



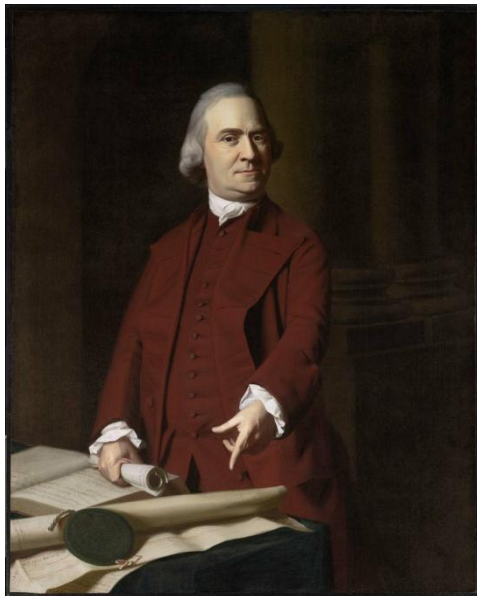
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**MAGNA CARTA, INSPIRATION FOR AMERICA'S FOUNDING FATHERS,
TO VISIT MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, BOSTON**

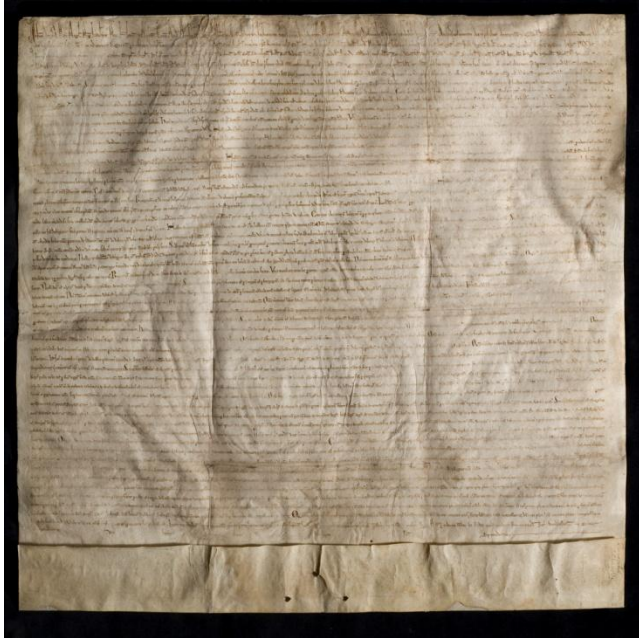
***Exhibition Tracing Massachusetts and American History also Includes MFA's Sons of Liberty Bowl by Paul Revere and
Manuscript Drafts of Declaration of Independence***



Samuel Adams, about 1772,
John Singleton Copley

BOSTON, MA—One of only four surviving copies of the original *Magna Carta*—a document written in 1215 that subsequently served as a symbol for liberty around the world—travels to the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (MFA), this summer for a special exhibition of approximately 20 works in the Museum's Art of the Americas Wing. An inspiration for the *US Constitution* and *Bill of Rights*, the exemplar owned by the UK's Lincoln Cathedral and typically housed in Lincoln Castle will be on view in the exhibition, [*Magna Carta: Cornerstone of Liberty*](#), from July 2–September 1, 2014. In partnership with the Massachusetts Historical Society (MHS) and the Massachusetts House of Representatives, *Magna Carta* will join historical loans as well as portraits and works of art from the Museum's collection. The MFA's *Sons of Liberty Bowl* (1768) by Paul Revere—which is engraved with the words “Magna/Charta” and “Bill of/Rights”—will be among the works that help tell the story of patriots and revolutionaries who fought for freedom in the face of tyranny across the centuries. Founding Fathers, presidents and abolitionists, inspired by the

liberties enshrined in *Magna Carta*, will be represented in the exhibition through portraits, marble busts and historical documents that celebrate their commitment to civil rights and equal representation under the law. A mobile MFA Guide on the American Revolution will offer a tour of the Museum's most famous artwork from Colonial times and celebrate the extraordinary journey of the United States of America. *This exhibition has been organized by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, in partnership with the Massachusetts Historical Society and Lincoln Cathedral. Generously supported by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.*



Magna Carta, 1215

“Our state’s rich history and preeminent cultural institutions provide a wonderful showcase for *Magna Carta*,” House Speaker Robert A. DeLeo said. “Massachusetts’ tourism industry is booming and the House of Representatives is proud to provide substantial support for the arts, travel and tourism. Last month we extended this commitment by allocating sizeable funding to bring *Magna Carta* to Massachusetts. Thank you to the Museum of Fine Arts and my colleagues in the Legislature for their work in securing this momentous historic treasure.”

State Representative Cory Atkins (D-Concord), House Chair of the Joint Committee on Tourism, Arts, and Cultural Development, and Alice Richmond, Deputy Chair of the Magna Carta 800th Anniversary 2015 Committee, worked with the MFA and Lincoln

Cathedral to secure the loan of *Magna Carta*. After being shown in the MFA’s Edward and Nancy Roberts Family Gallery, *Magna Carta* travels to the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute in Williamstown, Massachusetts, and the Library of Congress in Washington, DC, before returning to London for an exhibition celebrating the charter’s 800th anniversary. All four of the original surviving 1215 *Magna Carta* manuscripts will be brought together for the first time in history at a three-day event at the British Library from February 2-4, 2015.

“Massachusetts is a fitting place to learn about the founding of this great nation and the development of civil rights and liberties both here and abroad. I am incredibly proud to bring *Magna Carta* to Boston, where it inspired so many Sons of Liberty and Founding Fathers to action, and am grateful to the Lincoln Cathedral for this extraordinary loan,” said Malcolm Rogers, Ann and Graham Gund Director at the MFA. “This foundational document will hold a place of honor among American masterpieces and colonial treasures that bring some of the Commonwealth’s most famous patriots to life.”

For centuries, *Magna Carta*—Latin for “Great Charter”—has had symbolic influence on politicians, judges and revolutionaries who were inspired by its protections against tyranny and arbitrary rule. Written in Latin, the document laid the foundation for modern concepts of justice, due process, trial by jury and civil rights, and was reissued multiple times in the Middle Ages. In the 17th century, its influence was revived during the English Civil War. The concepts enshrined in the document also had a profound influence on the American Colonies, where it influenced the *Declaration of Independence* and later the *US Constitution*—particularly the *Bill of Rights*.

Massachusetts Historical Society President Dennis Fiori added, “This exhibition will be a terrific experience for anyone with an interest in the people and events that shaped our country. In partnering with the MFA, the MHS is pleased to loan a number of documents and artifacts that define our nation’s history. It will be quite something to see the nearly 800-year-old *Magna Carta* together with important US documents—such as handwritten drafts of the *Declaration of Independence* and an annotated copy of the *Constitution*—that were inspired by it. I am sure the Founding Fathers would be pleased.”

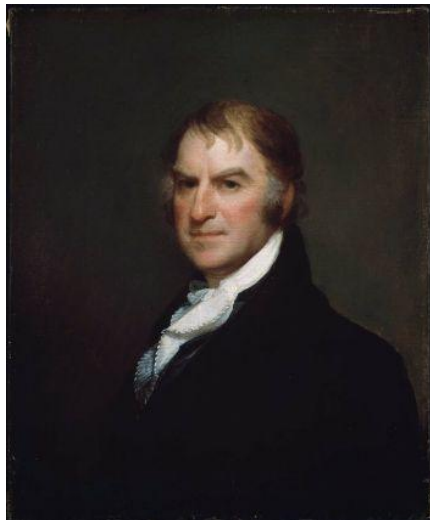
The exhibition at the MFA will focus on Massachusetts’ and America’s ongoing relationship with *Magna Carta*—highlighting early presidents, Founding Fathers and patriots whose ideals and philosophies have shaped our nation. Iconic works of art, loans and manuscript material from the MHS and other lenders will tell the story of these remarkable men and women, and the revolutionary acts inspired by *Magna Carta*. The MFA’s silver *Sons of Liberty Bowl*, a highlight of the Museum’s renowned collection of art and objects from Revolutionary Boston, honors 92 members of the Massachusetts House of Representatives who refused to rescind a letter protesting the Townshend Acts (1767), which taxed tea, paper, glass and other commodities. This act of civil disobedience by the “Glorious Ninety-Two” was a major step leading to the American Revolution, and demonstrates the legacy and influence of *Magna Carta* more than 500 years after it was first issued.



Sons of Liberty Bowl, 1768, Paul Revere

“Since the 17th century, *Magna Carta* has served as a potent symbol for all Americans seeking protection against ‘the insolent menaces of villains in power,’ as the inscription on the *Liberty Bowl* states,” said Gerald W. R. Ward, New Hampshire State Representative (D-Portsmouth) and the MFA’s Senior Consulting Curator and Katharine Lane Weems Senior Curator of American Decorative Arts and Sculpture Emeritus. “This exhibition offers the rare opportunity, in this digital age, to see the nearly 800-year-old ‘real thing’ that is the ancient underpinning for so many freedoms and rights that we cherish today.”

Also on view in the exhibition will be the celebrated portrait of *Samuel Adams* (about 1772, John Singleton Copley), which depicts the statesman pointing to *The Charter of Massachusetts Bay*. Granted to Massachusetts by King William and Queen Mary and signed on October 7, 1691, the charter affirmed many traditional English liberties for the citizens of the colony. The Charter, as Samuel Adams wrote in 1765, “is . . . as sacred [to Bostonians] . . . as *Magna Carta* is to the People of Britain.”



Theodore Sedgwick, about 1808,
Gilbert Stuart

A number of items from the Museum's collection will be paired with loans from the MHS. Two manuscript copies of the *Declaration of Independence*, originally penned by John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, will be accompanied by the MFA's marble busts of the two Founding Fathers. The MFA's painting of lawyer *Theodore Sedgwick* (about 1808) by Gilbert Stuart complements a miniature portrait from the MHS of *Elizabeth Freeman* ("Mumbet") (1811), a woman who was enslaved in Massachusetts and was represented by Sedgwick when she successfully sued for her freedom—a case which abolished slavery in the Commonwealth. Other loans from the MHS include a portrait of former Massachusetts Governor and US Vice President Elbridge Gerry and his annotated copy of the US Constitution, as well as two *Paul Revere Sword in Hand Notes* (currency)—one of which depicts the words "*Magna Carta*."

To celebrate the exhibition, the MFA has partnered with Smart Destinations to offer a "Magna Carta Boston History Pass"—a multi-attraction package which features a Freedom Trail Walking Tour and admission to the MFA, including the *Magna Carta* exhibition. Other Boston-based historic attractions that are included in the package (\$42 for adults, \$12 for children 3-12) are Revolutionary sites such as the Old State House, Old South Meeting House and Paul Revere House.

In addition to the Lincoln exemplar, there are only three other copies of the original 1215 *Magna Carta* in existence—two are held by the British Library and one by England's Salisbury Cathedral. The exemplar from Lincoln is notable for being written in an "official" hand and having remained in the same location since the time of its first issue. On its three-stop tour of the US, the Lincoln *Magna Carta* is first exhibited at the MFA from July 2–September 1, 2014, and from September 6–November 2 moves to the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute in Williamstown. The final exhibition, November 6–January 19, is at the Library of Congress in Washington, DC, which is commemorating 75 years since the Lincoln *Magna Carta* was there as part of the 1939 World's Fair.

Magna Carta has been in the possession of England's Lincoln Cathedral since the Bishop of Lincoln, Hugh of Wells, brought it back from Runnymede in June 1215, where it had been sealed by King John. Eminent Victorian John Ruskin said, "I have always held and proposed against all comers to maintain that the Cathedral of Lincoln is out and out the most precious piece of architecture in the British Isles."

The Dean of Lincoln, the Very Reverend Philip Buckler said, "The Lincoln Cathedral *Magna Carta* is a source of great pride for the people of Lincoln and its Cathedral. It has been met by great enthusiasm whenever it has travelled to the United States in the past

and we look forward to it being a source of inspiration to all those who visit the exhibitions, so much so that they are encouraged to come and visit Lincoln—the place where so much of the story begins.”

The City of Lincoln boasts what is probably the finest Gothic Cathedral in Europe. Alongside the medieval building is Lincoln Castle, which was built by William the Conqueror and is currently undergoing a £20 million restoration which includes a state-of-the-art interpretation center for *Magna Carta* and the restoration of 18th- and 19th-century prisons, which featured in the TV program, *Downton Abbey*. Lincoln itself is a vibrant city with two Universities, one of which, as a centre for Medieval History, is conducting ground breaking research into the medieval origins of democracy.

The Massachusetts Historical Society is one of the nation's preeminent research libraries, with collections that provide an unparalleled record of the vibrant course of American history. Since its founding in 1791, the MHS has fostered research, scholarship, and education. With millions of pages of manuscript letters, diaries, and other documents, as well as early newspapers, broadsides, artifacts, works of art, maps, photographs, and prints, the MHS offers a wide-ranging perspective on the United States from the earliest beginnings of the nation to the present day. Exhibition galleries are open Monday to Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (MFA), is recognized for the quality and scope of its collection, which includes an estimated 500,000 objects. The Museum has more than 140 galleries displaying its encyclopedic collection, which includes Art of the Americas; Art of Europe; Contemporary Art; Art of Asia, Oceania, and Africa; Art of the Ancient World; Prints, Drawings, and Photographs; Textile and Fashion Arts; and Musical Instruments. Open seven days a week, the MFA's hours are Saturday through Tuesday, 10 am–4:45 pm; and Wednesday through Friday, 10 am–9:45 pm Admission (which includes one repeat visit within 10 days) is \$25 for adults and \$23 for seniors and students age 18 and older, and includes entry to all galleries and special exhibitions. Admission is free for University Members and youths age 17 and younger on weekdays after 3 pm, weekends, and Boston Public Schools holidays; otherwise \$10. Wednesday nights after 4 pm admission is by voluntary contribution (suggested donation \$25). MFA Members are always admitted for free. The Museum's mobile MFA Guide is available at ticket desks and the Sharf Visitor Center for \$5, members; \$6, non-members; and \$4, youths. The Museum is closed on New Year's Day, Patriots' Day, Independence Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. For more information, visit mfa.org or call 617.267.9300. The MFA is located on the Avenue of the Arts at 465 Huntington Avenue, Boston, MA 02115.

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