



Cultivating Equality: Care About & Care For

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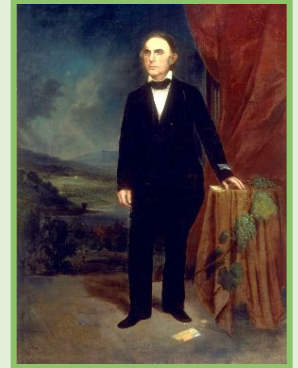
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Idea in Brief

Rarely does one's name fit as perfectly as Nicholas Longworth's. Longworth made a fortune while making a difference by *'caring about'* democracy and *'caring for'* people that society excluded. Longworth's keen eye for opportunity built an industry and his eye for talent advanced the career of an internationally famous African American.

Inclusive Actions

- Create industry innovations that advance social equality.
- Go beyond virtue signaling (e.g., Black Lives Matter) and *caring about* a movement, to *caring for* people who are right in front of you, then discover mutual benefits.
- Create opportunities for diverse talent that matter. Be an advisor, employer, sponsor, connector, and advocate that opens doors at the highest level.
- Leave a legacy of cultivating talented people that others may overlook or underestimate.



Nicholas Longworth Portrait
by Robert Duncanson 1858
Collection of the University of Cincinnati
Photo courtesy of the Taft Museum of Art

Business Profile

Nicholas Longworth (1783-1863) amassed his fortune in real estate, agriculture, and as father of the American winemaking industry. He is one of the wealthiest Americans of all time^{1,2} --and he paid the second highest tax bill in the nation. Despite his extraordinary wealth, Longworth wore it casually -- probably because of his humble beginnings.

Personal Profile

Longworth's rags to riches journey starts in Newark, New Jersey, where his parents supported the British 'red coats'³ and lost everything because of it, just before Nick was born in 1783. Teenage Longworth fled the stigma of poverty and political embarrassment to live with extended family in South Carolina. There, he got a job and fell in love. But when he learned that his sweetheart's family supported slavery, they broke up. He moved to Ohio to study law.

As a new lawyer, Longworth often accepted land instead of cash as payment for his legal services. This enabled him to acquire considerable real estate holdings. After a while though, he grew restless with his law career. Longworth found his new path unexpectedly -- while recovering from a whiskey hangover in the woods.⁴ The combination of a headache, prohibition, and the temperance movement prompted him to consider the market for less potent and more "cultured" alcohol. He began dabbling with grape growing and winemaking. By age 42 (1825), the millionaire land baron quit practicing law and turned his grape hobby into an agricultural empire! Yet he never gave up rags completely.

In fact, Longworth sometimes looked more like a beggar than a millionaire. His small stature, unassuming demeanor, and notes pinned to his clothes led people to underestimate him. That's why, when President Abraham Lincoln visited the mogul's estate, he mistook Longworth for the gardener. Longworth enjoyed his low-profile deception -- but his business colleagues knew better.

Leading Change

Cultivating Fruit, Fortunes & Freedom

Longworth and his friends in the Cincinnati Horticultural society made Ohio an agricultural powerhouse! They imported exotic fruits, harnessed technology to grow them off-season, industrialized production, and fed the nation. These conscious capitalists also *cared about* social equality and promoted it through industry via the 'free produce' movement.⁵ Abolitionists created the 'free produce' movement to increase consumer demand for fruit-based sugar produced by employees, while reducing demand for cane sugar grown on slave plantations. The horticultural society marketed their expertise and exotic offerings just as wealthy Europeans did--with sumptuous still-life oil paintings.⁶ Their *care about* commerce and art resulted in a connection between Longworth and the painter Robert Duncanson.

Cultivating Talent



Robert S. Duncanson (1821/22-1872) was an African American house-painter turned fruit-painter. Born free, in New York, to an African American mother and Scottish Canadian father.⁷ Young Duncanson moved to the Midwest, to Michigan and Ohio. He earned a living painting houses, then taught himself to paint artistically. Despite Duncanson's emerging skills, it was difficult for him and other African Americans to obtain lucrative art commissions; they too

were underestimated. So Duncanson strategically aligned his efforts with Ohio's horticultural boom and soon gained notoriety for his fruit paintings. Throughout the 1840s, Duncanson's paintings of oranges, lemons, pineapples, and grapes reveal his extraordinary access to expensive fruits that were not indigenous to Ohio. This suggests that he also had access to wealthy fruit entrepreneurs and art patrons. But access doesn't necessarily translate into opportunity. Longworth created opportunities.

Longworth *cared about* arts and culture and *cared for* different people that created it – black and white, men and women. He sponsored dozens of artists who became famous, including Hiram Powers, Lilly Martin, and Worthington Whittredge. Longworth observed Duncanson's skills, cultivated a relationship with him, and introduced him to this elite circle of artists. Then he provided Duncanson with resources, educational opportunities, trips abroad, and professional introductions -- as he did those other artists. In fact, he may have provided Duncanson with more.

Longworth was so captivated by the landscape that Duncanson painted for abolitionist Charles Avery⁸, that he created the opportunity of a lifetime. Longworth commissioned Duncanson to paint eight landscape murals for his magnificent Belmont mansion.⁹ Suddenly, Duncanson's lowly house painting skills proved invaluable for creating monumental artworks that catapulted him to national fame. Longworth's mansion became the talk of the artworld. Duncanson's murals in Longworth's mansion forever connects these two remarkable American success stories. However, Longworth's largess wasn't limited to artists; he extended care democratically to people at all levels of society.

Cultivating Community & the Common Good

It's not surprising for someone with Longworth's wealth to care about charitable causes, such as the orphanage that he funded for black children. *Caring about* the less fortunate from a distance is easy; *caring for* people up close is another matter. Longworth cared for people up close. He invited ordinary people from the community into his gardens. He didn't just educate them about exotic produce – he made luxury delicacies accessible and affordable for them.

Longworth also supported immigrants by providing food for the poor or hiring them to work as tenant farmers in his vineyards. That's how he learned from German immigrants about their wine-making processes. Together, they increased consumer demand, profits, and job opportunities. But Longworth's care didn't always connect to his business.

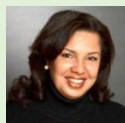
One day, while Longworth worked in his garden, an escaped slave from Kentucky begged for help to avoid capture. Longworth hid Harvey Young in his cellar, purchased his freedom, then employed him as a butler for the rest of his life. The price that Longworth paid for Young's freedom and employment is modest compared to the story's lasting value. When Longworth shared the saga with his friend, Harriet Beecher Stowe, he inspired her to write a pivotal scene in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, a best-selling novel (1852) that awakened the nation's conscience and nudged it toward equality. Still, Longworth's generosity didn't immunize him from trouble. Locals sometimes stole from him and torched the businesses of abolitionists. He persisted.

Near the end of his life, Longworth hired Duncanson to paint his portrait, showing a quirky note pinned to his suit coat and Catawba grapes from his legendary vineyard, which yielded a 700% return on the land. Longworth died in 1863 and the land eventually succumbed to mold and fungi but his investment in people lives on as national treasures (e.g., paintings, sculpture, literature, and the community). By 1863, Duncanson's fame and fortune soared, which enabled him to flee the U.S. during the Civil War. While traveling abroad, he continued painting, his acclaim grew, and Duncanson became the first world renowned African American landscape painter.¹⁰

Conclusion

Longworth was not a vocal advocate for social change. Yet his actions echo throughout the nation and beyond. He *cared about* the common good -- and he *cared for* people who were excluded or suffering. Whether minority artists, poor immigrants, orphans, or freedom-seeking runaways, Longworth's empathy is remarkable given research about high status people and caring.

Specifically, studies show that simply thinking about money predisposes people to justify the existing social system and seek to dominate others. He didn't. Further, thinking about money makes one less likely to be warm, caring, and prosocial, and more likely to focus on 'work hustle' and acquiring more.¹¹ Consider the implications of these findings for wealthy and powerful people. People in financial services. People in business. And all of us who are immersed in a culture of money messages that drive capitalism. What are the consequences for care in our society? More importantly, how did Longworth, a wildly successful capitalist, transcend callous indifference to become a change agent that includes others? And how can we? By intentionally *caring about* seemingly distant social issues and *caring for* people that we encounter every day. It's tempting for organizations to *care about* social issues that make headlines but *caring for* ordinary people makes a positive difference.



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¹ <https://www.philanthropyroundtable.org/almanac/people/hall-of-fame/detail/nicholas-longworth>

² Allen County Public Library Genealogy Center (1933). The making of Nicholas Longworth; annals of an American family." New York: R. Long & R.R. Smith, Inc.

³ Nicholas Longworth Obituary, Harper's Weekly: A Journal of Civilization. New York, Saturday March 7, 1863, Vol VIL-No.323.

⁴ Hannickel, E. (2013). *Empire of Vines: Wine Culture in America*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

⁵ <https://theconversation.com/ethical-us-consumers-struggled-to-pressure-the-sugar-industry-to-abandon-slavery-with-less-success-than-their-british-counterparts-173473>

⁶ Hochstrasser, J.B. (2007). *Still Life and Trade in the Dutch Golden Age*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

⁷ <https://americanart.si.edu/artist/robert-s-duncanson-1353>

⁸ Cliff Mine, Lake Superior 1848.

⁹ <https://youtu.be/EgmGE-8sS28> <https://www.cincinnatihistory.org/post/nicholas-longworth-a-rags-to-riches-story>

¹⁰ <https://fineartamerica.com/art/paintings/robert+s.+duncanson>

¹¹ Vohs, K. D. (2015). Money priming can change people's thoughts, feelings, motivations, and behaviors: An update on 10 years of experiments. *Journal of Experimental Psychology* 144(4), e86–e93.