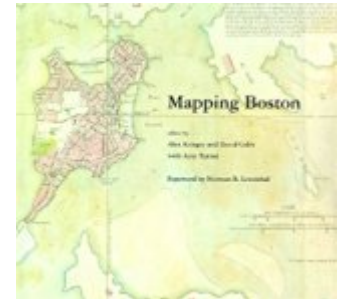


**Alex Krieger, David Cobb with Amy Turner.** *Mapping Boston.* Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 1999. ix + 277 pp. \$60.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-262-11244-4.



**Reviewed by** Clay McShane

**Published on** H-Urban (March, 2000)

This extremely handsome book traces the cartography of Boston and its region from discovery by Europeans to the present. At its heart are full color reproductions of 72 original maps, largely from the collection of Boston developer Norman Leventhal. Hundreds of smaller reproductions and other illustrations accompany the maps. Leventhal not only contributed the maps, but must have subvented the book otherwise, since the MIT Press could hardly have produced a book as lavish as this for only sixty dollars otherwise. Leventhal has been exceedingly kind at sharing his collection with the public, placing several of these maps on display at downtown buildings and recently putting a number of them on display at Boston Public Library.

While theoretically covering the whole gamut of Boston history, there are more plates of seventeenth century maps than twentieth, a reflection of the book's focus. The book also contains seven essays, one of which, a literary appreciation by James Carroll, seems a little out of place. Sam Bass Warner, Jr. has written a superb ten page introduction to the city's history. The detailed histories of map-making and map-buying in Boston (all em-

phasizing the eighteenth nineteenth century) by Barbara McCorkle, David Bose, and David Cobb are major contributions. Nancy Seashole's lengthy topographic history of Boston updates and, if a bad pun may be excused, fills in Walter Muir Whitehill's classic book.[1] A useful, but hardly exhaustive, bibliography augments the book.

The plates themselves are set off from the text with "vignettes" (photos, blow-ups of sections, and smaller copies of other maps, prepared by Anne Mackin and ably explained in an accompanying text.) This organization has the virtue of fully setting the context for each map, but has the drawback of creating some redundancy with the essays. The coverage is especially strong for the colonial period, the revolutionary era, and the mid-nineteenth century.

Remarkably, twenty of these maps are available at <http://www.mappingboston.com>. It is probably unfair to ask for more from an already overwhelming book, but twentieth century Boston has a cartographic legacy as well, in the cultural and social maps of such authors as Kevin Lynch, Michael Conzen, and George Lewis.[2] The various authors are kinder about twentieth century

urban renewal than I would be. Finally, two small errors. Ronald Formisano's first name is not Donald, and James Michael Curley was born in the South End, not South Boston. These are minor flaws.

This is an extremely valuable work. I don't know of anything approaching its thoroughness and quality for any other city. No scholar will ever be able to use a map of Boston again, without checking this book to find out its origins and limitations. *Mapping Boston* enormously enriches our understanding of the city's history and of the history of urban cartography.

#### Notes

[1]. Walter Muir Whitehill, *A Topographical History of Boston* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1959). Harvard University Press has an updated version of this Whitehill book in press.

[2]. Michael P. Conzen and George K. Lewis, *Boston: A Geographical Portrait* (Cambridge: Ballinger Publishing Company, 1976) and Kevin Lynch, *The Image of the City* (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1960)

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