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JAMAICA PLAIN

## Jamaica Plain library, Hub's 3rd-oldest branch, to mark 100 years

Posted by Matt Rocheleau September 19, 2011 04:45 PM

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An archive photo from inside the JP library branch, circa 1939. For more vintage photos of the Jamaica Plain branch, [click here](#).

By **Matt Rocheleau**, Town Correspondent

The Jamaica Plain Branch Library is preparing to celebrate its 100th year operating out of its current facility.

The library's home is the third-oldest neighborhood branch library in Boston. The 9,600 square-foot building near the corner of Sedgwick and South streets opened on July 24, 1911 after a fire three years prior at the library's former space in the adjacent Curtis Hall, where the branch began in June 1876.

The branch library was the first independent building, apart from the Copley Square Central Library, built by the city exclusively for library use, according to the city library system's [1912 annual report](#). It cost \$33,000, including furnishings, to build on city-owned land, the report says.

The only older, actively-used neighborhood branch libraries are the Hyde Park branch, which opened in 1899, and the Uphams Corner branch, which opened in 1904 in a then two-year-old building. Boston's Central Library opened in 1895.

Throughout next month, the [Friends of the Jamaica Plain Branch Library](#), in collaboration with branch staff, the Jamaica Plain Historical Society, GEORGE

collaboration with branch staff, the Jamaica Plain Historical Society, UFORGE Gallery, and the Footlight Club, will commemorate the building's centennial with an array of events for children and adults.

"The Friends are excited to host this celebration of a lifetime with events for everyone aged 1 to 100," said Don Haber, co-chair of the board of the friends group, which at 59-years-old is the oldest branch friends group within Boston, home to the nation's oldest public library.

The featured celebration will be the "Birthday Bash," which will include an art auction hosted by the gallery, hors d'oeuvres from Linda Marino of La Bonne Maison, music by the International String Duo and pianist Jonathan Jarvis, a raffle, and birthday cake.

Mayor Thomas M. Menino and other community leaders plan to attend the bash scheduled for Oct. 22, from 7 to 9:30 p.m.

The [Jamaica Plain Branch](#) began in a small Reading Room in Curtis Hall, with books supplied by the Roxbury Branch of the [Boston Public Library](#).

In September 1877, around one year after it was established, the JP library expanded and became the first city library branch to purchase books from public funds. After a fire in 1908, the present building, which features large schoolhouse windows and two fireplaces, was built.

A small addition was constructed in 1936 and the interior remodeled in 1963. The branch's collection stands at around 52,300 items, according to recent counts.

After a grassroots push that began almost a decade ago, library system officials completed a renovation and expansion study for the branch in 2006. An [\\$8.5-million plan](#) to repair the building, make the facility compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act; improve the front of the library and expand some services was selected as was an architect to lead the project.

But, due to a lack of funding, no further steps toward renovating the branch have been announced. The project was not among those the city's library system listed in its final version of its FY12-FY16 capital projects plan approved at the beginning of this calendar year.

The Oct. 22 birthday celebration will also serve as a fundraiser for the friends group. Tickets are on sale now for a minimum donation of \$25 each. Tickets may be purchased online [here](#). Tickets may also be purchased for \$35 at the door, though availability will be limited there.

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Events for children leading up to October 22 include:

- Friday, September 30, 4:00 pm: Stuffed animal library sleepover
- Saturday, October 1, 9:30 am: Stuffed animal breakfast pick-up
- Wednesday, October 5, 4:00 pm: Kids Club: a library history treasure hunt
- Tuesday, October 11, 10:30 am: Preschool story time: celebrate libraries
- Wednesday, October 12, 4 pm: Kids Club: Make a Secret Garden journal
- Tuesday, October 18, 10:30 am: Preschool story time: the number 100
- Wednesday, October 19, 4 pm: Kids Club: Make a Secret Garden terrarium

Events for adults leading up to October 22 include:

- Thursday, October 6, 6:00 - 8:00 pm: Artists' Reception for "Turning the Page: Dewey to Digital" with a preview of the art to be auctioned at the Birthday Bash
- Saturday, October 8, 7:00 pm: "Building Community Through Collaborations with Artists" presented by Kate Laurel Burgess-MacIntosh

(Location: UFORGE Gallery, 767 Centre Street; \$12; evening includes a complimentary wine reception)

- Thursday, October 13, 6:30 - 8:00 pm: History Lecture by author Catherine Willis about her new book on the history of the Boston Public Library, co-sponsored by the Jamaica Plain Historical Society

Saturday, October 22 daytime events for children include:

- 10:30 am - 12:30 pm: Drop-in arts & crafts program
- 12:30 pm - 1:15 pm: Puppet show
- 1:15 pm - 2:00 pm: Cupcake decorating
- 2:00 pm: Performance: The Secret Garden - A reading with song presented by the Footlight Club (Location: The Footlight Club, 7A Eliot Street; \$10)

Saturday, October 22 events for adults include:

- 11:00 am - 12:00 pm: Historical Performance by Joyce Miles about Ellen Swallow Richards — Jamaica Plain resident, first woman admitted to MIT and first woman professor at MIT
- 12:30 pm - 2:00 pm: History Lecture by author Anthony Mitchell Sammarco, a noted local historian and author of over 60 books on the history of the Boston area, about the history of Jamaica Plain and the Jamaica Plain Branch
- 7:00 pm - 9:30 pm: Birthday Bash (please see above)

All events noted above will take place at the Jamaica Plain Branch unless otherwise noted. The branch is located at 12 Sedgwick St. Additional information about the Friends of the Jamaica Plain Branch is available at [www.friendsjplibrary.org](http://www.friendsjplibrary.org).

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A photo of the JP library branch's exterior from the Boston Public Library system's 1912 annual report. For more vintage photos of the Jamaica Plain branch, [click here](#).



(Boston Public Library)

An archive photo of the JP library branch's exterior, believed to be photographed around 1940. For more vintage photos of the Jamaica Plain branch, [click here](#).



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