



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
November 9, 2012

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New Exhibition Opens at the BPL's Norman B. Leventhal Map Center

'Boston in the Gilded Age' is subject of exhibition and related programs

BOSTON – November 9, 2012 – The fourth exhibition to open as part of the Boston Public Library's [Building Boston](#) initiative is *Boston in the Gilded Age: Mapping Public Places*. The exhibition is presented by the Norman B. Leventhal Map Center at the Boston Public Library's Central Library in Copley Square, located at 700 Boylston Street. The exhibition is on display starting Friday, November 16, 2012, through Tuesday, April 23, 2013.

The Gilded Age – the era from the late 1860s to the late 1890s – was a period of significant growth and transformation in Boston as wealth emerged and waves of immigrants were arriving. Two major events allowed for the expansion of the city – the filling in of Back Bay, which took place from 1858 to 1882, and the devastating [Great Fire of 1872](#). The filling in of Back Bay created beautiful boulevards that featured fine architecture along with a number of public spaces. The Great Fire decimated Boston's commercial district, burning 65 acres. Although many homes and businesses were destroyed, Boston responded by quickly rebuilding, with improved streets and new building codes.



"This exhibition documents Boston's radically changing geography," said curator Stephanie Cyr, a six-year veteran of the Leventhal Map Center staff. "There is a focus on the evolving street pattern and emerging park system which was developed for the city's growing population."

The story within *Boston in the Gilded Age* begins with the Boston Common and Public Garden. Moving west, the exhibition examines the growth of open spaces in Back Bay, then south to Frederick Law Olmsted's Emerald Necklace, finishing with the development of Copley Square – the permanent home of the BPL's Central Library and home to the Leventhal Map Center. *Boston in the Gilded Age* shows 30 maps, prints, and photographs from the Boston Public Library's special collections as well as two items from the Museum of Fine Arts, which was originally located in Copley Square before opening its Huntington Avenue location in 1909.

The Leventhal Map Center also offers programs related to *Boston in the Gilded Age*:

- On Wednesday, November 28, the Leventhal Map Center will host a gallery tour with curator Stephanie Cyr (5:30 p.m. in the Map Center) followed by a lecture by Alex Krieger titled

“Constructing an Egalitarian Landscape” (6 p.m. in the Commonwealth Salon). The tour and lecture are jointly presented by the Leventhal Map Center and the Boston Map Society.

- On Saturday, December 1, the Leventhal Map Center will host an open house from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. The afternoon will include hands-on activities for children and tours of the *Boston in the Gilded Age* exhibition. The all-ages open house will have special elements for young people to make and explore, including word games, map puzzles, and map bookmarks.

The Leventhal Map Center exhibition gallery is open Monday - Thursday: 10:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m., Friday - Saturday: 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., and Sunday: 1:00 – 5:00 p.m.

About the **NORMAN B. LEVENTHAL MAP CENTER AT THE BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY**

The Leventhal Map Center is ranked among the top 10 map centers in the United States for the size of its collection, the significance of its historic (pre-1900) material, and its advanced digitization program. It is unique among the major collections because it also combines these features with exceptional educational and teacher training programs to advance geographic literacy among students in grades K-12 and enhance the teaching of subjects from history to mathematics to language arts. The collection is also the second largest in the country located in a public library, ensuring unlimited access to these invaluable resources for scholars, educators, and the general public. The Leventhal Map Center, created in 2004, is a nonprofit organization established as a public-private partnership between the Boston Public Library and philanthropist Norman Leventhal. Its mission is to use the Boston Public Library’s permanent collection of 200,000 maps and 5,000 atlases and a select group of rare maps collected by Mr. Leventhal for the enjoyment and education of all through exhibitions, educational programs, and a website that includes thousands of digitized maps at maps.bpl.org. The map collection is global in scope, dating from the 15th century to the present, with a particular strength in maps and atlases of Boston, Massachusetts, and New England.

About the **BUILDING BOSTON INITIATIVE**

Building Boston is a citywide celebration of Boston's public spaces and encompasses five unique exhibitions, special tours, lectures, and youth programs at a variety of Boston Public Library locations. To learn more, visit www.bpl.org/buildingboston.

About the **BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY**

The Boston Public Library has a Central Library, twenty-five branches, a literacy center, map center, business library, and a website filled with digital content and services. Established in 1848, the Boston Public Library has pioneered public library service in America. It was the first publicly supported municipal library in America, the first public library to lend books, the first to have a branch library, and the first to have a children’s room. Each year, the Boston Public Library hosts thousands of programs and serves millions of people. All of its programs and exhibitions are free and open to the public. At the Boston Public Library, books are just the beginning. To learn more, visit www.bpl.org.

Map detail above from 'Bird's-eye view of Boston, showing the burned district,' Charles R. Parsons, 1872, <http://maps.bpl.org/id/10445>.