



The Life & Library of Robert Morris, America's Second Black Lawyer

OUR VALUE PROPOSITION

AALL is dedicated to supporting the career development needs of law librarians through quality educational programming and events designed specifically for legal information professionals.

AALL embraces law librarians in all stages of their careers to provide exceptional experiences, tools for success and premier services to support professional growth.

Our Team



Laurel Davis (she/her)
Teaching & Research Librarian
and Curator of Rare Books,
Boston College Law School



Avi Bauer (he/him)
Digital Initiatives & Scholarly
Communication Librarian,
Boston College Law School

WITH THANKS TO

Mary Sarah Bilder
Nick Szydowski
Stephanie Farne

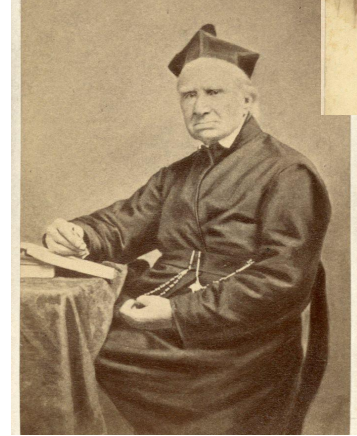
Introduction

- Basic plan for the session
 - Intro to Robert Morris
 - The Morris Library
 - Why & How of a Digital Exhibit
 - Web tools
 - Impact



Contextualization

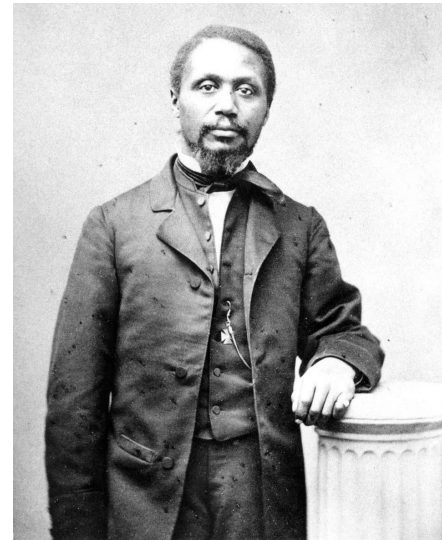
- Jesuit Catholic school
- Founded in 1863
- Student body: children of Irish immigrants
- Mission
- Broadening the narrative



Robert Morris

June 8, 1824/5–December 12, 1882

- Born in Salem, MA
- Apprenticed with Ellis Gray Loring
- Admitted to Mass Bar on Feb. 2, 1847
- Early antislavery & civil rights activism
- Married wife Catharine in 1846
- Robert Jr. (1848-1882) became a lawyer



Social Law Library, Boston

A Community of Activists: Abolition & Beyond

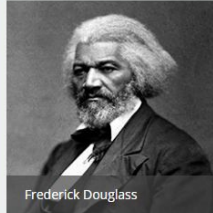
Morris's Circle



Catharine H. Mason Morris



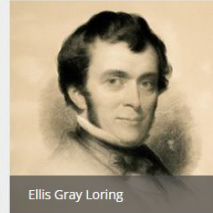
Robert Morris Jr.



Frederick Douglass



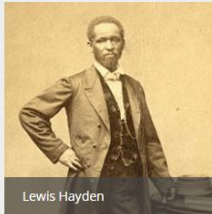
William Lloyd Garrison



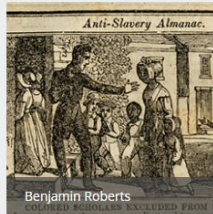
Ellis Gray Loring



Harriet Bell Hayden



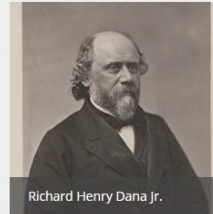
Lewis Hayden



Benjamin Roberts



Charles Sumner



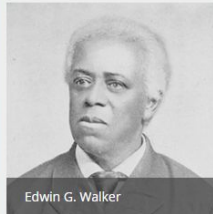
Richard Henry Dana Jr.



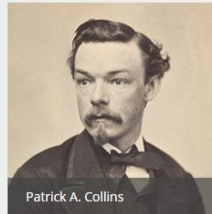
William Cooper Nell



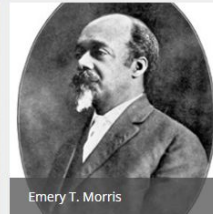
Lydia Maria Child



Edwin G. Walker



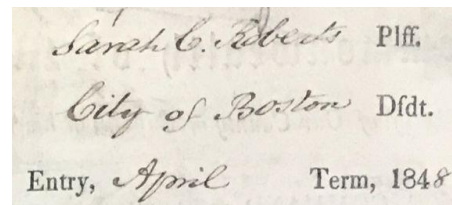
Patrick A. Collins



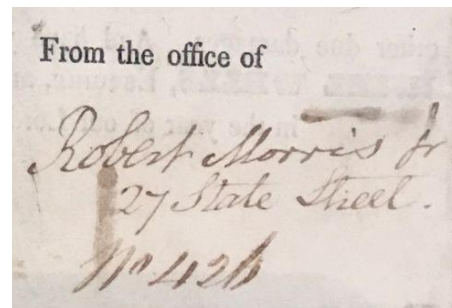
Emery T. Morris

Equal School Rights: *Roberts v. City of Boston*

- Filed one year after admission to bar
- Hired to represent 5-year-old Sarah Roberts
- Worked on school desegregation in Salem
- Hires Charles Sumner to help on appeal
- Loss at MA Supreme Judicial Court
- **Connections to *Plessy & Brown v. Board***
- Eventual success with legislature



Sarah C. Roberts Plff.
City of Boston Dfdt.
Entry, April Term, 1848

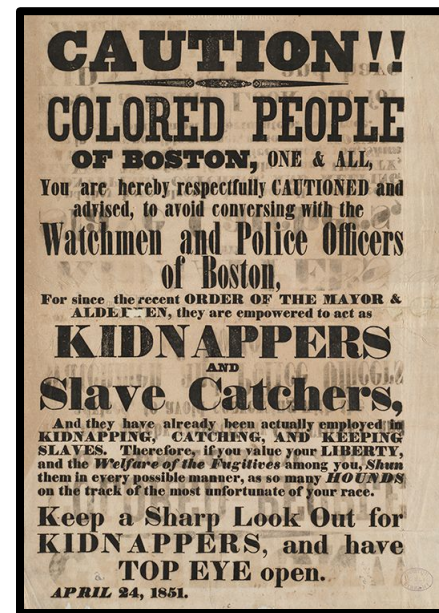


From the office of
Robert Morris Jr.
27 State Street.
No 426

From the Roberts Writ,
SJC Archives

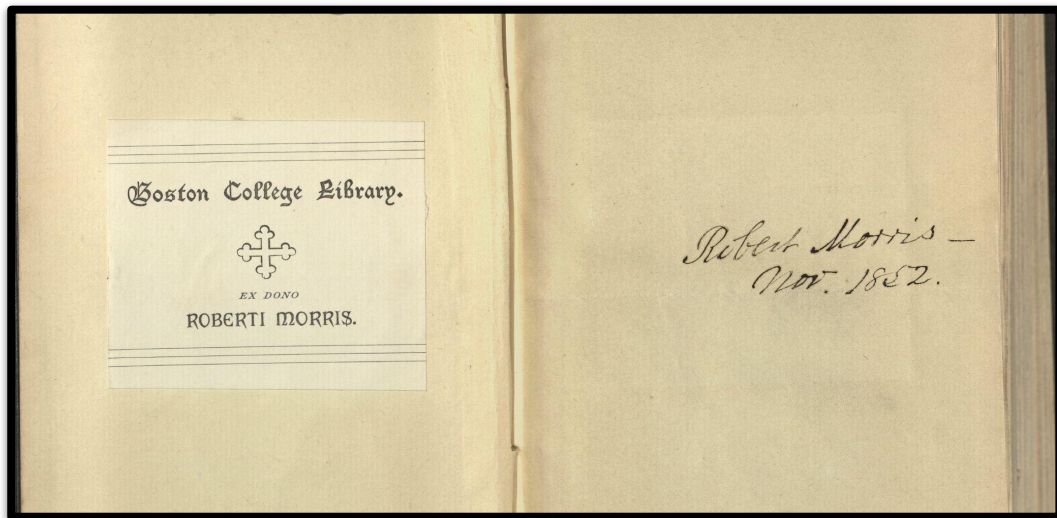
The Rescue of Shadrach Minkins

- Fugitive Slave Act of 1850
- Fugitive from slavery in Virginia
- Arrested by Feb. 15, 1851
- Morris & others go to courthouse
- Escape followed by multiple indictments & trials



Boston Public Library

To the books!



John J. Burns Library's Blog

Your window into the fascinating world of archives, manuscripts and rare books



— T. S. Eliot's Ariel Poems

Breaking Barriers: The Medical Texts of Nicholas Culppeper

Robert Morris: A Man of "Energy and Iron Will"

Posted on May 11, 2015 by burnslibrary



Robert Morris (1823 – 1882) was one of the first African-American attorneys in the United States. The Burns Library owns books from his personal library.

The [John J. Burns Library](#) holds books from the personal library of the eminent nineteenth century Boston lawyer, Robert Morris (1823-1882). The majority of the Morris Library has been housed in the Bostonia Collection, a group of materials aimed at preserving Boston and Massachusetts history. I was recently charged with isolating the Morris books from the larger collection in order to survey their physical condition.

Admittedly, before I started pulling the books I did not know who Robert Morris was. I gradually began to piece together an idea of the man based on the books I pulled from the shelves. He was a man obviously interested in justice, social and legal. This was made evident by the anti-slavery works that

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May 2015

M T W T F S S

				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

« Apr

Jun »

Browse our Instagram!

Morris's Library

- One of the only extant, antebellum African American-owned libraries
- Most law books not found (yet)
- Giving & receiving books
- Wide variety of topics



Robert Morris
from C.H.M.
June 8, 1853.

Miss Catherine H. Mason
With the love of
Robert Morris, Jr.
Jan. 1, 1845.

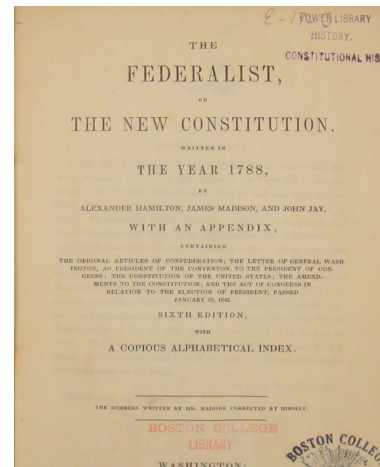
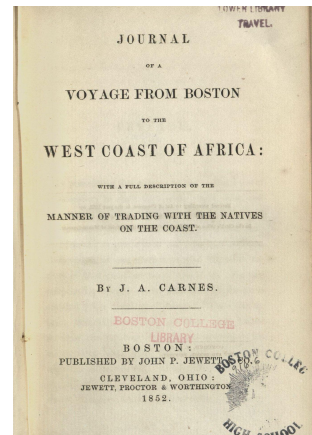
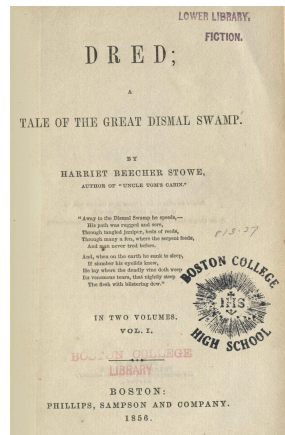
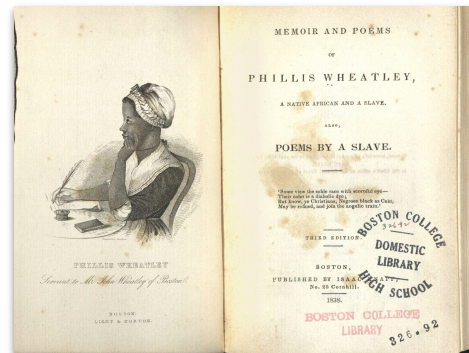
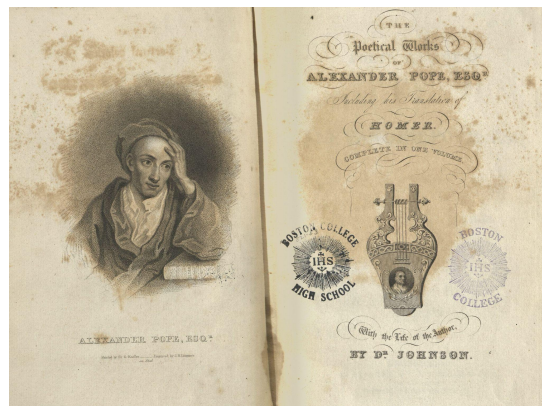
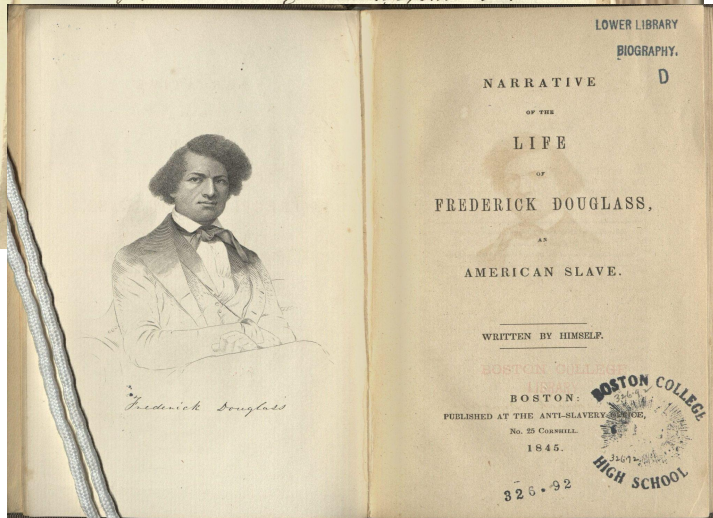
To Cousin L'Oratoire.

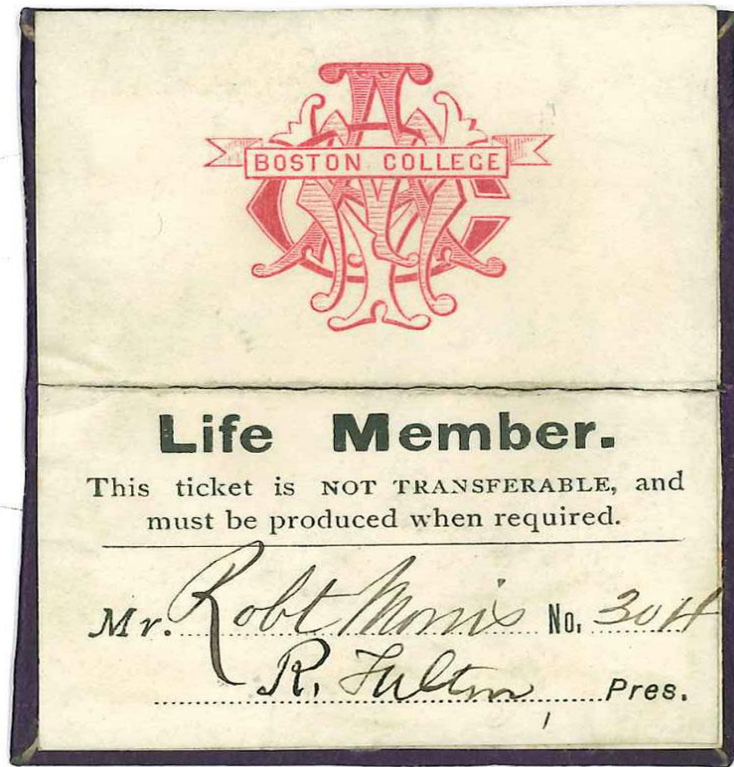
Separate the most unhappy man of men
Wretched the wretched state and his father
Within his hearing, or his head he ever
Followed in some dark dangerous career;
O miserable creature! There and where
Will you find patience? Just die, not alone
Near mother in his hands, never to rise again
Through fallen flesh, never to rise again
Live and take comfort, then last left hand
Hopes that will work for life, the death wish;
There's not a feeling of this common world
That will work for life; now last left hand
They find out, or rather, they find out
And love and want unchangeable mind.

Wendell.

Contents.

Walkers' Appeal
Rights of Colored Men to Trial by Jury &c.
Address of the Boston Vigilance Committee.
Tracts proving the Good Conduct &c. of Emancipated negroes.
The West India Question.
The Remarks on the Expulsion of Slaves from the Colonies &c.
Proceedings of the A. S. Society of American Women.
Views of Slavery Emancipation &c. H. Martineau.
A Discourse on the Abolition of the Slave Trade.
A Geographical Sketch of St. Domingo, Cuba &c.





Boston College,
Saturday.

My dear Mr. Morris,

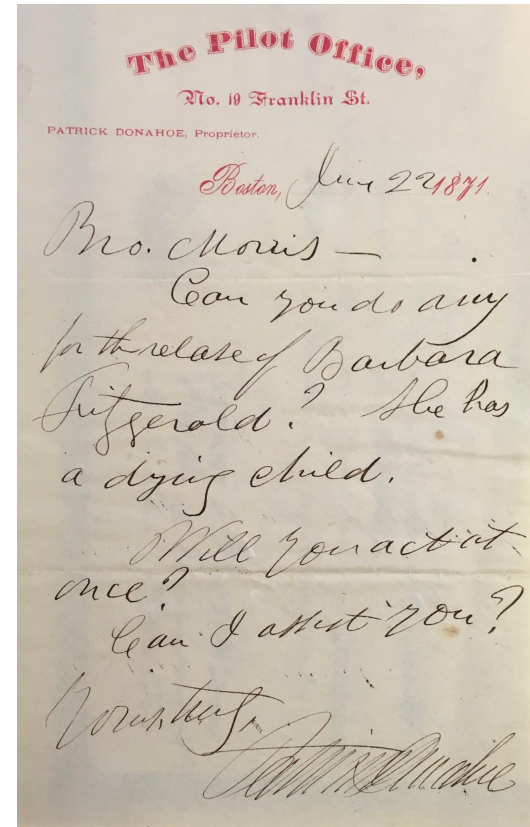
I sent to Mr. Baker to procure a map. I did not get any answer till last night - and I go to Philadelphia on Sunday night. Mr. B. reported that the Harbor Commissioners told him the matter belonged to the harbor committee - and the latter said it belonged to the former. If the committee is correct, a bill may have to be passed through the legislature, and it is too late to bring in new matter. Better leave the thing where it is at present, as the Fairhaven Senator has taken it up. I am sure the less obliged to you. Sorry to hear Mrs. M. has been sick.

Sincerely yours,
Robert Fulton.

Robert Morris Papers, Boston Athenaeum

The Irish Lawyer

- Morris eulogy: about 75% of Morris's clients were Irish
- Joining the Catholic Church



All the residue of my property I give to the Church of the Immaculate Conception on Harrison Avenue in said Boston. I nominate John P. Manning of Boston to be executor of this will and I request that he be exempt from giving surety or sureties on his bond as such executor. In testimony whereof I hereunto set my hand and in the presence of three witnesses declare this to be my last will this third day of November A. D. 1895.

Catharine Morris.

Purses of gold were awarded as follows : —

Twenty-five dollars for Declaration to Michael Glennon.

Twenty-five dollars for Reading to Stephen J. Hart.

For the best Centennial Ode, a prize (the gift of Robert Morris, Jr., Esq.) was awarded to Patrick H. Callanan.

of Irish genius, and a goodly treasure of Irish History and Biography.

On the death of Robert Morris, Esq., in 1882, another department became a fortunate heir. As yet no provision had been made for the ordinary literature of our language ; it was done by the studios and noble-hearted lawyer whose least title to remembrance is that he was the respected protégé of the Loring, the Danas, the Sumners and Phillipses.

Within the last year Miss Edith Agnes, the daughter of the late venerable Doctor Richard Henry Salter, has presented to the College

we remember, is as follows : A couple of assassins had penetrated into the royal palace to slay the young prince. In the room of the queen there was a copy of the *Kazanski Boje Matre*, held in highest veneration by the Muscovites. At the sight of the murderers the mother seized her son, held him up before this picture and invoked Our Lady of Kazan, and instantly rays of keen and brilliant light darted from the eyes of the Madonna, dazed and blinded the ruffians, and enabled the queen to make her escape with her child.

Our picture is a piece of tapestry of fair design and gorgeous coloring, worked by the Oblate Sisters of Providence, in Baltimore, and donated to the college by Mrs. Catharine Morris, widow of the late Robert Morris, Esq.

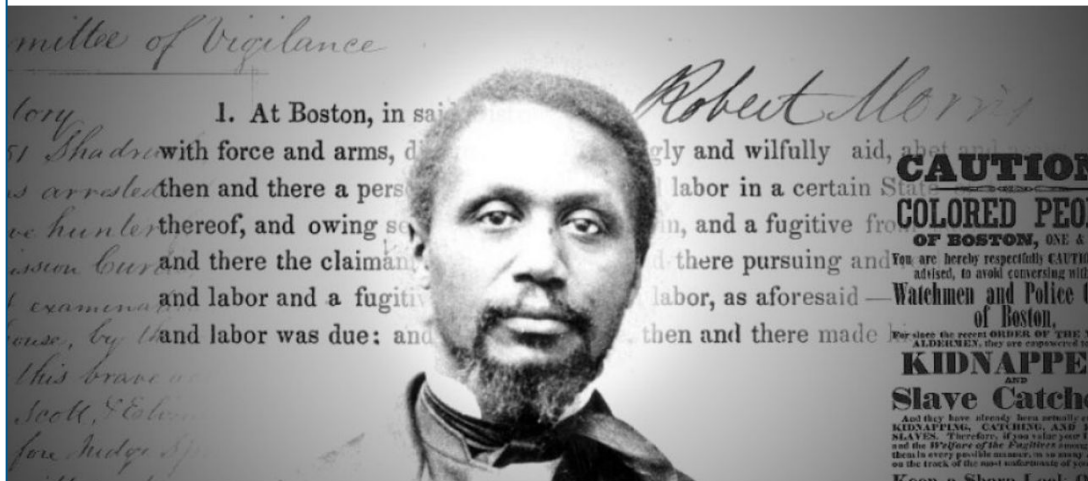
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1857.	Amt. from Acc. of. being Estimated val. of Lib.		
April 18	1 All. De Tocqueville's Democracy in America	150	
May 3	2 Little's Living Age	2	
"	" Jones Biographical Dictionary	42	
"	4 Belmont 30 Yrs. in U. S. Senate	257	
"	" Emily Eden's Whimsical Woman	62	
31	5 Little's Living Age	112	
June 9	6 "Society in America" H. Martineau	42	
"	" Hot. Corn	22	
"	" Eloquence of the United States 4 vols	3	
17	7 The God Family Abroad, (Lover)	42	
"	" The Good-Husbands (Annas)	37 1/2	
"	" Chads of Warran (Peter)	37 1/2	
"	" Westminster Review & Binding	375	
"	" Proverbs Course of Reading	67	
23	8 True Parker's Sermon	25	
July 19	10 All. Park's Pinner's Memoirs of Foreign Land	160	
"	" Lectures on Romanism, Cummings	1	
"	" Locke's Philosophical Essays vol. 1	87	
Aug 1	12 Exchange of Books	52	
18	14 Pilgrims of Walsingham	75	
25	15 St Aubigne His. Reformation	125	
Sep. 11	17 Lyke Dictionary	80	
"	" Lives of the Chief Justices of the U. S.	225	
"	" This, That, or the Other	80	
19	18 Brougham's Eminent Statesmen	150	
"	" Despotism in America, "H. Dalt"	60	
Oct. 21	22 Weyland Elements of Intellectual Philosophy	1	
"	" Macdonald's His. of the Jesuits	87	
28	" V.H. Little's Living Age	3	
Nov. 10	24 8 Vols. Chas. Dickens's works	663	
17	25 Ferguson's His. of Rome	125	
21	26 Ida May	1	
25	" Curtis's Constitutional His. U. S.	2	

Recovering the Morris Library

- How big was it?
- Continuing the search at BC
- Account book
- LibraryThing Legacy Library

The WHY and HOW of a Digital Exhibit

Robert Morris: Civil Rights Lawyer & Antislavery Activist

[HOME](#) [MORRIS'S BOSTON](#) [EARLY CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT](#) [ANTISLAVERY ACTIVISM](#) [RELIGION & THE IRISH COMMUNITY](#) [HOW DO WE KNOW?](#) [ABOUT US](#)

Civil Rights Lawyer & Antislavery Activist

Robert Morris: Civil Rights Lawyer and Antislavery Activist

<https://bc.edu/robert-morris>

Why a Digital Exhibit?

	Physical Exhibit	Digital Exhibit
Physical Accessibility	Limited access <i>on-campus</i> in Newton, MA.	Unlimited free access <i>online</i> .
Assumed Audience	Assumed <i>legal & historical background</i> .	Developed for a <i>secondary-school</i> audience.
Content Breadth	Generally limited to <i>BC or other local collection</i> items.	Able to draw from <i>multiple geographically-distributed collections</i> .

Team Roles

MARY SARAH BILDER

Content Expertise

LAUREL DAVIS

Content Expertise

Writing

NICK SZYDLOWSKI

Project Management

AVI BAUER

Page Building

Front-End Coding

COLLABORATIVE

Information Architecture

User Experience Design

Editing & QC

Everything Else

Website-Building: Tools & Strategies

TOOLS

University Platforms

Adobe Experience Manager

Open Source Software

Timeline JS (Knight Lab)

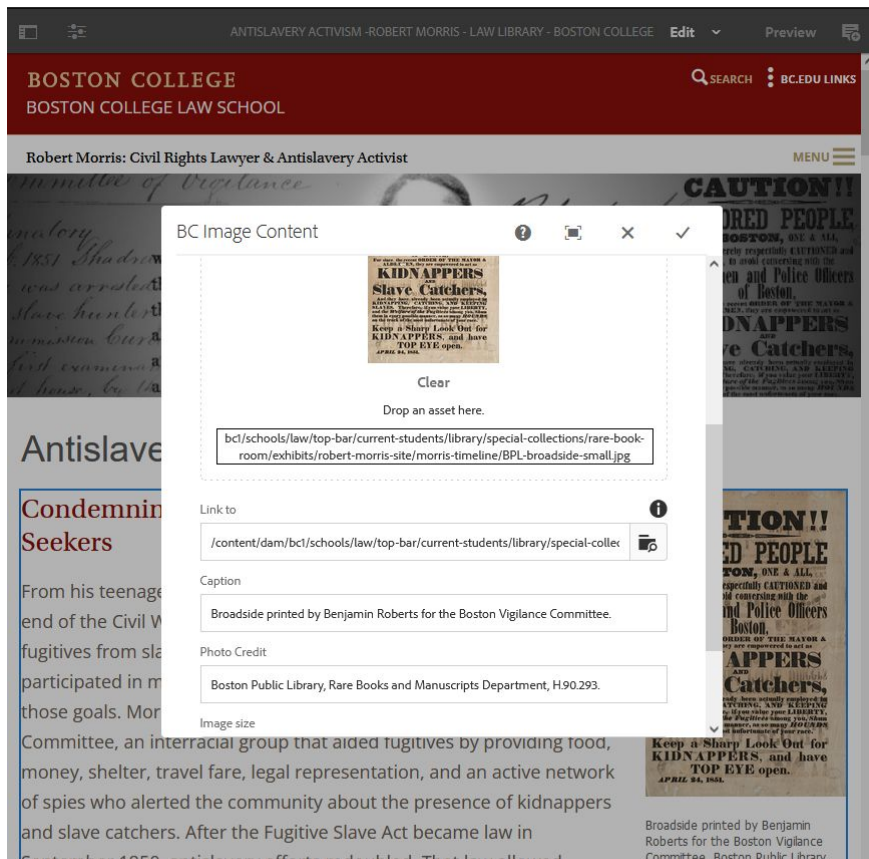
StoryMap JS (Knight Lab)

STRATEGIES

Using Pre-Made Tools

Building on Prior Experience

Collaborative Research



Tools:

Adobe Experience Manager (AEM)

- Content Management System (CMS)
- Drag-and-drop components
- Provides space to store files (images, documents, etc.)
- Same software used for the Law School and Law Library websites

Strategies: Adapting Existing Components

Alumni Profiles

Our alumni are dedicated and leading professionals driven by a desire to give back and help new students reach their career goals.



<https://www.bc.edu/content/bc-web/schools/law/careers/alumni.html>

Morris's Circle



<https://www.bc.edu/content/bc-web/schools/law/sites/students/library/special-collections/robert-morris/morris-in-boston.html>

Tools:

Timeline JS

- Open source interactive timeline
- Available via timeline.knightlab.com
- Images and text pulled from a Google Sheet
- Minimal coding required

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  };
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</script>
```

ROBERT MORRIS & SON,
ATTORNEYS AND COUNSELLORS AT LAW,
221 Washington Street,
ROOM NO. 2. (Near State Street.) BOSTON.
ROBERT MORRIS. (French Spoken.) ROBERT MORRIS, Jr.

Robert Morris Papers, Boston Athenaeum

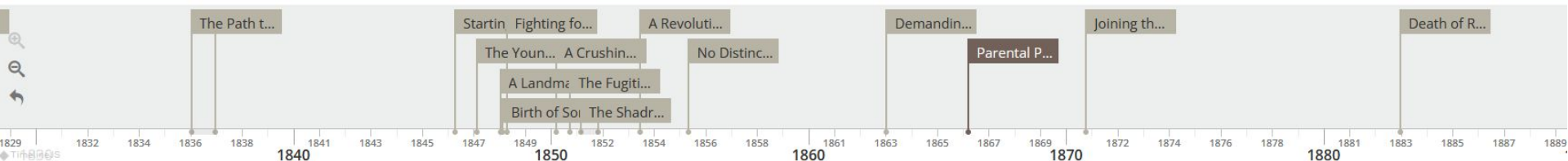
Business card of the Morris father and son law practice.

March 7, 1866

Parental Pride and the Family Business

Morris writes to U.S. Senator Charles Sumner, his former co-counsel, about the accomplishments of his son, Robert Jr. Years before, Sumner had helped secure a passport for the young man to study in France after a delay within the State Department "on account of his color." Morris expresses gratitude for Sumner's support on behalf of himself and Mrs. Morris. Robert Jr. returns home to Boston around 1870 and eventually joins his father's law practice.

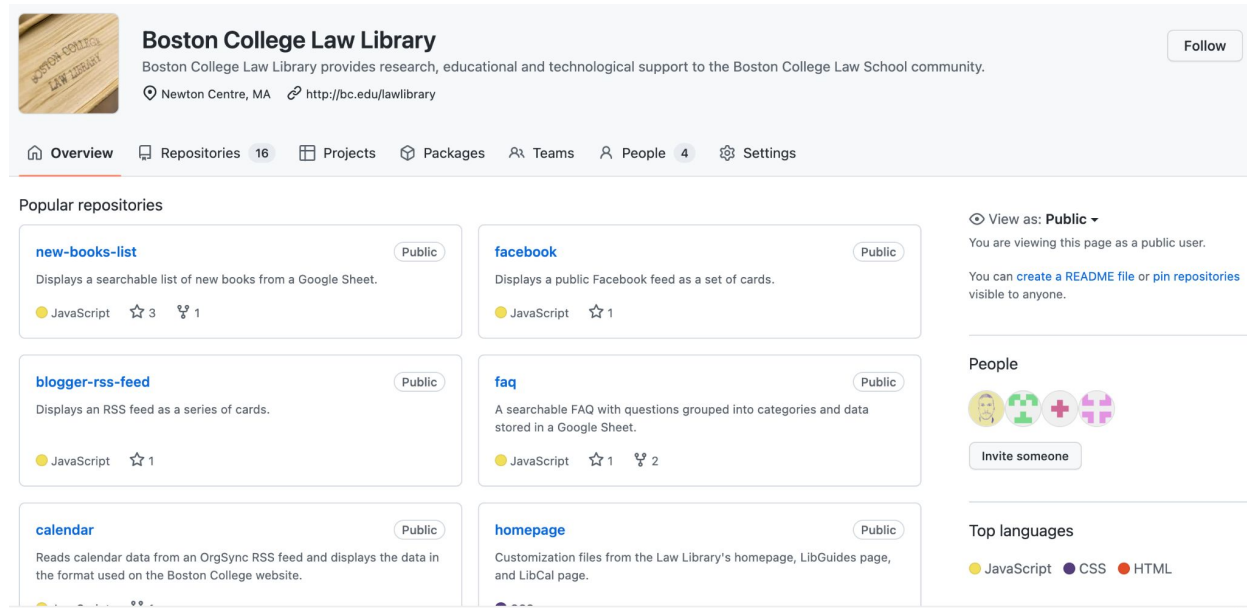
Joining the
Catholic
Church
October 1870



<https://www.bc.edu/robert-morris>

Strategies: Building on Existing Skills

Past projects allowed library staff to develop relevant skills, including familiarity with **HTML**, **CSS**, and **JavaScript**.



The screenshot shows the GitHub profile for the Boston College Law Library. The profile header includes a repository icon, the name "Boston College Law Library", a description "Boston College Law Library provides research, educational and technological support to the Boston College Law School community.", location "Newton Centre, MA", and website "http://bc.edu/lawlibrary". A "Follow" button is in the top right. Below the header is a navigation bar with tabs: Overview (selected), Repositories (16), Projects, Packages, Teams, People (4), and Settings. The main content area is titled "Popular repositories" and displays a grid of six repository cards. Each card shows the repository name, a brief description, the programming language (JavaScript), star count, and fork count. The repositories are: "new-books-list" (3 stars, 1 fork), "facebook" (1 star), "blogger-rss-feed" (1 star), "faq" (1 star, 2 forks), "calendar" (0 stars, 0 forks), and "homepage" (0 stars, 0 forks). On the right side of the repository grid, there is a "View as: Public" dropdown, a note "You are viewing this page as a public user.", a link to "create a README file or pin repositories", a "People" section with four avatars and an "Invite someone" button, and a "Top languages" section showing JavaScript, CSS, and HTML.

Boston College Law Library
Boston College Law Library provides research, educational and technological support to the Boston College Law School community.
Newton Centre, MA <http://bc.edu/lawlibrary> [Follow](#)

[Overview](#) [Repositories 16](#) [Projects](#) [Packages](#) [Teams](#) [People 4](#) [Settings](#)

Popular repositories

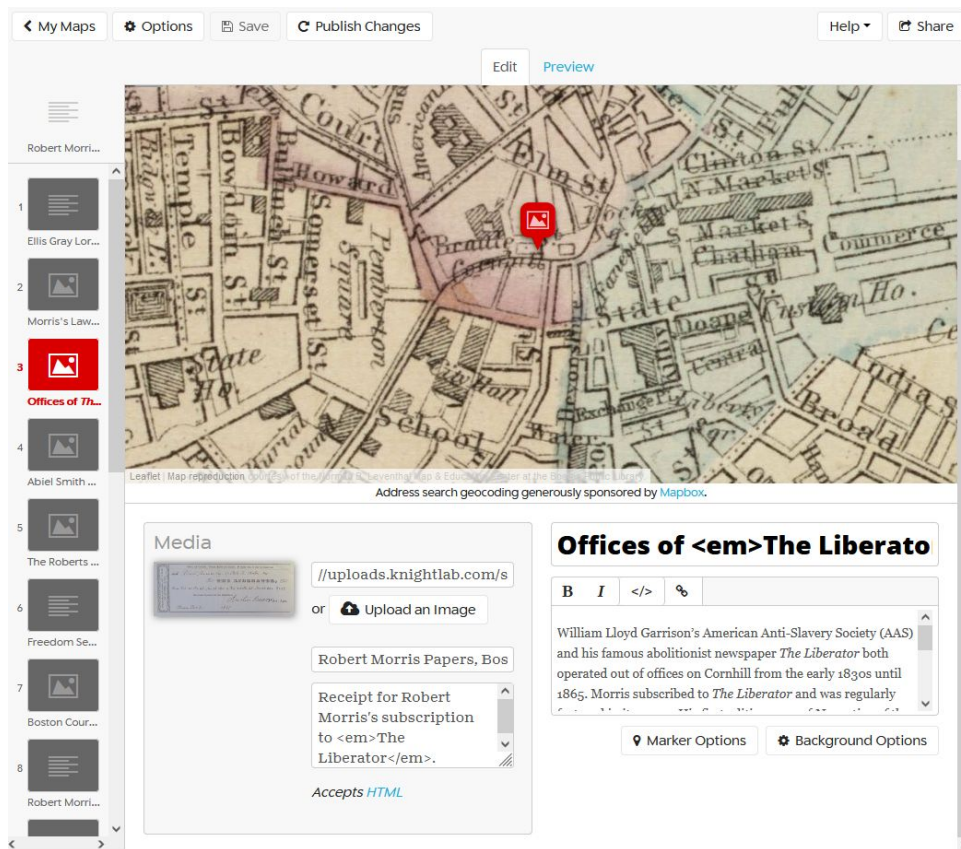
- new-books-list** (Public)
Displays a searchable list of new books from a Google Sheet.
JavaScript 3 stars 1 fork
- facebook** (Public)
Displays a public Facebook feed as a set of cards.
JavaScript 1 star
- blogger-rss-feed** (Public)
Displays an RSS feed as a series of cards.
JavaScript 1 star
- faq** (Public)
A searchable FAQ with questions grouped into categories and data stored in a Google Sheet.
JavaScript 1 star 2 forks
- calendar** (Public)
Reads calendar data from an OrgSync RSS feed and displays the data in the format used on the Boston College website.
- homepage** (Public)
Customization files from the Law Library's homepage, LibGuides page, and LibCal page.

View as: Public
You are viewing this page as a public user.
You can [create a README file](#) or [pin repositories](#) visible to anyone.

People
[Invite someone](#)

Top languages
JavaScript CSS HTML

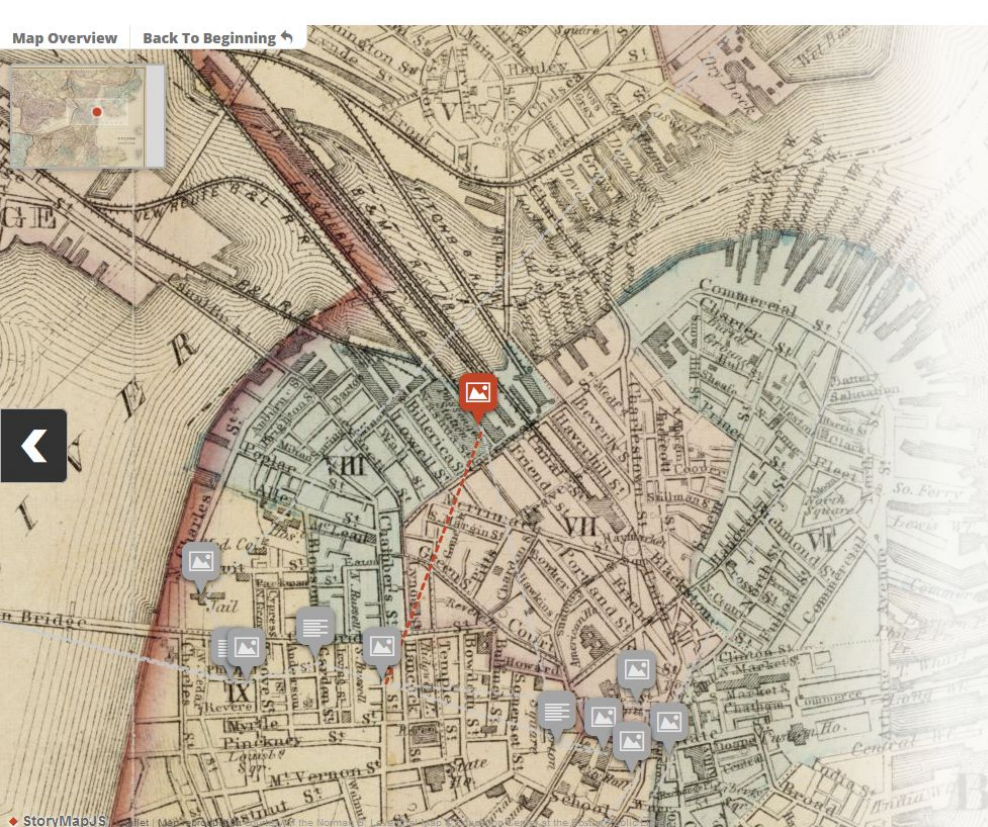
<https://github.com/BCLawLibrary>



Tools:

StoryMap JS

- Open source interactive, map-based slideshow
- Available via storymap.knightlab.com
- Intuitive interface (fillable fields, drag-and-drop location pins)
- **Zero** coding required



The school established in Belknap Street is twenty one hundred feet distant from the residence of the plaintiff, measuring through the streets, and in passing from the plaintiff's residence to said Belknap Street school, the direct road passes the ends of two streets in which there are five primary schools. The distance to the school in Sun Court Street is much greater. The distance from the plaintiff's residence to the nearest primary school is nine hundred feet. The plaintiff might have attended the school in Belknap Street at any time and her father was so informed, but refused so to do.

Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court Archives

Excerpt from Morris's Statement of Facts in the Roberts case.

The Roberts Home (3 Andover Street)

In 1848, after his five-year-old daughter Sarah was ejected from the nearby public school and forced to walk to the Abiel Smith School, Boston printer Benjamin Roberts hired Robert Morris to file suit against the City of Boston. Morris argued that Sarah had been unlawfully excluded from the public school closest to her home. He explained that Sarah had to walk almost half a mile from the family's home on Andover Street (today, the site of the Thomas P. O'Neill Federal Building, next to North Station) to the Smith School on Belknap Street in Beacon Hill. She passed five other primary schools along the way.

They lost at the trial and appellate levels, with the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court ultimately adopting a "separate but equal" holding. It was a crushing loss for the Roberts family, Morris and his co-counsel Charles Sumner, and the broader community. In 1855, after continued lobbying by Morris and many others, the Massachusetts legislature essentially reversed the decision by enacting a statute that prohibited segregation in public schools. The Smith School closed soon thereafter.

<https://www.bc.edu/content/bc-web/schools/law/sites/students/library/special-collections/robert-morris/morris-in-boston/storymap.html>

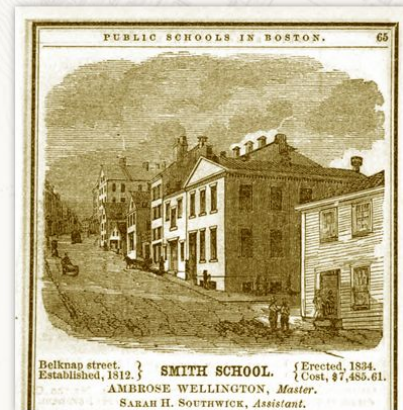
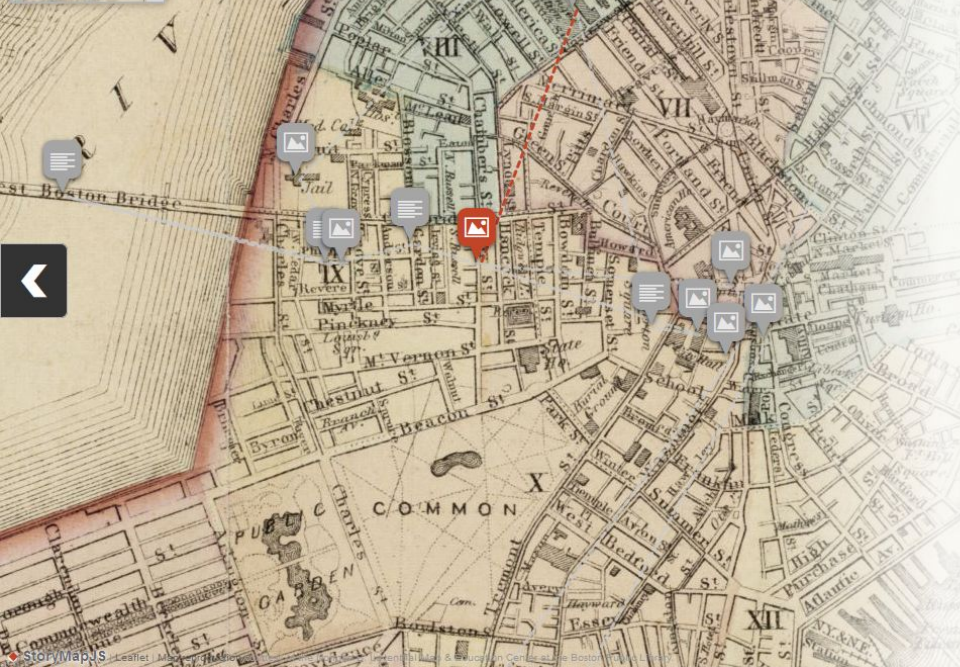


Illustration of the Smith School from *The Boston Almanac* (1849).

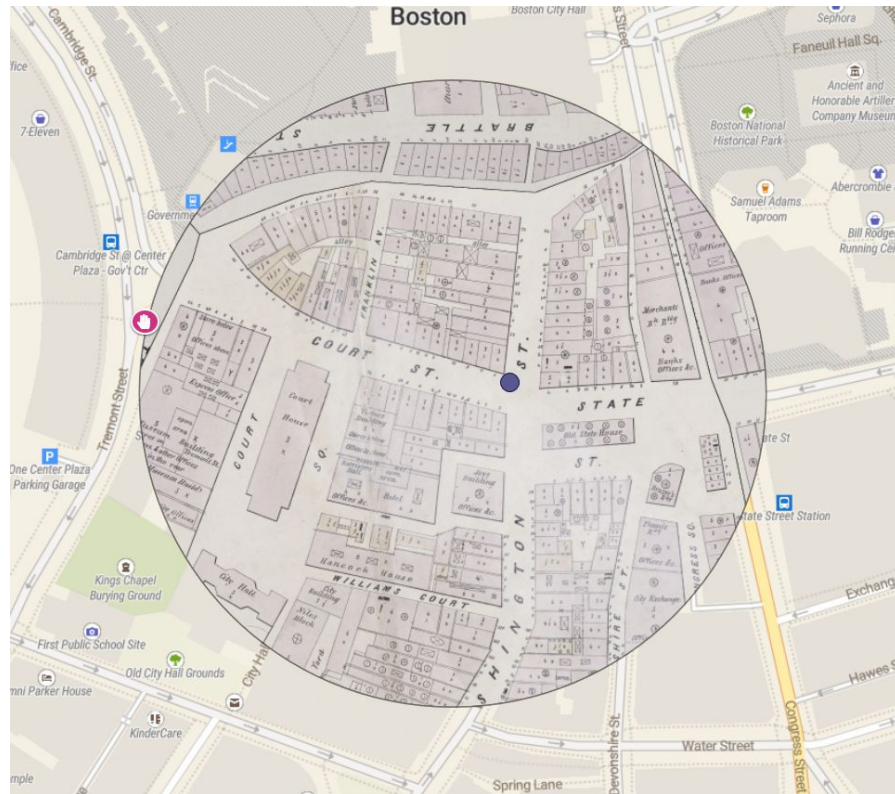
Abiel Smith School (46 Belknap Street)

The Abiel Smith School at 46 Belknap (now Joy) Street became a focal point of civil rights activism for Boston's African American community, particularly during one of Morris's most important cases, *Roberts v. City of Boston*. Originally founded as the African School in 1812 on the lower floor of the African Meeting House, the school was established to educate African American students, who were refused entry to segregated White public schools. In the 1840s, tensions and protests intensified. Some Black Bostonians defended the Abiel Smith School, but many other parents and community members lamented its subpar conditions and the lack of funding. Activists like Morris, William Cooper Nell, and Benjamin Roberts organized protests and boycotts, pushing for the integration of public education. Visitors can still tour the site of the Smith School, which closed soon after the Massachusetts legislature prohibited segregation of public schools in 1855. The site is now operated by the Museum of African American History.

<https://www.bc.edu/content/bc-web/schools/law/sites/students/library/special-collections/robert-morris/morris-in-boston/storymap.html>

Strategies: Collaborative Investigation

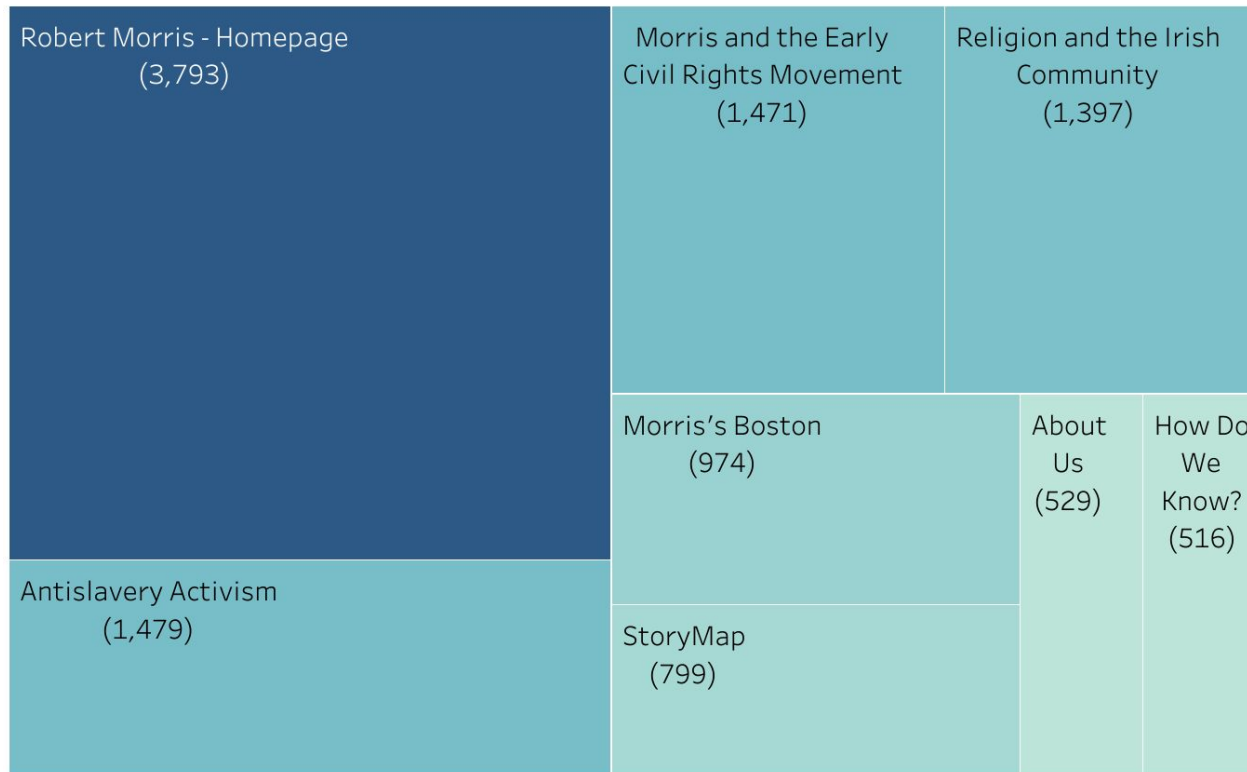
1. Laurel identified locations of interest.
2. As a group, cross-referenced locations between modern Boston maps and contemporary historical maps.
3. Made use of collective & individual familiarity with Boston's history and geography as well as Boston Public Library resources.



<https://www.atlascope.org/>

Impact

Total Page Views, Nov 2021 - Feb 2024

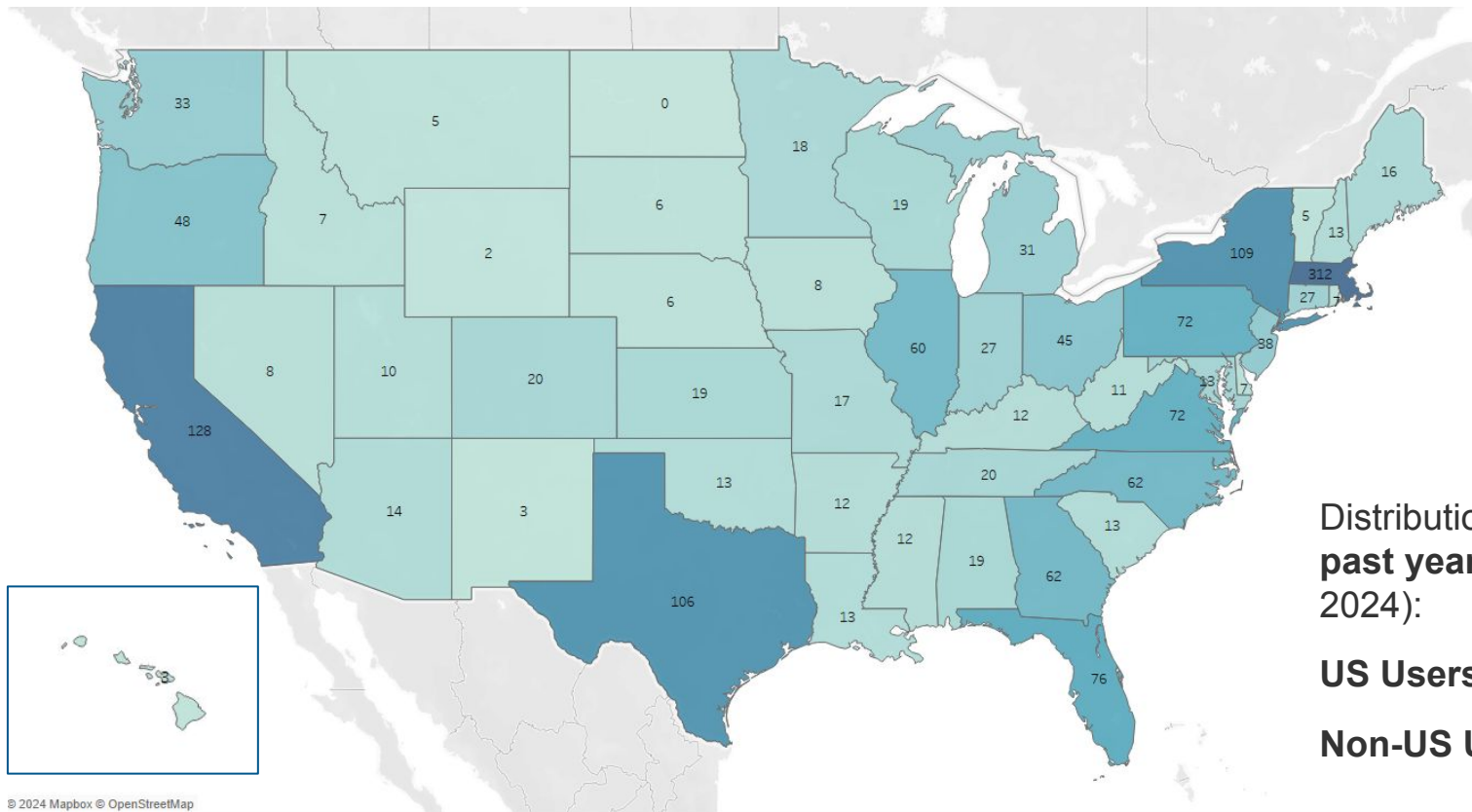


<https://www.tableau.com/community/public>

Since launch in Nov 2021, we have had approximately:

- **11,000 total page views**
- **8,000 total visits**

(That's an average of about 280 visitors per month!)



Distribution of users in the
past year (Feb 2023 to Feb
2024):

US Users: 1,683

Non-US Users: 144

<https://www.tableau.com/community/public>

Not the end...

Questions and Answers

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The digital exhibit:
bc.edu/robert-morris

Thank You

