

# LINCOLN LORE

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## HISTORIC LINCOLN BIBLES

Many of the large city libraries are just now featuring the five hundredth anniversary of the first printing from movable type. The Gutenberg Bible, named for the inventor, is always associated with the beginning of printing, so it would seem appropriate to compile a list of the Bibles which are known to have been in the possession of the Lincoln family. Three of these Bibles now owned by the Government are on display in Washington.

No book could be more appropriately associated with Abraham Lincoln than the Bible. The Second Inaugural Address has often been called Lincoln's Sermon on the Mount. During this address he mentions God six different times and a very pronounced spiritual tone permeates the whole effort. It is not likely that any President more often used Biblical terms in his writings than Abraham Lincoln.

### *Mother's Bible*

Lincoln is reported to have told one of his friends that his mother was "a ready reader" and read the Bible to him habitually. The influence of this early Biblical atmosphere may have had much to do with Lincoln's literary style as well as his moral character. Lincoln's mother's Bible is now on display in the old Ford's Theatre at Washington. It was published in 1799 in Switzerland and the preface and notes were edited by Rev. Mr. Osterwald.

### *Lucy Speed Bible*

Lincoln, greatly depressed by his broken engagement to Mary Todd, sought relief from his despondency in the home of his friend, Joshua Speed, at Louisville, Kentucky. On September 27, 1841, after returning to Illinois he wrote to Joshua's sister, Mary, and said, "Tell your mother that I have not got her present (an Oxford Bible) with me but I intend to read it regularly when I return home." On October 3, 1861, when Lincoln was President he sent Mary's mother, Lucy G. Speed, an autographed photograph of himself with this comment, "For Mrs. Lucy G. Speed from whose pious hand I accepted the present of an Oxford Bible twenty years ago."

### *Mary Todd Lincoln Bible*

A gift from Abraham Lincoln to his wife, a large family Bible, now in the Library of Congress, bears the inscription "Mary Todd Lincoln" stamped in gold on the cover. On the pages available for the family record one finds entered in the handwriting of Abraham Lincoln, under the caption marriages, this notation: "Abraham Lincoln and Mary Todd Lincoln married November 4, 1842."

Later on Robert, the President's son, entered this record: "Robert Todd Lincoln and Mary Harlan married September 24, 1868."

This Bible bears a Philadelphia imprint of 1847 and was published by Lippincott & Co. It is called "The Comprehensive Bible."

### *First Inaugural Bible*

The Bible used in the ceremonies of the First Inaugural is now in possession of the Library of Congress and is on display in the Abraham Lincoln collection. The following

inscription appears on the inside of the front cover and following page:

### *"Supreme Court of the United States*

"I, William Thos. Carroll, Clerk of the said court do hereby certify that the preceding copy of the Holy Bible is that upon which the Honble. R. B. Taney, Chief Justice of said Court, administered to His Excellency, Abraham Lincoln, the oath of office as President of the United States, on the day of the date hereof at the Capitol of the United States in the City of Washington and District of Columbia (being the seat of the National Government of the said United States).

"In testimony whereof I hereinto subscribe my name and affix the seal of the said Supreme Court this 4th day of March A. D. 1861."

### *Pocket New Testament*

Mr. Lincoln visited Fortress Monroe on May 4, 1862, and on the return trip he was found sitting in a secluded corner of the vessel. According to Mr. Jay he was "absorbed in reading his pocket edition of the New Testament."

### *Book of Psalms*

A book of Psalms is said to have been much read by Abraham Lincoln and after his death his widow presented it to Hon. William Reid, U. S. Counsel at Dundee, Scotland. It was printed in "Great Primer" type by the American Bible Society in 1857 and contains 212 pages. Bound in a black leather cover it bears in gold letters "Book of Psalms" and beneath this title the name "Abraham Lincoln." On the cover is also the verse "Pleased is the man that maketh the Lord his trust and respecteth not the proud, nor such as turn to lies." This book is now privately owned.

### *Stuart's "Cromwell Bible"*

Once when George H. Stuart, esq., of Philadelphia was visiting at the White House he offered Mr. Lincoln a book. According to Mr. Stuart, Mr. Lincoln "rose from his chair, read the title, expressed great pleasure in receiving it, and promised to read it." The title of the book was Cromwell's Bible which contained a selection from the scriptures.

### *Freedmen's Bible*

In 1864 a group of colored people from Baltimore, Maryland, presented Abraham Lincoln with a beautiful Bible, pulpit size, bound in velvet and ornamented with bands of gold. A plate of gold placed on the cover bore this inscription "To Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, the Friend of Universal Freedom. From the loyal colored people of Baltimore as a token of respect and gratitude. Baltimore, July 4, 1864."

Lincoln acknowledged the receipt of this book with a short address from which the following excerpt is taken: "In regard to this great book, I have but to say it is the best gift God has given to man."

### *Second Inaugural Bible*

One who witnessed the Second Inaugural ceremonies recalled having seen Abraham Lincoln place his left hand on the Bible held by Chief Justice Chase, and at the conclusion of the oath kiss the book as was customary. It is said that his lips touched the 27th and 28th verses of the fifth chapter of Isaiah. Chief Justice Chase marked these verses and the following day gave the Bible to Mrs. Lincoln. The editor of Lincoln Lore has been unable to find out where the Bible is at this time.