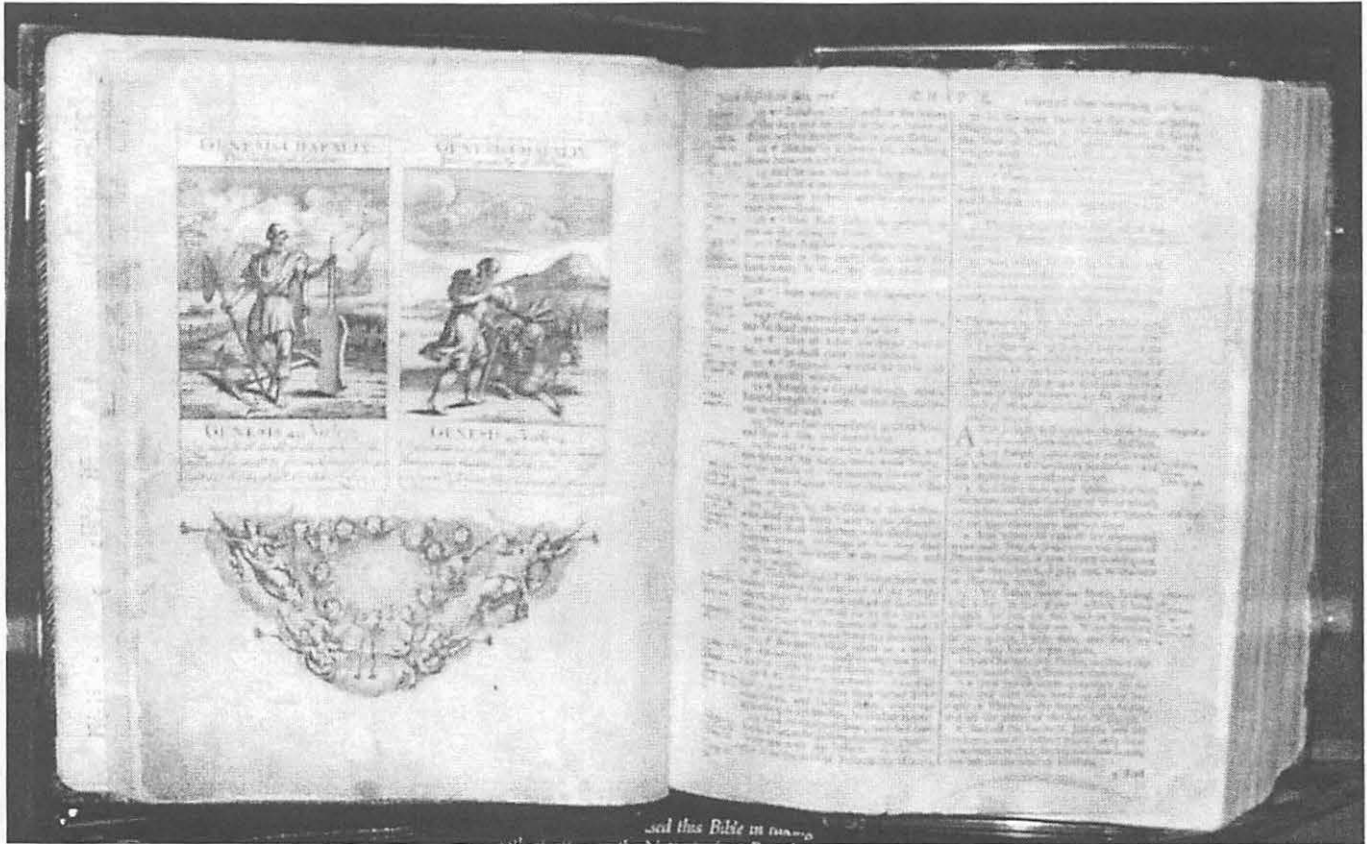




George Washington's Inaugural Bible



In 1789 at Federal Hall, George Washington placed his hand on this page, took the oath of office, and was inaugurated first President of the United States.

St. John's Lodge No.1.A.Y.M., Free and Accepted Masons, the oldest Lodge in New York State is the caretaker of the Washington Inaugural Bible on which the first President took his oath of office in New York City. The Bible is a King James Version, printed in London in 1767, complete with the Apocrypha and elaborately supplemented with the historical astronomical and legal data for that period. It contains 103 steel engravings and two foldout maps. It was presented to St. John's Lodge by Jonathan Hampton on November 28th, 1770, the night he became Master of the Lodge.

The popular story is that no Bible had been in place at Federal Hall on Inauguration Day, April 30th, 1789 and that Jacob Morton, Master of St. John's (and later Grand Master of New York State Masons) retrieved the Altar Bible of St. John's from the Lodge Rooms located at "the old Coffee House" on Wall Street. George Washington placed his right hand on Chapters 49 and 50 of Genesis, "Jacob calleth his sons together to bless them and the mourning for Jacob" and took his oath of office administered by New York State Chancellor Robert R. Livingston. When the oath was completed Washington added the phrase, "I swear, so help me God," and bending forward, kissed the open book.

The Bible has been displayed, not only for specific Masonic functions but at such public occasions as the funeral processions of Presidents George Washington, Andrew Jackson and Zachary Taylor, the inaugurations of Presidents Warren G. Harding, Dwight D. Eisenhower, Jimmy Carter and George Bush, the dedication of the Washington Monument, the centennials of the cornerstone laying of the White House and Capitol, and the launching of the aircraft carrier, George Washington.