

# The Dr. Gene Scott Bible Collection

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## STATION 45:

### THE BAY PSALM BOOK

The First Book Printed in English America

*First printed in*

**1640**

When the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock, they brought with them Henry Ainsworth's version of the Psalms, given in prose and meter with printed tunes to sing them. In Massachusetts Bay, however, the Puritan colonists who landed there in 1629-1630 used the Sternhold & Hopkins version often bound with contemporary Bibles (and first included in editions of the Geneva Bible). But this version was unacceptable to many of the Non-Conformists, who ridiculed it as the "Genevah Jiggs." It was a desire for a more exact translation of the Psalms, more reflective of the original Hebrew, that led to an effort begun in 1636 to have "30 pious and learned ministers" each undertake to translate a portion of the Psalms, in a common effort led by Richard Mather, Minister at Dorchester.

The results of their labors were published in Cambridge (then just outside Boston), Massachusetts Bay, by Stephen Daye in 1640. of the 1700 printed of this first edition only 10 copies are known to exist, none remaining in private hands. The small ***duodecimo*** size was indicative of the limited technical means available to the colonial printers; Daye had only arrived in 1638 together with a printing press, and the "Bay Psalm Book" has the distinction of being **the first book printed in British America.**

It was quickly adopted by nearly every congregation in Massachusetts Bay, hence the name. A revised and enlarged edition was printed in Cambridge in 1658, and further printings continued (some 27 in all) until 1762. By 1692, even the Plymouth colonists agreed to use this version in preference to Ainsworth's. The new translation became immediately popular in England as well, ***"by some eminent Congregations prefer'd to all***

***Others in their  
Publick Worship,"***

according to

Thomas Prince (whose one-time holding of 5 copies was given to the Old South Church in Boston in 1758). Printings of the "Bay Psalm Book" were made in England and Scotland; while some were retained for local use (for example, by Presbyterians throughout Scotland), many were exported back to the colonies.



The example shown here is from the **Tenth Edition**, printed in London **"for Richard Chiswell, at the Rose and Crown in St. Paul's Church Yard."**

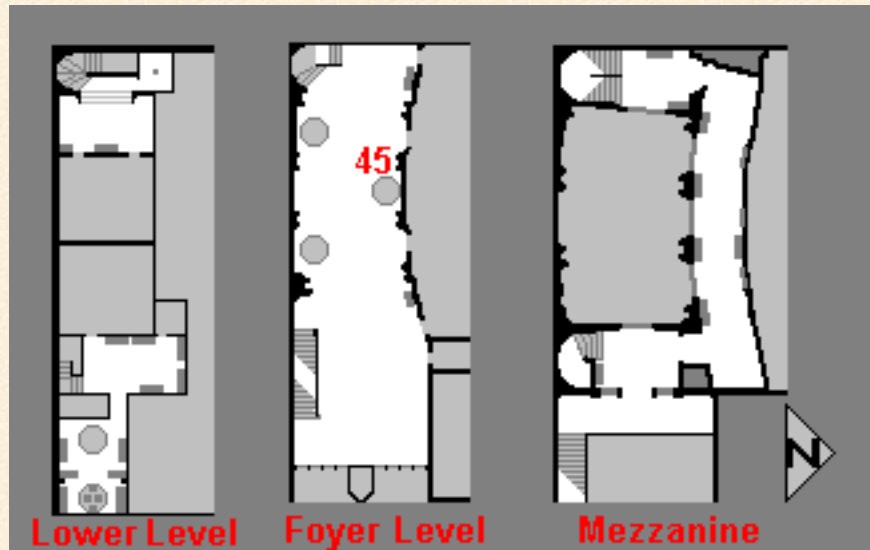
**Any** of the 17th and early 18th Century editions of the "Bay Psalm Book" are rare; their small size and heavy use meant that most would perish after the boom in Bible printing began at the end of the 18th Century, when more handsome editions in larger sizes supplanted the relatively primitive prior editions. In fact, the volume shown here is **THE ONLY KNOWN SURVIVING EXAMPLE OF THE TENTH EDITION**. It is bound together with a 1706 King James Version New Testament printed in London - continuing the tradition of binding Psalms with Testaments and Bibles. The actual title of this edition of the "Bay Psalm Book" is indicative of its history, purpose and character:

***"THE PSALMS, HYMNS,  
AND SPIRITUAL SONGS  
of the Old and New  
Testament,  
faithfully  
translated into  
English Meeter. For  
the Use,  
Edification and  
Comfort of the  
Saints in publick  
and private,  
especially in New-  
England."***

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## STATION LOCATION MAP

Below is a floor plan map of the Cathedral in 3 sections, one for each level. The first section is the Lower Level, the second is the Foyer Level, and the third is the Mezzanine Level. This station is located in the central Octagon on the Foyer Level at the red #45.



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