



DANTE IN BOSTON: RARE BOOKS NOW ON VIEW
Boston Athenæum marks 700th anniversary of Dante Alighieri with display of seven centuries of fine printing and rarely-seen books

Boston, MA — September 21, 2021 — The Athenæum presents highlights from its special collections related to Dante Alighieri, celebrating a major anniversary of one of the great poets of world literature. A superb selection of historic and rare books will be on public view through December 30, 2021 on the Boston Athenæum's first floor.

This year marks the 700th anniversary of the death of Dante Alighieri (1265-1321), the Florentine poet, philosopher, and statesman whose pioneering epic, the *Divine Comedy*, written in vernacular Italian, stands as a classic of world literature.

Dante's work has endured and inspired through centuries as the foundational achievement of Italian literature. The Athenæum began acquiring copies of works related to Dante as early as 1819. Rare, unusual, and beautiful holdings include medieval printed editions as well as present-day translations illustrated by Boston-area artists.

New, later hours—until 9 PM on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday nights—enable visitors to stop in after work or dinner.

Highlights of the installation include:

- A 1487 illustrated edition of the *Divine Comedy*
- An inscribed 1793 first edition of engravings by British neoclassical artist John Flaxman (1755-1826), a gift of the Earl of Camperdown in 1934
- An 1843 volume, the first American translation of any portion of the *Divine Comedy*, by Boston Athenæum Proprietor Thomas W. Parsons, Jr.
- An 1867 publication, the first complete American translation, by Boston Athenæum Proprietor Henry Wadsworth Longfellow
- A letter from Longfellow to Elizabeth Chapman Lawrence, thanking her for the gift of fragments of Dante's coffin, which were displayed at the Boston Athenæum in 1872 and

subsequently moved to their present location at Longfellow House

- From the early twentieth century, rare privately printed Dante translations by Charles Eliot Norton (1930; one of 30 copies) and Eleanor Vinton Murray (1920)
- Contemporary fine press illustrated editions by New England artists Roberta Delaney (1999; one of 15 copies) and Michael Mazur (2001; one of 25 bound copies; with translations by Robert Pinsky).

Dante in Boston

On view through December 30, 2021

MEMBER AND VISITOR HOURS

Monday	9am-8pm
Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday	9am-9pm
Friday and Saturday	9am-5pm

ADMISSION

Adults (13 and up)	\$8	Children (12 and under)	Free
Students and Military	\$6	Boston Athenæum Members	Free
Card to Culture	\$2		

ABOUT THE BOSTON ATHENÆUM

The Boston Athenæum, “Boston’s best kept secret” (Boston.com) and one of the most distinguished libraries in the nation, was founded in 1807. Its landmark 1849 building and architecturally significant reading rooms at 10¹/₂ Beacon Street welcome readers, thinkers, writers, and learners a block from Park Street T and the State House.

Highlights of the library’s holdings include the King’s Chapel Library collection, with roots in the 17th-century settlement of Boston; rare publications in Native American languages; the personal library of George Washington; historic early European printed works; and numerous works of fine art, including portraits of notable Americans such as Hannah Adams, John Marshall, and Alexander Hamilton, and by artists such as Gilbert Stuart, John Singer Sargent, Allan Rohan Crite, and Polly Thayer Starr. An extensive collection on the art of the book includes examples from many eras of bookbinding and fine printing, as well as contemporary artists’ books.

Learn more at bostonathenaeum.org.

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