



Library Acquires Historic Oliver Wendell Holmes Letter

Cambridge, MA, May 5, 2021 -- The Cambridge Public Library is pleased to announce the acquisition of a historic piece of Cambridge Public Library memorabilia: a letter written in 1890 by Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. declining an invitation to sit on the Board of Advisors, now known as the CPL Board of Trustees. Holmes, the son of Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr., a prominent Cambridge author and physician, went on to serve as a United States Supreme Court Justice. The document was acquired with the generous support of the Cambridge Public Library Foundation.

“We didn’t realize that Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. was asked to sit on the Library’s Board of Advisors,” says Alyssa Pacy, Archivist at the Cambridge Public Library. “The date of the letter is significant because that’s when the Library first opened in its current location at 449 Broadway. There was an effort by the Library’s Board of Advisors to recruit prominent individuals with ties to Cambridge to help guide the Library’s mission and build a world class collection for its citizens.” The letter now resides in the Cambridge Public Library’s Archives and Special Collections, where it has been preserved to archival standards.

“This is an amazing piece of the City, the Library and the Country’s history,” said Dr. Maria McCauley, Director of Libraries for the City of Cambridge, “It is an honor that the Cambridge Room is now the repository of this important document.”

Holmes’ letter, along with letters by George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Paul Revere, and Margaret Fuller, will be featured in the upcoming lecture, American Treasures from the Cambridge Public Library’s Archives and Special Collections, presented by Drew Griffin, Cambridge Public Library’s Senior Librarian in Adult Services. The lecture will take place virtually on Thursday, May 13, at noon, as part of the popular Lunchtime Lectures from the Cambridge Room. [Registration is required to participate in this virtual event.](#)

About the Cambridge Public Library:

At the Cambridge Public Library, we welcome all, inspire minds and empower community. We support a Cambridge where everyone has equitable opportunities to learn, people live their best lives, and democracy thrives. During the Covid-19 health crisis, we are offering a variety of programs and services. [Visit our website](#) to learn the details.

Media Contact:

Muna Kangsen, Manager of Communications, Programs and Events

Office: 857-235-9809

Mobile: 617-461-3708

Email: mkangsen@cambridgema.gov