

President-elect Obama to be sworn in using the Lincoln Bible

Written by

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Washington, D.C. - On January 20th, President-elect Barack Obama will take the oath of office using the same Bible upon which President Lincoln was sworn in at his first inauguration. The Bible is currently part of the collections of the Library of Congress. Though there is no constitutional requirement for the use of a Bible during the swearing-in, Presidents have traditionally used Bibles for the ceremony, choosing a volume with personal or historical significance. President-elect Obama will be the first President sworn in using the Lincoln Bible since its initial use in 1861.

"President-elect Obama is deeply honored that the Library of Congress has made the Lincoln Bible available for use during his swearing-in," said Presidential Inaugural Committee Executive Director Emmett Beliveau. "The President-elect is committed to holding an Inauguration that celebrates America's unity, and the use of this historic Bible will provide a powerful connection to our common past and common heritage."

The Bible was originally purchased by William Thomas Carroll, Clerk of the Supreme Court, for use during Lincoln's swearing-in ceremony on March 4, 1861. The Lincoln family Bible, which is also in the Library of Congress's collection, was unavailable for the ceremony because it was packed away with the First Family's belongings, still en route from Springfield, IL, to their new home at the White House.

The Bible itself is bound in burgundy velvet with a gold-washed white metal rim around the three outside edges of both covers. All its edges are heavily gilded. In the center of the top

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cover is a shield of gold wash over white metal with the words "Holy Bible" chased into it. The book is 15 cm long, 10 cm wide, and 4.5 cm deep when closed. The 1,280-page Bible was published in 1853 by the Oxford University Press.

Annotated in the back of the volume, along with the Seal of the Supreme Court, is the following: "I, William Thomas 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 the said Court, administered to His Excellency, Abraham Lincoln, the oath of office as President of the United States ..."

The Lincoln Inaugural Bible will be on display at the Library of Congress February 12th to May 9th, 2009, as part of an exhibition titled "With Malice Toward None: The Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Exhibition." The exhibit will then travel to five other American cities. The Library is planning several other events and programming in commemoration of the bicentennial of the birth of the nation's 16th president, who was born on February 12th, 1809.

On March 4, 2009, the 147th anniversary of Lincoln's first inauguration, the Library of Congress will also be convening an all-day symposium with several renowned Lincoln scholars. For more information see the Library of Congress Web site at www.loc.gov.