



Norman B. Leventhal Map Center
at the Boston Public Library

PRESS RELEASE

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LEVENTHAL MAP CENTER SET TO OPEN NEW AMERICAN REVOLUTION EXHIBITION

We Are One: Mapping America's Road from Revolution to Independence

Boston – After spending more than two years identifying and selecting maps and artifacts, the Norman B. Leventhal Map Center (Map Center) is preparing to open a new exhibition, *We Are One: Mapping America's Road from Revolution to Independence*. *We Are One* explores the tumultuous events that led thirteen colonies to forge a new nation and commemorates the 250th anniversary of American colonial resistance to Britain's 1765 Stamp Act, a pivotal moment in the chain of events that led to Revolution. The exhibition will be a free public program at the Boston Public Library from May 2, 2015 – November 29, 2015, made possible by the generous support of private donors, foundations, and corporations.

“This exhibition can change the way people look at the Revolutionary War,” said Jan Spitz, executive director of the Leventhal Map Center. “Many rare and historically significant materials have never been exhibited before. This will be a whole new experience for students, educators, history buffs, and everyone who is fascinated with our roots.”

We Are One takes its title from Benjamin Franklin's early design for a note of American currency containing the phrase “We Are One.” This presaged the words “E Pluribus Unum” found on the seal of the United States and on all U.S. coins. The exhibition features 60 maps and 40 prints, paintings, and objects selected from 20 partner institutions including the British Library, Library of Congress and private collectors, telling the story of our nation's founding. After showing in Boston, the exhibition will travel to Colonial Williamsburg in 2016 and the New-York Historical Society in 2017.

Using geographic and cartographic perspectives, the exhibition traces the American story from the strife of the French and Indian War to the creation of a new national government and the founding of Washington, D.C. as its home. Exhibited maps and graphics show America's early status as a British possession: thirteen colonies in a larger trans-Atlantic empire. During and after

the French and Indian War, protection of those thirteen colonies exhausted Britain economically and politically and led Parliament to pass unpopular taxes and restrictions on her American colonial subjects. The Stamp Act, the Tea Tax, and limits on colonial trade and industry incited protests and riots in Boston, as contemporaneous portrayals in the exhibition show.

When tensions between Britain and her American colonies erupted into war, cartographers and other witnesses depicted military campaigns, battles, and their settings. At a time when photography was nonexistent and art was romantic and stylized, these maps and drawings provide the most accurate pictorial representations of the North American colonies and bring the long, bloody struggle for independence to life.

Finally, *We Are One* shows how, in the aftermath of the Revolution, America took stock of her new geography with surveys and maps. During this period, the Founders struggled to craft a new national government that would confederate thirteen colonies with different economic interests and cultures. European maps reflect their success by recognizing America's triumphant new status of nationhood and her expanding territory.

“Our goal always is to bring important maps and views to the public, drawing on the extensive collections of the Leventhal Map Center and selected treasures from other institutions worldwide,” said Bob Melzer, chairman of the board of the Leventhal Map Center. “We are tremendously proud of this exhibition, and we hope that anyone with an interest in the foundations of this country will come by the Boston Public Library to take a look.”

As a highly interactive part of the *We Are One* exhibition, the Map Center will launch their new American Revolution Portal. This Portal hosts digitized maps of the Revolutionary War era from nationally and internationally recognized collections, and its magnification technology allows viewers to investigate the rich world revealed in the details of these historic documents. The exhibition features loans from twenty institutions and collectors; eleven are also partners in the Portal. Reflecting the Portal's magnification technology, *We Are One* zooms in on history by using maps at different scales.

With support from the Massachusetts Foundation for the Humanities, a three dimensional “Liberty Tree” will be installed in the Northwest Corridor of the Central Library in Copley Square. Printed prompts will invite visitors to join a discussion on what liberty means by adding comments on leaf tags and physically tying them to the Liberty Tree or posting virtually to #LibertyTreeBPL.

About the NORMAN B. LEVENTHAL MAP CENTER

The Norman B. 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 BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

Boston Public Library has a Central Library, twenty-four branches, 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 large free municipal library in the United States, 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.

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