



**Historic and rare 'The Whole Booke of Psalmes  
Faithfully Translated into English Metre' for sale  
\$31 million; USA original 1640**

*Peter Menkin*

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# Historic and rare 'The Whole Booke of Psalmes Faithfully Translated into English Metre' for sale \$31 million; USA original 1640

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For sale and asking \$31 million dollars for a book of Psalms to fund the future ministry and life of Old South Boston Church, USA, a church that appears to be selling its traditional and rare, historic items to fund ministry. One assumes this means social ministry, even so much as aiding the poor. This work is described by the Church in this manner of social Gospel work. So it discerns for itself, and prays will be—with the money from the sale of the book. And other help from God.

The Bay Psalm Book (The Whole Booke of Psalmes Faithfully Translated into English Metre) is the first fruit of the American press. The first book printed in British North America, it was also the first book entirely written in the Colonies...

Phil Stern is Board Chairman of Old South Boston ... Gathered in 1669, Old South Church is steward of storied events and great personages. We opposed the 'witch' trials, published the first anti-slavery tract, baptized Benjamin Franklin, hosted the meetings that led to the Boston Tea Party and opened our sanctuary as a recruiting station for the Union Army. Taking our cue from Moses' "Let my people go!" we have through the centuries championed abolition, civil and human rights, affordable housing, free speech, LGBT rights and equal marriage. We host and author forums on the weighty issues of the day with the purpose of tending to a bruised and battered world with hearts and minds informed and inspired by Christian witness. We take the Bible far too seriously to read it literally. Today we are a diverse and thriving Christian community offering multiple worship services, opportunities for education, Christian formation, direct service and justice advocacy.

So says the Church website, and one can easily say this is an historic American Church in Boston noted for successful works of prophecy of historic dimension.

The first book printed in British North America, it was also the first book entirely written in the Colonies. It was printed in Cambridge, MA in 1640, just twenty years after the landing at Plymouth. Of the first printing of 1,700 copies only eleven copies are known to have survived. Old South owns two. (The discovery of a twelfth complete copy was one of the plot points in David Baldacci's 2006 novel, *The Collectors*.)

Phil Stern says of selling the Book of Psalms talking to this Religion Writer in a telephone interview regarding its offering for sale by Sotheby's, New York City: There are churches that do things out of desperation. Many churches make their decisions way too late, when they are in decline. Old South is growing; it is a strong church. It is an effective church in our community.

Clearly this Church wants the future more than the past, more than its 344 year old tradition as it has been named and interpreted.

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#### **William Patterson:**

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