

The Dr. Gene Scott Bible Collection

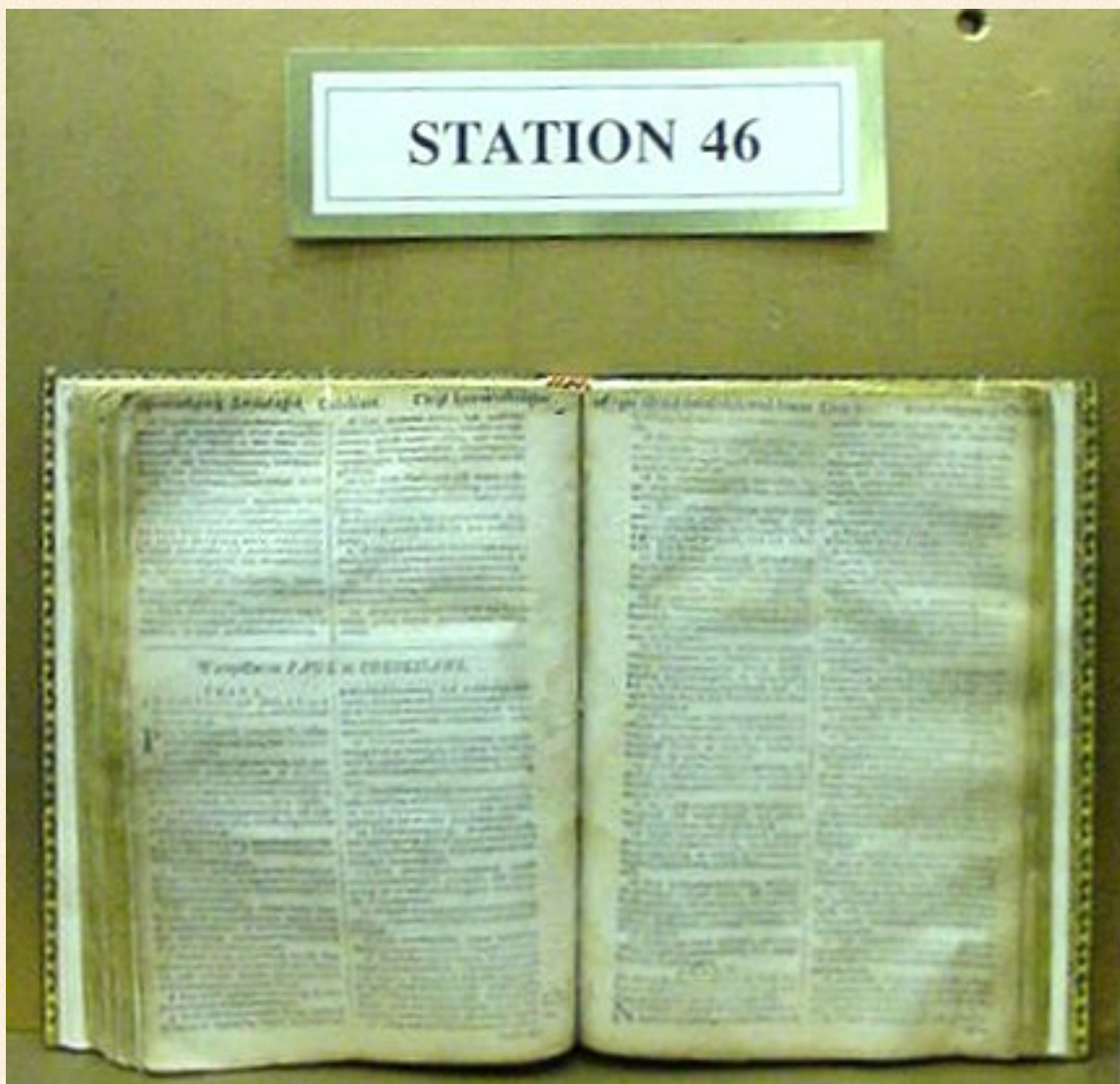
STATION 46:

THE ELIOT INDIAN BIBLE

The First Bible Printed in the New World & The First Bible Created for a Pagan People

Because the monopoly for printing the Bible in English was held by England (who treated her Colonies as a source of raw materials only, with "finished goods" being the exclusive province of the Mother Country), no Bibles in English were allowed to be printed until the American Colonies broke away (the first complete English Bible printed in America, the "Aitken" Bible, is featured at [Station 47](#)).

The only concession the English made was to allow printing of the Bible or Testaments in languages other than English. For example, the famous Saur German Bibles were produced under English rule (two examples of the rare 1776 edition are shown at [Station 53](#)); these were the first American editions in any modern European language. From the obligation some Colonists felt to convert the indigenous American peoples, almost from the start of European settlement in North America, comes one of the great treasures of the Dr. Gene Scott Collection: the **Eliot Indian Bible**.



On the eastern seaboard of what became the USA lived a diverse number of "native Americans;" one of the main groups were the Algonquins, whose language was Massachusett. Beginning in 1655, one of the missionaries to this group, John Eliot, conceived of producing a Bible in their language. After obtaining permission from England (being careful not to encroach upon the British Bible monopoly), Eliot printed his first substantial effort, a New Testament, in 1661. Nearly all copies have perished. This was preceded by separate publications of *Genesis* in 1655 and *Matthew* in 1658 (though only one copy of the former and none of the latter have survived).

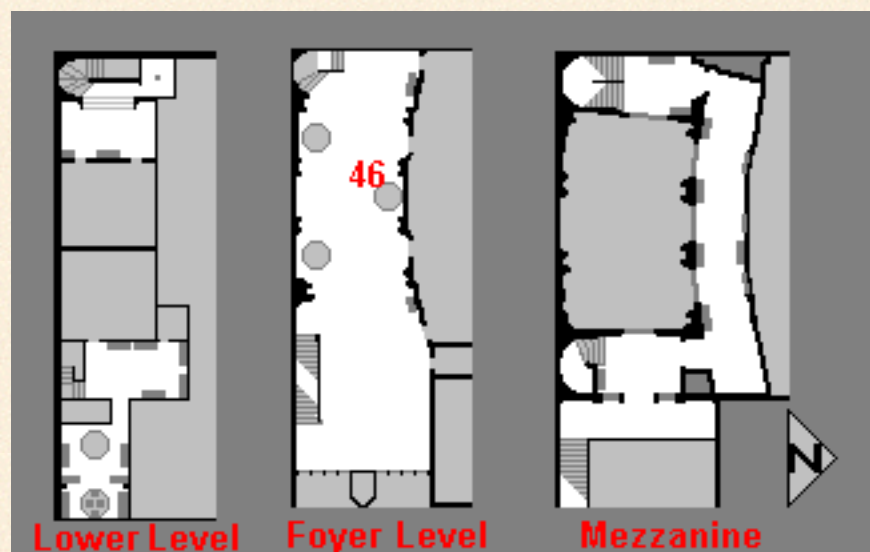
In 1663, this Testament was reprinted, differing in that the title page was in Massachusett only (except for the printer's imprint). This was again reissued in 1680. In 1663, the complete Eliot Indian Bible was printed, and was reprinted in 1685. These five distinct printings are now known in fewer than two dozen examples all told. They represent not only **the first Bibles printed for a pagan people**, but also for a people now extinct - for none can read them today.

The example shown here is noteworthy for its exceptional condition, the finest of the very few examples known. One celebrated copy has an entire page in facsimile; the Dr. Gene Scott Collection example is virtually flawless. You are looking at one of the true milestones in the history of Bible printing, and you are among the very few people who can do so, given the rarity and the dispersal of the few surviving examples world-wide.

This Bible (as all the Eliot Bibles) was printed in Cambridge, Massachusetts by Samuel Green, assisted by Marmaduke Johnson. It is recorded that some 40 copies of the Eliot Testament went to London as a gift to the Governor of the corporation which financed the printing; this example, extraordinarily well preserved, may have been among them. Given the early date of its production (less than half a century after the first book printed in America, the "Bay Psalm Book," shown at [Station 45](#)), it is a distinguished relic of both early American printing and early missionary zeal. The few copies that have survived of any of the Eliot Bibles are among the most important American historical and cultural artifacts.

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 #46.





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