

## Case Study 10 - The Bay Psalm Book, 1640

1,700 copies were printed of the first book printed in British North America<sup>i</sup>. This is the 1640 *The Whole Booke of Psalmes Faithfully Translated into English Metre*. The book was used by nearly all the congregations in the Colony of Massachusetts Bay - hence the name of *The Bay Psalm Book*. The origin and production of *The Bay Psalm Book* may be summarized as follows.

The Pilgrims who landed in 1602 had Henry Ainsworth's *The Book of Psalmes: Englished both in prose and metre. With annotations, opening the words and sentences, by conference with other scriptures. By H.A.* Arrivals in 1629 and 1630 used Sternhold and Hopkins Psalms, but increasing dissatisfaction led to the call for a fresh translation which led to the printing of *The Bay Psalm Book*. That project called for a press to be acquired. Rev. Joseph (Josse) Glover, Rector of Sutton, England, raised funds from England and Holland for a press, fonts and paper for the printing of the fresh translation. The contracted printer was Stephen Daye. They travelled to Boston, but Rev. Glover died either before departure or during the voyage. In March 1639 printing began in Cambridge, MA, but there are no extant copies of those products. The 1700 copies of *The Bay Psalm Book* first appeared in 1640. The stated print costs were £33. 116 reams of paper were required, according to a 1655 statement by Stephen Daye in the course of a legal action taken by Glover's heirs against Henry Dunster, President of Harvard College.

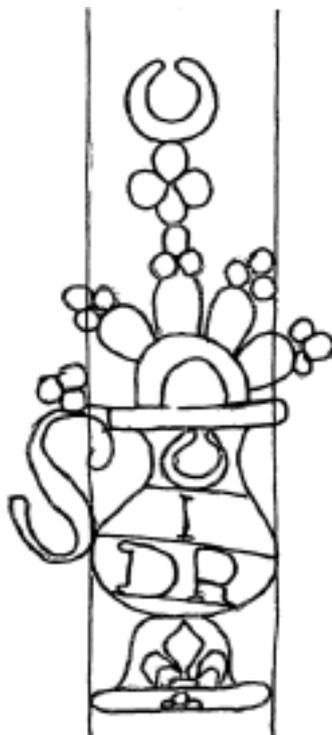
There is one copy in England at the Bodleian Library<sup>ii</sup>. Two of the other ten extant copies were, until 2013, held, like the above mentioned Béarnese book, at the Boston Public Library. One of them was sold in 2013 for \$14.2 million. Prior to the sale I had the privilege of using my earlybook imaging system on both copies. The major result was the archiving of a full set of both front lit and back lit images of both books. A full set of the front lit images of

the whole of one of the copies (property of Old South Church, Boston) in page turning format can be seen (Flash needed) at:-

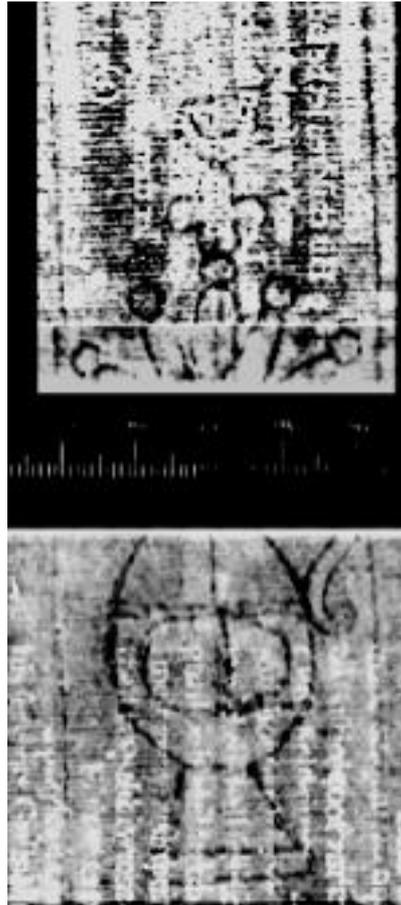
<https://www.oldsouth.org/sites/default/files/bay-psalm-book/template-osc.htm>



The 116 reams of paper for *The Bay Psalm Book* were not only essential but no waste could be tolerated. The watermarks show that the paper came from several different sources. One of the most common shows a bunch of grapes with a column to the left and a column to the right<sup>iii</sup>. Another common watermark shows a crescent, a quadrifoil, central letters and a jug<sup>iv</sup>. The image below, from the Bernstein Memory of Paper database – note the fleur de lys - is from 1645, Boizenburg:-



It is a close variant of a watermark found in numerous pages of both Boston Public Library copies. The following image shows the copy 21.15 Kk gathering watermark:-



It has been claimed above that ‘no waste could be tolerated’. That claim is supported by two features of the paper used in copy 21.15. In both cases very evident errors have been tolerated – it was better to produce a legible but imperfect copy rather than destroy it. Both errors are due to printing / binding errors, as will now be explained. (I am indebted to Mr Nigel Roche formerly of St Bride Printing Library who unravelled both mysteries for me).

The first error concerns gathering D. The pages are out of order. When the original sheet was printed it should have been merely flipped over horizontally for the other side to be printed, but in fact it was not only flipped over horizontally but was also rotated 180 degrees. The error was noted by a reader who duly annotated all the four pages affected. The following image shows the annotations (‘miss 2 leaves’, ‘miss 2 leaves’, ‘turn back a leafe’ and ‘turn back a leafe’) at the base of each recto at gathering D:-

God exalted bee.  
D miss 2 leaves 47 Its

corne they shake.  
miss 2 leaves upō

Turne barba luse D 3  
thou  
76

D 2 Turne barba luse in

The second error is towards the end of the book and concerns gathering Kk. The outer forme has been folded incorrectly, so that the fourth page appears instead of the first and vice versa. Those errors were either unnoticed or not annotated. The consequence is that those pages are not in the correct places and the Psalms concerned are variously segmented<sup>v</sup>.

This Case Study shows how images intended for watermark research not only provide additional information about the travels and travails of books, as illustrated above for the Psalms. The images are also a valuable research resource for allied domains, such as typography and the composition of books.

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<sup>i</sup> The first book to be printed in the Americas was by Juan Pablos at Casa de Juan Cromberger in Mexico City in 1539. It was *Breve y más compendiosa doctrina Christiana en lengua*

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*Mexicana y Castellana*, but no copies are extant. It is a short compendium of Catholic Doctrine in Nahuatl and Spanish.

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ii Available from:-

<https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/inquire/Discover/Search/#/?p=c+0,t+,rsrs+0,rsp+10,fa+,so+ox%3Asort%5Easc,scids+,pid+617a3903-6b49-44b4-a484-fa7155660a60,vi+7a9f29cb-ee71-48d2-b55b-63441740f458>

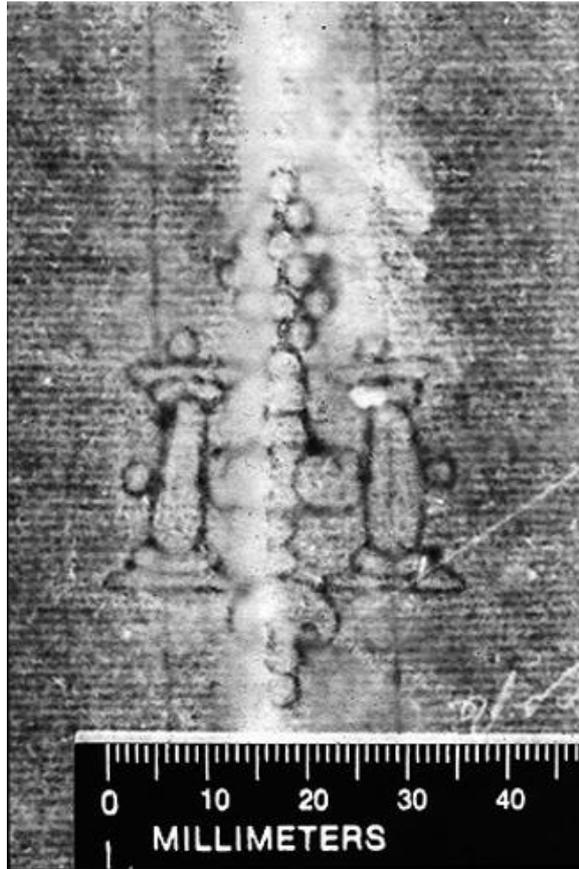


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iii Watermark in a letter to Sir Henry Slingsby at York. July 6, 1634. Written from the Strand [London]. He has sent his tomb "packt vpp in two great sugar-Chestes," and needs his brother's help in transporting it from Hull to the chapel at Knaresborough, where their father's tomb lies. Gravell collection image available from Folger Shakespeare Library:-

<http://www.gravell.org/record.php?RECID=330>





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<sup>iv</sup> This same style of watermark ('CC' for 'CD') is found in Edward Heawood, “Transactions of the Bibliographical Society”, *The Library*, (London, December 1930), ser. 2, vol 11, p. 289, number 78. Dates of samples between 1623 and 1662.

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<sup>v</sup> In gathering Kk the second and third pages (both recto and verso) are in the correct places. The first page (both recto and verso) should be at the fourth (both recto and verso). The fourth page (both recto and verso) should be at the first (both recto and verso). *The Bay Psalm Book* is a quarto. For information about the imposition of text for a quarto see [PAPER, PAGES AND FINDING WATERMARKS](#) below.

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