house and plans for it.

Meier, Peg, "Fish Jones and His Zoo," Minneapolis Star and Tribune, February 9, 1988, p. 1E. General account, repeats many of the anecdotal tales about Jones.

"The Remarkable 'Fish' Jones," Greater Minneapolis, February 1963, pp. 16+. General account of Jones' career.

"Robert F. Jones, Founder of Longfellow Gardens, Picturesque City Figure, Dies," Minneapolis Journal, October 16, 1930. Obituary gives account of Jones' life and career, portrays him as a significant figure in Minneapolis history.

Upham, Warren, Minnesota Geographic Names: Their Origin and Historic Significance. rpt. edn. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1969. (originally published in 1920 by the Minnesota Historical Society as volume 17 of the Collections of the Minnesota Historical Society).

Includes extensive discussion of the Longfellow/Minnehaha Falls connection.

Wirth, Theodore, Minneapolis Park System, 1883-1944: Retrospective Glimpses in the History of the Board of Park Commissioners of Minneapolis, Minnesota and the City's Park, Parkway, and Playground System. Minneapolis: Board of Park Commissioners, 1946. Includes detailed discussion of the founding of Minnehaha Park.

Wood, Dave, "'Longfellow House' is ghost manor now," Minneapolis Tribune, June 13, 1981, p. 1B. General account of house history provides summary of uses since abandonment as a library.

Zalusky, Joseph W., "'Fish' Jones and His Irresistible Longfellow Gardens . . ." Hennepin County History, Fall 1967, pp. 7+. One of the best local history accounts of Jones' life and the Longfellow Gardens. Lavishly illustrated.

-----., "He Was a Colorful Figure Robert 'Fish' Jones," Hennepin County History, Spring 1961, pp. 3+ General account of Jones' life.

E. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated

An interview with Sharon Siegrist, founder of the Longfellow House Restoration Group, might contribute personal reminiscences of the period when the building was used as a library. Oral history interviews with other long-time neighborhood residents might add to the early history of the Longfellow Gardens. Examination of the annual reports of the Minneapolis Park Board and the Minneapolis Library Board, as well as further exploration of the files of both those agencies would contribute additional details, including a list of every lienholder who filed a claim against R. F. Jones.

F. Supplemental Material

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This documentation was completed as part of a Memorandum of Agreement between the Federal Highway Administration, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office, and the Minnesota Department of Transportation governing mitigation of the effects of a proposed widening of Trunk Highway 55 in south Minneapolis. The Longfellow House is to be moved to a site mutually agreed upon by the above parties and the

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Minneapolis Park Board, where it is to be restored by the Park Board. The documentation was prepared by Patrick Nunnally, project historian in the Trunk Highway Archaeology Program, Minnesota Historical Society. The map on page 17 was prepared by Kent Skaar of the Trunk Highway Archaeology Program, Minnesota Historical Society. Photography was by the Minnesota Department of Transportation. Photographic copies of historic photographs from the files of the Minneapolis Park Board and the Minneapolis Public Library were made by the Minnesota Department of Transportation.