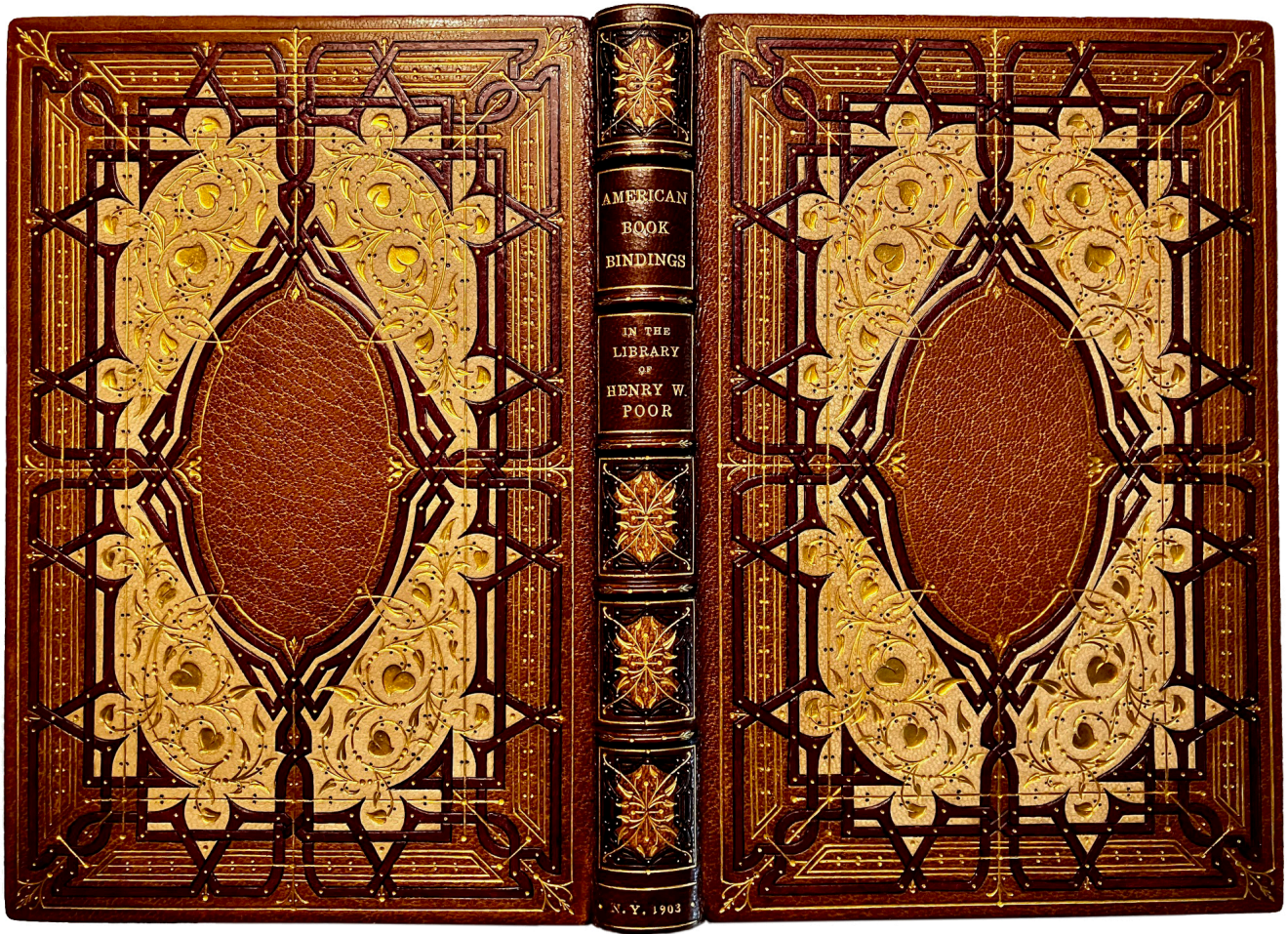


INTRODUCING A BRADSTREET'S BINDING ON
American Bookbindings in the Library of Henry William Poor (1903)



Pène du Bois, Henri. *AMERICAN BOOKBINDINGS IN THE LIBRARY OF HENRY WILLIAM POOR*. Jamaica, New York: George D. Smith (printed at The Marion Press), 1903. Only edition. A striking and magnificent *mosaic morocco* binding heavily onlaid and gilt-stamped by Alfred William Launder, Bradstreet's finest binder, who bound for major collectors such as William Loring Andrews, Robert Hoe, Henry William Poor, and J. Pierpont Morgan in the early 1900's. Richly adorned with multiple large sections of onlaid morocco including a central beige pattern and intricate maroon strap work. Gilt stamped and tooled fillet borders and winding vines terminating in prominent solid hearts on the beige morocco. Single gilt fillet ruling along all board edges. Spine with five raised bands, six compartments decorated to match the cover designs. Wide dentelles with six fillet concentric rectilinear edge motifs of different composition, signed on front dentelle in gilt pallet, "Bradstreet's." Marbled pastedowns and end-sheets. Top edges gilt. Original cloth covers bound-in at end. Copy #160 of 200 Copies on Handmade Paper. This copy signed by Henry W. Poor.



Contents: The most important book on American bookbinding published at the time, or perhaps at any time since. A stunning example of color reproduction, containing thirty-nine covers of fine bindings in vibrant and true colors and shimmering gold from notable firms such as Club Bindery, Matthews, Smith, Zahn, and others of equal caliber. ❖ In 1908 the Anderson Auction Company of New York called this book “The most sumptuously printed and illustrated work on Bookbindings ever produced in America.” (“Rare and Fine Books including a Portion of the Library of Chas Belden van Nostrand / New York City”, Feb. 13 & 14, 1908, Source Record Number 6 32-13). ❖ In another Anderson Auction sale in 1908, Anderson Auction Co. called it “the most beautiful book of its kind ever issued in America” (656-64). ❖ For the Preston A. Perry sale, AAC said of it, “the Illustrations are remarkably well done, and represent some of the finest work in binding done in this country” (658-307). ❖ “The plates are in colors and gold, by the Bierstadt process... More faithful reproductions of book bindings have never been made. The colors and textures of the leathers are perfectly given by the impression from glass plates, while the gold tooling is carried out in applied gold leaf. The effect is so rich and true to the original materials that one gets fully as satisfactory a view of the bindings as if the originals were seen in glass exhibition cases.” Another 1908 catalogue says “The plates are probably the most beautiful and accurate reproductions of bindings ever made, each having been stamped in gold leaf from brass dies.” *The Literary Collector—An Illustrated Monthly Magazine of Book-Lore and Bibliography*. Vol. VII, Nov. 1903-April 1904. Greenwich, CT & New York: The Literary Collector Press, pp. 12-13. ❖ Finally, “This binding [Bradstreet’s] is on a book that shows fine bindings like no other book before or after it has.”—Pradeep Sebastian, author of *The Book Beautiful—A Memoir of Collecting Rare and Fine Books* (2023), *The Book Hunters of Katpadi* (2017) and *The Groaning Shelf and Other Instances of Book Love* (2010).

Bindery: “This is the work the Bradstreet Bindery in New York. John M. Bradstreet (1815-1863) established one of the first credit rating companies. The firm came into bookbinding through their publishing activities, but when Henry and his siblings took over the firm “fine binding” was largely a European phenomena with William Matthews of New York being the only major American exponent. They carried out work for J. P. Morgan, the Grolier Club and other bibliophiles.” —ANTIQUARIAAT FORUM. ❖ In 1883, Du Bois in his *Historical Essay on the Art of Bookbinding* gave high honorable mention to Bradstreet’s showing that bookbinding “was not an art to be restricted to one nation or to one family, as tradition would have it in France, and forthwith did Bradstreet’s of New York undertake to make it American also; and now, if the rallied book collectors of the Old World point with pride to Trautz-Bauzonnet, Lortic, Marius Michel, Hardy, Amand, Bedford, Smeers, Riviere and Zaehnsdorf, the New World may retort with Matthews and Bradstreet’s. And deservedly, because there is a solidity, strength and squareness of workmanship about the books of the Bradstreet bindery... Certainly none can put a varied coloured morocco coat on a book, and gild it with greater perfection in choice or ornament and splendor of gold, and with greater care, taste and success than Bradstreet’s.” This statement was made *twenty years before* our 1903 binding on *American Bookbindings*. Bradstreet’s high-quality binding was greatly enhanced by the introduction of Alfred William Launder to Bradstreet’s around 1890.

Mindell Dubansky of The Metropolitan Museum pictures a high-quality Launder binding in her article, “A Well-Bound Book Mocks at Time: The Legacy of Alfred William Launder” (2017), but the above *American Bindings* is even more ornate and magnificent, and one of only a very few examples of the highest caliber of Launder’s work. Dubansky writes, “in 1889 or 1890, Launder was hired as a finisher at Bradstreet’s, a small fine bindery that was part of the larger reference-book publishing firm of the same name. The little bindery, located on Elm Street in Lower Manhattan, produced deluxe bindings for rare book and manuscript collectors, including J. Pierpont Morgan and Henry W. Poor. Prior to his work at the [Metropolitan] Museum, Launder, a Londoner, had been a lifelong fine binder and finisher who had achieved the highest level in his trade. As a finisher, he was exclusively responsible for the design and decoration of bindings, including the decorative leather onlays, inlays, and gold tooling. Launder came from a family of bookbinders, and as a young man he apprenticed in his father’s shop before later working for the Mansell Bindery, an old and prominent London bindery/stationer.”

One of the finest bindings by an American master binder executed during the peak era of rich, ornate and accomplished fine bindings.

“A man is known by the company he keeps”

--attributed to Greek philosopher, Aesop

A Preliminary Binding Census

In this case, the man in question is the binder, Alfred William Launder of the Bradstreet's Bindery, and the company he keeps is found both among the binders whose work was carefully selected for inclusion in *American Bookbindings in the Library of Henry William Poor*, and by the bindings/binders who practiced the best of their talents on the book itself. Nothing much has been written about bindings on copies of *American Bookbindings* which we hope to somewhat rectify here. Below is a list of American binders and their bindings on this famed 1903 imprint presenting American bindings of the early 20th century. These copies in fine bindings have been gleaned from bookseller or exhibition catalogues, auction catalogues, auction records as searched via the Rare Book HUB, and entries on World Cat (over sixty institutions record copies of the book in their collections) and other on-line searches. This certainly isn't being presented as a definitive list, but it does give some indication as to what full, ornamental bindings were placed on copies of *American Bookbindings in the Library of Henry William Poor*. See copies A-H below.

Copy A

(Bradstreet's) Description of the Alfred William Launder of Bradstreet's binding as shown at the outset of this article.

Copy B

(Club Bindery)

POOR'S "AMERICAN BOOKBINDINGS" IN FULL CLUB BINDING

146. PENE DU BOIS, HENRI. *American Bookbindings in the Library of Henry William Poor. 39 magnificent full-page plates in gold leaf and colors by Edward Bierstadt. 8vo, full dark blue levant, elaborate fillet and pointille borders, with large floral decorations at corners, paneled back heavily gilt with floral devices; full doublures of dark blue levant with multiple gilt borders, brocaded blue silk end-papers, by The Club Bindery; all edges gilt. Jamaica, Queensborough, 1903.*

ONE OF 238 NUMBERED COPIES PRINTED AT THE MARION PRESS, and signed by George D. Smith, the publisher, and Mr. Poor. Enclosed in full blue morocco slipcase. A sumptuously illustrated work in brilliant binding. *

* [NOTES: The above is from the catalogue of Swann Auction Galleries, Sale No. 109 "FINE SETS. EXHIBITION BINDINGS. COLOR PLATE AND SPORTING BOOKS. PRESS BOOKS. AUTOGRAPHS. Selections from the Libraries of Arnold W. Hoffman / Barrington, R.I. // Mrs. A. C. Ball / New York City. // and other consignors. February 8, 1945. Brought \$65. As recorded in The Rare Book HUB, this same binding was sold earlier in 1914 as part of "THE VALUABLE LIBRARY OF THE LATE FRANCIS L. WHITE, ESQUIRE OF SUMMIT, NEW JERSEY EXECUTRIX'S UNRESTRICTED PUBLIC SALE ON APRIL 24th, 1914. It was described as "Illustrated in gold and colors by Edward Bierstadt. 8vo., full blue levant, silk end papers, gilt edges, by The Club Bindery. One of 200 copies on Holland paper, signed by G. P. Smith and H. W. Poor.]

Copy C

ANOTHER COPY IN FULL CLUB BINDING

(Club Bindery)

107. **Poor, Henry W.**

American Bookbindings in [his] Library . . .

Described by Henri Pène du Bois.

New York, 1903

8vo, red levant morocco, sides decorated with straight and curving interlacing bands of olive mosaic, and gold-tooled in the manner of Le Gascon; doubled with red levant, with narrow dentelle border of Le Gascon tools.

Taken from *An Exhibition of Some of the Latest Artistic Bindings done at The Club Bindery*. New York: The Grolier Club, April 26-May 12, 1906, p. 38 (Entry 107). This copy not in the Henry W. Poor nor the Robert Hoe sales.

Copy D

(Rose Bindery) THE LIBRARY OF THE LATE CHARLES P. SENTER ST. LOUIS, MO. SOLD BY ORDER OF WILKINS JONES AND THE ST. LOUIS UNION TRUST COMPANY ADMINISTRATORS. UNRESTRICTED PUBLIC SALE OCTOBER 25 AND 26. AMERICAN ART ASSOCIATION ANDERSON GALLERIES, INC. 30 EAST 57TH STREET. (Cat. 4055, No. 77; 1933)

40 full-page reproductions in gold and colors by Edward Bierstadt. 8vo, full dark brown levant morocco, gilt fillet paneling on the back, interlaced gilt tooled pattern of double fillets on the sides, purple brocade doublures and linings, edges gilt over rough, by the Rose Bindery. In a morocco-edged cloth slip case. A superb copy of the First Edition. One of 200 copies on Holland handmade paper.*

* [NOTES: This Rose Bindery binding may be the one currently located at the Bancroft Library, and is described as: BANC; TYP AA49.R6.P6 1903: Full dark brown morocco by the Rose Bindery; multiple gilt interlocking circular designs within gilt borders; silk doublures and endpapers; undated.]

Copy E

(V. A. B.) The New York Public Library records having a second copy of the title, copy no. 32 of 35 copies printed on Imperial Japan vellum paper, signed by Henry W. Poor, and with the bookplates of Poor and Blacque. Extra illustrated with one portrait and three plates (one inlaid) in a binding signed by V. A. B. (1905) whom they identify as Valentine A. Blacque, and is bound in full dark blue levant morocco, gilt, with doublures of red morocco, gilt. Valentine Alexander Blacque (d. 1915) was a businessman and author whose papers are located at The New York Public Library. His library was featured in Henri Péne du Bois's *Four Private Libraries of New York* (1892), and was the founder of The Book Fellows' Club in 1881. Following his retirement, a *New York Times* article of March 18, 1906 notes "Valentine Blacque has been in Paris and Mrs. Blacque goes over to be with him. At present he is making much success with the binding of books, an art and fad much in vogue on the other side..." It is also known that Blacque transferred a large block of books from his own library to Henry William Poor sometime around 1903. Most likely this relationship continued up until Poor's financial career plummeted, regrettably forcing him to put his entire library up for sale in 1908-09.

Copy F

(Christine Hamilton) The Grolier Club in New York records a copy in their library as copy No. 17 which is a Japan vellum copy bound in brown morocco by Christine Hamilton (d. 1968) and notes from the preliminaries, "Of this edition of *American Bookbindings in the Library of Henry William Poor* there have been printed three copies on vellum, numbered 1 to 3; 35 copies on Imperial Japan paper, numbered 4 to 38; two hundred copies on Holland hand-made paper, numbered from 39 to 238." In examining the binding, I find it is not what I would fully consider a fine production.

Copy G

(Stikeman) In Larremore's *The Marion Press: A Survey and a Checklist...* (New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll Press, 1981), entry No. 61 is for the Marion Press's printing of *American Bookbindings in the Library of Henry William Poor* which was "handset in Caslon type; bound in full green cloth [by Stikeman], although 1 Japan-paper copy bound **in full morocco by Stikeman** is known..."

Copy H

(Curtis Walters) Parke-Bernet Galleries offered a copy of *American Bindings...* bound by Curtis Walters as part of a group of Outstanding Mosaic Bindings: "Illustrated in gold-

leaf and colors by E. Bierstadt. 8vo, full crimson levant, covers decorated with a rich design of gilt and blind-tooled small squares containing alternate gilt and blind-tooled flowers; gilt back with bands, gilt inside dentelles, red watered silk doublures and end leaves, gilt top; in slip-case." --Parke-Bernet Galleries, Inc. (Cat. 1971, No. 20, Dec. 10, 1957).

Why this binding was selected for the Mosher Collection

Collectors tend to adopt certain rules or parameters for their book collecting. I have a number of such rules which include not only the subject matter, but also rules about acceptable condition. Such rules function as guidelines to keep the collector focused on what the boundaries of the collection entail. They also function to keep the collector focused on what he or she is trying to accomplish. Sure, it's just fine to assemble all sorts of books one falls in love with, but if it's a collection, then there should be a rhyme and reason why one selection is made over another. If you have unlimited funds, by all means buy to your heart's content. It doesn't matter if you have little or no focus other than *acquiring* subject only to one's whims or interest du jour. Many an interesting assemblage of wonderful books have been amassed in such a broad or in some cases haphazard way. That's well and good, but it is not necessarily a collection. You're a buyer, not a collector. To be a collector requires a different tact, a limiting of focus and pursuit over the long haul. The idea is to come up with a collection which hangs around a subject or concentration, and in doing so takes on heightened meaning and scholarly value.

Now my chosen area of collecting has been just about everything revolving around the publisher, Thomas Bird Mosher and *The Mosher Books*. Among the sub-collections formed to assist in telling the Mosher story I have included the imprints themselves, their various states (regular copies, Japan vellum, or what they called "pure vellum" copies), correspondence and manuscripts surrounding Mosher's life and publishing, hand-illuminated copies of *The Mosher Books*, association copies, books from Mosher's personal library, and any of *The Mosher Books* in decorated leather bindings. It's this last area which involves the Alfred W. Launder binding of Bradstreet's.

I have always had one particular rule with regard to special bindings in the Mosher Collection: simply said, they must be on Mosher imprints. So, for the longest while each and every fine binding produced from a binder or bindery had to be placed on a Mosher book. It's been that way for over 450+ acquisitions entering the collection except for three notable exceptions, and there are good reasons why those three were selected even though they are not on any of the Mosher imprints.

One such deviation from "the rule" is the copy #1 printed on Japan vellum of *On Art Binding* by Otto Zahn. I acquired it, at considerable expense I might add, because not only do I have seventeen bindings by Otto Zahn of Toof & Co. Bindery—later the Zahn Bindery (including by the highly talented and delightfully quirky journeyman, Lorenz Schwartz) but because it pictures two Mosher publications in very special bindings. *On Art Binding* was expressly written and produced to accompany the bindery's inclusion in the St. Louis Exposition of 1904 (alternately called the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, or the 1904 World's Fair) at which the Toof & Co. bindings took first place. So there is that association between Zahn, the Toof & Co. bindery, and the seventeen such bindings I have on titles issued from *The Mosher Books*. As I mentioned, two of the bindings on Mosher imprints pictured in *On Art Binding* and I'm pleased to say are in fact in my collection, and so there is that unmistakably wonderful connection. Furthermore, through a fortunate occurrence of events, I also acquired the only Toof & Co. binding pictured in the book which is printed in color and used as the frontispiece. This binding is not on a Mosher imprint, but beautifully augments my holdings and the

whole swirling around the book's presentation of the Toof bindery. Lastly, the richly tooled covers and leather doublures of this Copy #1 of *On Art Binding* is one of the most outstanding in the collection. I almost lost the chance to own it and have recounted elsewhere how it finally came into my possession. So, in addition to the fifteen Toof /Zahn Bindery bindings on Mosher imprints, I have to count these last two Toof bindings as part of the collection, with this outstanding binding on the Copy #1 being a masterpiece by Lorenz Schwartz of the Zahn Bindery. As such, it's the capstone of all the Zahn/Schwartz/Toof bindings in the collection. It's preeminently positioned as the diadem, the crown jewel of this particular sub-set of bindings, and its significant rank as being Copy #1 is a collector's dream. All together it's one super-sweet package. To mix metaphors and taking the risk of sounding a bit like a back-woods boaster, I feel like the mother hen who has found a way to protect her chicks under her wing. The chicks all belong represented under the aegis of this one fine expression of a binder's accomplishment.

As with the binding above which I described as the capstone, the diadem, or the crown jewel of the Toof/Zahn/Schwartz bindings in the Mosher Collection, I likewise selected the Launder of Bradstreet's binding on the *American Bookbindings in the Library of Henry William Poor* (1903). There are six glorious Club Bindery bindings on Mosher imprints in the Mosher Collection. Each and every one of them is a special treat to hold and examine. I have been very fortunate to have assembled these bindings in the collection, and the *American Bookbindings* title is particularly rich in representations from the Club Bindery. So for that reason alone it is worth having this binding and title in the Mosher Collection, but that doesn't cover all the reasons why I paid more to acquire this Launder binding than any other binding in the collection.

Of the thirty-nine exquisite full-page illustrations in this monumental book on bindings, one particular example stands out for me: it's the one-of-four copies of Mosher's *The Germ* (Mosher, 1898) bound at the Club Bindery pictured opposite p. 40 in the *American Bindings*. I've always been particularly attracted to this vellum-printed book because of its many "firsts" like the first book Mosher had printed on vellum; the first book printed on vellum in the state of Maine, the first Mosher and first American edition of the Pre-Raphaelite publication, *The Germ*. While I don't have Poor's copy now at the prestigious Huntington Library, I do have Mosher's own vellum copy (copy #4) later put into an exquisite binding by Leonard Mounteney. The vellum printing is as Dr. William E. Fredeman (the father of Pre-Raphaelite Studies in North America) once called it, the "black orchid" of Mosher's many distinctive publications and "a magnificent specimen of book production." So, to have one of the four copies, and to share that distinction with Henry William Poor and the Club Bindery is almost beyond words for me. Almost.

Additionally, several of the other Club bindings in the Mosher Collection were once owned by Henry William Poor, and one of them (Rossetti's *Poems* bound by the incomparable Léon Maillard) received the high praise of being shown at The Grolier Club's 1906 *An Exhibition of Some of the Latest Artistic Bindings done at The Club Bindery* (entry 115), and two others were part of the "Bound to be the Best—the Club Bindery" exhibition held at The Grolier Club in 2004 (entries 30 and 33 in the accompanying exhibition catalogue). The count goes on, however, in that the collection contains fifteen of Henry William Poor's copies of Mosher books printed on vellum, on Japan vellum, and regular copies as well, all bearing his bookplate. The collection also contains correspondence from Mosher to Poor, so Henry William Poor is well represented as being one of the foremost serious Mosher collectors. They had a long-standing bookseller/customer relationship besides being fellow members of The Grolier Club. Of course, it was to this prestigious book club that the book itself was dedicated—and to which I now belong as a member. So having a special copy of Poor's book on *American Bookbindings* in his library is all so very attractive. But there are even more reasons why it is appropriate to have this specially bound book in the collection.

One of the books bound by Launder at Bradstreet's is also pictured in the Poor book opposite p. 44. Just think of it, this special highly complicated binding on *American Bindings...* is bound by one of the book's proponents of fine artistic bindings in America. It also includes many of his fellow binders during this high point of American bookbinding, binders which are represented in the Mosher Collection. Furthermore, as previously mentioned, one of Mosher's imprints, *The Germ*, appears in the book bound at the premier bindery in New York. Just like that capstone of the Toof/Zahn Bindery, so this Launder binding holds a similar position overlording the other American bindings. To put a cherry on top, one of Otto Zahn's bindings is therein pictured, and Zahn's work holds a special place in the Bishop Collection. Jeff Stikeman, the collector who sold me the Launder/Bradstreet's binding, expressed some remorse in parting with it: "this one hurt, seeing it go. But it allowed me to add something I never could have otherwise, and what I ended up with is a better fit for my collection, just as this is a wonderful fit for yours. Happy that you are happy. It's going to the best place." Jeff's remarks are right on, but happiness is only one selection to my reactions.

In addition to selling exquisite illuminated manuscripts and book bindings over the years, one of the world's great experts on book bindings, Bernard H. Breslauer (1918-2004), assembled his own personal collection which was placed on exhibition in Brussels, Belgium. The catalogue of this exhibition is the *Historic & Artistic Bookbindings from the Bibliotheca Bibliographica Breslauriana* (Brussels: Bibliotheca Wittrockiana, 1986).



There are two Bradstreet's bookbinding entries, Nos. 41 and 44 (later sold by Christie's on 21 March 2005, entries 107 & 112). The first is a binding on Joseph W. Zaehnsdorf's *The Art of Bookbinding* (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1880, pp. 94-95) with the second being on William Matthews' *Modern Bookbinding Practically Considered. A Lecture before the Grolier Club*. (New York: The Grolier Club, 1889, pp. 100-101). Both are absolutely exemplary and show a pronounced superlative treatment of book cover design in

quadrants, but the Zaehnsdorf title is particularly relevant to the design of the present *American Bookbindings in the Library of Henry William Poor*.

There is a very close similarity between these two bindings including: (1) both are mosaic bindings, (2) both are on bookbinding subject matter, (3) the manner of treatment of the spine decoration which matches the style of the covers, (4) the patently obvious geometric quarter division of the cover design, (5) the use of single fillet tooling to create and frame the structure to the covers—admittedly far more elaborate on the *American Bookbindings*, (6) the use of measured and paired dots along gilt-tooled lines, and (7) wide gold-tooled turn-ins and light marbled paper liners and endleaves, much in the style of the Doves Bindery and that of Cobden-Sanderson himself in his own bindings (see Tidcombe's *The Bookbindings of T. J. Cobden-Sanderson* (1991) stating "he avoided leather or vellum doublures" (p. 38). It should also be noted that C-S's "earliest bindings have tipped-on endpapers, although these were apparently the norm at de Coverly's and in the trade in general"). This is the London world of bookbinding under which Launder was assiduously trained before coming to America, and so his use of paper pastedowns and endpapers rather than leather doublures was in keeping with his British heritage (although he also did employ decorated leather doublures on occasion). Above is a visual comparison. Both are handsome bindings, but in my perhaps biased assessment, the *American Bookbindings* is of a heightened complexity combining both art nouveau and a complex architectural design much like the underlayment of an elaborate arbor further complemented by the structured onlays of a purple apparatus and light tan onlays over which curvilinear vines, tendrils and leaves stand in contrast to the straight and exacting architectural design.

The description for the Breslauer exhibition catalogue perhaps adds to the comparison:

41 ZAEHNSDORF, JOSEPH W. *The Art of Bookbinding*. London, G. Bell & Sons, 1880. 8vo. Bound by Bradstreet's, New York, c. 1880: red morocco, sides closely inlaid to a design of leafy arabesques in green, mauve and tan morocco, interwoven with leafy tendrils which also fill the interstices, five bands on spine, two compartments lettered in gilt, the others inlaid and gilt in matching style, broad turn-ins gold-tooled, light marbled paper liners and endleaves, top edge gilt. Signed on upper turn-in BRADSTREET'S (205 by 135 mm).

Hardly anything can be discovered of the firm of Bradstreet's. Robert Hoe refers to him in his *Lecture on Bookbinding*, 1876 (see No 43), page 35: "One word for the art of bookbinding in our own country. All that has been, or is worthy of our consideration here is contemporary. We have three binders whose work is favorably known to American amateurs, viz.: Smith, Bradstreet and Matthews (father and son)". At the exhibition *Recent Bookbindings, 1860-1890*, at the Grolier Club, New York, 1891, one binding by "Bradstreet" (not Bradstreet's) was shown (No. 223). See also No. 44 of this catalogue.

Given the similarities between the Breslauer example and the example of *American Bookbindings...*, the date of its completion might have been accomplished closer to ca. 1903 or thereabouts rather than 1880 for *The Art of Bookbinding*; however, it may also be the case that the similarity may be due to a consistency in design over the twenty years.

One added note here is appropriate. In that same Breslauer exhibition the William Matthews' *Modern Bookbinding Practically Considered* briefly mentioned above had very complicated mosaic leather doublures, and when this book came up for auction at Christies in 2005 (first portion, March 21), only the intricate doublure was pictured in the auction catalogue. It does show that Launder of Bradstreet's was fully capable of adding beautiful and quite fascinating doublures. In the third portion of the Christies sale (27/28 June) two Jansenist Bradstreet's bindings appeared: Henry Pène du Bois' *Historical Essay on the Art of Bookbinding*. New York, Bradstreet Press, 1883 (entry 1340, with decorated leather doublures) and Brander Matthews' *Bookbindings Old and New. Notes of a Booklover....* New York & London: Macmillan & Co., 1895 (entry 1407, with decorated turn-ins and watered silk endpapers). All these examples of Bradstreet's bindery are on books on bookbinding, and all differ in their treatment of the way the

inner boards are adorned. Three of them do not appear at book auction or in dealer catalogues until the 2005 Breslauer sale (with the *American Bookbindings* in Bradstreet's binding never appearing at auction). Might this suggest that Launder was assembling bindings on bookbinding literature either for himself or for the bindery, or perhaps they were bound for an exhibition or for a publication but never making said appearance. Were these kept and handed down by the family, and only appeared when Breslauer (in 1986 & same binding in 2005), or as you will see later on, by another dealer, William Pinkney (also around 1985/86).

On the way to getting the Bradstreet's binding

Happiness only touches upon my feelings with regard to securing this binding. I remember when I first saw the Bradstreet's binding pictured as an attachment to an email received from Jeff Stikeman. I was stunned. Simply petrified as though I had just seen the gorgon Medusa's head. Transfixed. Couldn't take my eyes off that which was turning me to stone. Such beauty flowering from such an intricate design of high technical merit, and on a book I've always highly admired for both its wonderful color and gilt lined images, as well as it's connection to both Mosher and one of his top four customers, Henry William Poor. Once I was able to break through this ossified state and able to function after emerging from the ensuing swirl of emotions caused by this image, I fired off an email on Nov. 11, 2022 saying to Jeff:

Say, you did show me that Bradstreet binding on *AMERICAN BOOKBINDINGS IN THE LIBRARY OF HENRY WILLIAM POOR*. That was quite the acquisition about which I'll say one thing here. If you ever need funds to purchase a Stikeman whale, I'd be pleased if you'd offer me first right of refusal to that Bradstreet binding. Inside there is a Bierstadt illustration of a Club binding on Mosher's edition of *THE GERM*. Of course, I have a fine example of the Stikeman-produced cloth cover version, but I wouldn't mind having the finely bound Bradstreet to complement it in the Mosher collection (oh the lengths to which we are willing to go). Anyway, I'd like to buy it from you if/when you might be trying to scare up some funds to buy a really great Stikeman binding. Enough said.

That's where matters rested. Then on December 22, 2022 a posting of the binding appeared on Instagram which again transfixed my gaze, and along with the eighteen more or less effusive compliments Jeff received, I only responded to the Instagram post, "Well, you know where I stand on this [three applause marks]" A few more months rolled by and again the binding came up for discussion between the two of us. It was toward the end of March and Jeff contacted me asking if he remembered correctly that I had expressed interest in acquiring the binding. Apparently, my previous exchanges with him were only enough to cast the faint residue of memory, but faint or not, he did contact me. He was preparing to work out a trade or sale of the binding involving at least two potential buyers, and he wanted to know if I was still in the mix. Both Jeff's potential purchasers were being contacted and he'd have to see if there was either a trade for what I presume was an important Stikeman binding (that's what he collects) or if the person who originally traded for the Bradstreet's binding wanted to have Jeff sell it back to him as they tentatively arranged. Both these collectors remained anonymous to me. The important thing though was that the game was afoot.

On April 4 we had what I might call an intense phone conversation following an exchange of messages. It looked like matters were truly coming to a head. Things were in flux, and he was trying to work out a three-way deal with some complications. But it looked like I was going to lose out. "I think my seller is back ON. Trying to get a firm number. I steered him away from part trade part cash. Too much to ask. / I got your email. Much appreciated. Sorry for the back and forth. Stay tuned! / But I believe he will do a deal now. Just need to nail him down on a number." I told Jeff what I was willing to pay, but the possible deal for what he wanted still seemed to be the way he'd go. The possibility of ownership was slipping away.

Surprisingly, I mean almost miraculously, the negotiations somehow didn't pan out. Apparently, the seller/buyer unilaterally pulled out of the negotiation. Following my phone conversation with Jeff, I stewed a bit and mulled things over, and then fired off an email asking were matters stood with his negotiations. It was then that I put all my marbles on the table. I told him what I was willing to pay thinking that might further influence his deliberations. He still didn't accede and so that's where matters stood.

A short while later Jeff made a counter offer and said "if you can do XY&Z I can send the book along to you." I was amazed. Really? Jeff sent me more photos of the book, answered a further query about its condition, and said he'd send the book for final examination and approval after which I could send him a check. No rush. But that too changed and all of the sudden there was a need for the funds, so I sent the check by overnight post. Everything from that point forward went smoothly. The next day I had the book in hand, and the day after Jeff had the funds. So ended the rollercoaster ride, and ended the latest in the modern line of ownership of this treasured book with whatever details I was able to muster given below:

Notes on early provenance:

Nothing, I mean absolutely nothing has been gleaned through various searches including on the Rare Book HUB's extensive auction records, Google book searches, research at The Grolier Club, looking over back issues of *The Book-Lover* and *The Literary Collector* where bindings were sometimes pictured. Past owners of Bradstreet's bindings, some of which were most certainly executed by Alfred William Launder, have all express exasperation over the paucity of information on the bindery and on Launder himself, except for the work he did while in the employ of the Metropolitan Museum of Art (starting in 1929 at age 62) after he left Bradstreet's. As I previously mentioned, I think a critical "change of hands" took place sometime in the middle 1980's when Breslauer acquired the three aforementioned, and Thomas G. Boss acquired the *American Bookbindings* volume from ABAA dealer, William Pinkney. Both Breslauer and Pinkney are no longer among us, and the secret of where the bindings had been hiding perhaps went along with them as well. It may be that Pinkney was the supplier of the bindings for both Breslauer and Boss, but what was Pinkney's source? The original source still remains unknown, and all we can rely upon are the more recent notes of provenance which I give below.

Notes on recent provenance:

- Offered for sale in the 1980's by long-time ABAA dealer William Pinkney III
- Bought by Thomas G. Boss in the 1980's
- Thomas G. Boss sold to Ed Nudelman of Nudelman Rare Books
- Bought by David Kolstad from Nudelman Rare Books (on-line cat. 43, 2019)
- Traded as part of a trade deal to Jeff Stikeman in 2022
- Sold by Stikeman to Philip R. Bishop for the Mosher Books Collection, 2023

Early Notes & Assessments from Jeff Stikeman

The following notes were posted by Stikeman on a social platform soon after he acquired the binding in 2022. Although subsequently taken down off the Internet, I retained the listing and with his permission have reposted it here. I found his reflections entertaining and informative which is why I print it here, but readers must realize that his comments were made informally, and the replies and comments were from anonymous posters:

"I used to post here years ago, but there was only one other person who really collected fine bindings.

These things were the Ferraris of their day. Entirely hand-built, custom, by a team of highly skilled people, and executed at a level that is just no longer possible. This

binding probably took more than a month to finish (tool and add mosaic leather onlays or inlays).

The content itself, American Bookbindings in the Library of Henry William Poor is notable for the very early gelatin color photograph reproductions by Bierstadt, using a single plate for each color and an additional one for actual gold leaf. Some had as many as seven plates.

Poor (of Standard and Poor's publishing) was enormously wealthy. He commissioned bindings by the best American binders, virtually all of whom were in a few block radius in New York City. When his fortune crashed, he auctioned everything, and most of the bindings are now at the Huntington Library.

Of all my bindings (a couple/few dozen), this is about the only one whose provenance I can't establish, which is pretty unusual given its level of execution. Current thoughts are that it may be an example of Bradstreet's own work (kept in-house), or perhaps a special exhibition binding. There's a shelf mark label, but the Avery adhesive labels weren't invented until 1935 or so, so the shelf mark post dates the binding by three decades easily. I know the last four owners. This was in a private collection for a couple decades before it landed on the market, quickly sold, and then I managed to get it by trade.

EDIT: (copied from the dealer's listing a couple years ago) "#160 of 200 Copies on Handmade Paper, Signed by Henry W. Poor. The most important book on American bookbinding published, a stunning example of color reproduction, containing dozens of covers of fine bindings from notable firms such as Club Bindery, Matthews, Smith, etc., in vibrant and true colors. The book itself is quite scarce and rarely found in nice condition. Housed in contemporary brown cloth slipcase Mindell Dubansky, (of The Metropolitan Museum) pictures a similar Launder binding in her article, "A Well-Bound Book Mocks at Time: The Legacy of Alfred William Launder," but ours more ornate and magnificent, one of only a very few of the highest caliber of Launder's work. Dubansky writes, "In 1899 or 1890, Launder was hired as a finisher at Bradstreet's, a small fine bindery that was part of the larger reference-book publishing firm of the same name. The little bindery, located on Elm Street in Lower Manhattan, produced deluxe bindings for rare book and manuscript collectors, including J. Pierpont Morgan and Henry W. Poor. Prior to his work at the [Met] Museum, Launder, a Londoner, had been a lifelong fine binder and finisher who had achieved the highest level in his trade. As a finisher, he was exclusively responsible for the design and decoration of bindings, including the decorative leather onlays, inlays, and gold tooling. Launder came from a family of bookbinders, and as a young man he apprenticed in his father's shop before later working for the Mansell Bindery, an old and prominent London bindery/stationer."

Thanks. Would show it to you when you arrive for the fair, but I am not passing this one around the table. Hahaha (note to peeps: This is the only person on the sub who ever seemed to be interested in bindings. Knows more than anyone I know about fine bindings in general, fine press, and that entire milieu.)

This one is a little more personal in style than the period normally produced. The typical approach was somewhat more historicist. Design was driven by clients in some cases as much as it might be by designers/finishers. Some binders were a little more experimental by nature.

This portion of an exhibit at Princeton hits the sweet spot of American/French/English bindings of the period. Launder or Bradstreet's (the binder of the binding I posted) isn't actually represented here. But the others are all of the same caliber. The Club Bindery probably the highest achievement technically in the US. Their design very historic though less experimental. Otto Zahn gets a mention, as does the binder I collect, although the example here is just on the cusp and somewhat later in date than I collect.

[reaction from a reader] Gorgeous! Never seen anything like it!

He's pretty good, right?! (Edit: by pretty good I mean great!) Launder had a stylized way about him later on. Most collectors of the era started out wanting what they knew, which was historical bindings. So for about the first ten years he was here (1890-1900) I think his work at Bradstreet's was also historical. But this and others of his show a really experimental personality.

I refer to this as somewhat 'Eastlake' in aesthetic [a Victorian architectural style of the "Aesthetic Movement"], but that's a term I use and I don't think anyone else does. Ha. For more on Launder, there's a well done article by Mindell Dubansky.

[reaction from a reader] I love fine bindings, though it isn't my area of focus (I have one Gruel, but that's it). You have a beautiful example there! Would love to see some still photos of it sometime."

Jeff Stikeman's further, more polished reactions to the binding as posted on Instagram

On December 22, 2022, Jeff posted ten pictures of the binding and offered his reflections. There were also a number of people who responded with their comments. These are all given below:

"American mosaics are among the rarest of bindings. And this may rank among the better ones. But no, must confess, this one's not by Henry Stikeman, although it **does** carry related content. It's the seminal 'Catalogue of American Bookbindings in the Collection of Henry William Poor'. You can't call yourself a collector of American bindings if you don't have a copy. And you may as well have the best.

This one is bound by Bradstreet's Bindery, or is at least signed that way. In truth, it was done by Alfred Launder.

The binding (likely) and edition date from 1903. It's so elaborate, we have to ask (and hope to solve) who commissioned it? Consensus seems to be, it must have been done by Launder as a spec binding, probably for an exhibition. More on that in a second comment (which has become my 'thang').

Launder was English, and arrived in NY early 1890, where he was the designer/finisher at Bradstreet's, pretty much the only other NY bindery of note at the time beside Stikeman. Launder elevated their reputation considerably.

His work at Bradstreet's first appeared that same year in the Grolier Club's Christmas Eve 1890 exhibition of 'Recent American Bookbindings 1860-1890.' It was the same exhibition in which Henry Stikeman's work first appeared under his own name.

The book is a catalogue of a number of bindings in Poor's collection, among them a Stikeman binding, cover and doublure (inner cover). Bierstadt's color plates are among the earlier experiments in color photo reproduction.

Last, the original publisher's cloth binding, and its spine, are bound in. That edition was bound by (unsigned) Stikeman & Co.

OK, so, who commissioned it? Right now my best guess is that it was done by Launder while at Bradstreet's for one of the annual bookbinding exhibitions, Scribner's or Bonaventure's (which in truth were the same exhibition, moved between the two venues).

If it were commissioned, it would have been quite an expensive binding. And anyone capable of paying for it would have been capable of following through, and having the inner boards (covers) done in leather and handled with a level of attention commensurate with the exterior.

It really seems strategic: an extravagant mosaic on a must-have title for any aspiring collector. Offered for sale after the exhibition (as was the case with the Scribner's and Bonaventure's exhibitions, always held conveniently before Christmas. Appropriate!

I have a copy of this on the rare Japan vellum, copy no. 10 actually. That one is in the blue ribbed cloth, an edition binding done by Stikeman. But I'm no fool. This Launder binding is the better book. No reason I can't have two copies. It's a poor (no pun intended) book collector who only has 'one' copy of a book."

[This posting drew 242 "likes" with the following stated reactions to Stikeman's post, along with their monikers]:

- Well, you know where I stand on this. – philipbishop3134
- Sublime! Thank you for sharing this binding. – dimitris_bookbinding_corner
- Stunning details. – huhubookbinder
- That's the most beautiful Bradstreet's binding I've seen... at least judging by their more basic work in our collection. Clearly I need to start diving deeper to see what, if anything, we have. – bookishjohn [Pierpont Morgan Library]
- Wowww!! This is something else – papelytinta.nanoi
- Wow – karenmcquirebookbinder
- I'm in awe – pendantpaper
- @mindelldubansky – faenwyl
- Love those heart-shaped leaves, they contribute much to the boards looking so three-dimensional – slightlyfoxedbooks
- I won't ever tire of seeing this one. Wow!! A title I have come close to purchasing several times... what a gorgeous binding! Only Bradstreet I own is a beautiful custom made box that used to house a Kelmscott Chaucer one upon a time – tannerbookcollection
- Wonderful bindings! – sahhaflar_orientshop
- [love emoji] – Thomas_boichot
- @arte.encuadernaciones – carlosayer

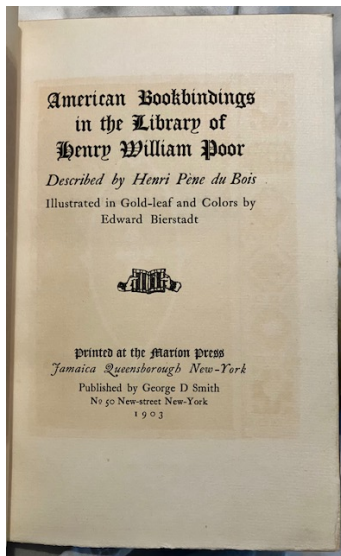
The aforementioned reactions are followed by comments and reactions on my own posting on Instagram and on Face-book after I received the binding from Jeff Stikeman. There were of total of 530 "likes" and the following comments:

- In a class of its own [and] I would love to see a stage by stage video of this binding. It's extraordinary. – acornmoonart
- A truly grand example of the binder's art. Congrats on this newest acquisition. – kbakerbooks
- Absolutely amazing, Phil!!! Wow!! [along with a "Lord help me with this one" picture GIF] – Arno Gschwendtner [and] That's just incredible - markblunt
- Nice binding and fascinating title too!! There were even 3 copies of this book printed on vellum, but their binding is not that elaborate – Marco Ivan Aranda Sánchez
- I had this book/binding, once! It's a stunner. – Ed Nudelman
- Wonderful! – William Joy [and] WOW! - pendantpaper
- Such beautiful details. – Rebecca Bingham [and] Awesome – author_zeno_rem
- Stunning! [and] Stunning craftsmanship! – Stewart Plein
- That is another marvelous piece, but you continually show us some magnificent examples of the art of binding. I cannot help but contrast you striving to identify the provenance of the item, and the common misconception the people, who unaware of the complexities of the whole book publishing and collecting world, when they assume we can look at a shelf full of spines, of less than ideal detail, and tell them what they have. Yet here it is, and you, as an expert in the field, and you are left with questions. – Allan Lanman
- Unique to me. Rdw – [R. David Weaver]
- Beautiful indeed [and] I have seen a Doves binding here in Toronto. Very nice craftsmanship indeed. – Robert Wu
- Structure, structure, structure. Architectural. More than just a competent binding performance. Perhaps one of the finest Bradstreet's bindings extant. Like the Doves Bindery and Cobden-Sanderson himself, no fancy leather doublures. Doesn't need them. Complete in and of itself. – Philip Bishop
- Magnificent Philip. – Stephen Green
- Another wonder! – Dennis Melhouse

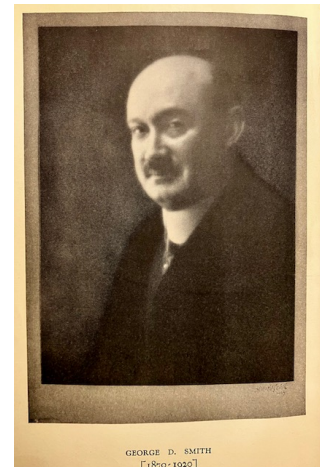
- Gorgeous. Thanks for sharing... – Irene Paverse
- Gorgeous! It would be fascinating if it were covering a telephone directory, but given the subject matter makes it doubly so... – Allan Lanman
- Henry Poor had a beautiful collection of fine bindings. In 1903 Edward Bierstadt put together a bibliography of Poor's binding, which itself is a significant collecting rarity. – Gerry Slater
- An astonishingly beautiful binding. Looking forward to seeing and reading as much about it as possible Thank you for sharing! – Dimitris_bookbinding_corner
- This is such a wonderful binding. – literarygem
- Such a beautiful book! Love that he was also a conservator—that is amazing. I can't wait to read your article when it is posted! Hopefully I will be able to see this beauty in person one day – domoniquealesi
- What an absolute astonishing, flabbergasting work...! – enveloppedutemps
- Amazing! – rust.robert [and] In a class of its own – acornmoonart [and] fabulous! - sbishcat
- [Three sets of hands applauding] - underthehillbooks
- Beautiful – raretome [and] Awesome – DM @thewriterswarmth

Some concluding remarks, observations, and questions

Here are some of my reactions including the following notes, tentative conclusions, and questions still outstanding. The binding obviously captured my attention and monopolized my time in trying to gather together some of the more interesting points and reflections about it.



One thing that is omitted from the description about the book is information on the publisher who was none other than George D. Smith (1870-1920), who for decades reigned as “the czar of the American Book trade” (Madelaine B. Stern in her *Antiquarian Bookselling in the United States*), a sobriquet later roughly transferred to A.



S. W. Rosenbach. Smith was Henry Huntington's chief auction buyer and advisor, and purchased nearly a third of Poor's collection for Huntington (Dickinson. *Dict. Amer. Book Collectors*). In this instance he was wearing his publisher's hat. He also published *The Literary Collector* where a three-page overview of the book, presumably by the editor Frederick C. Bursch, appears on pp. 12-14 of the November 1903 issue. Of course, it's probably an interesting story as to how it came

about that Smith published the book, but I have not uncovered background information in this regard.

I have also found it interesting that one of the art bindings done by the Club Bindery (see “Copy C” at the beginning of this article) may have been from Poor's library, but there is no record of it in the 1908-09 auction catalogues of his library. It does appear in the 1906 *Latest Artistic Bindings...*, and many of those books were owned by H. W. Poor, but there is no conclusive ownership information. If that was indeed his copy, he may have taken it for personal keeping, but there is no record of this binding that I've been able to uncover. Incidentally, there were at least 246 bindings from the Club Bindery, and at least 245 bindings by Bradstreet's in Poor's library. The parity is notable.

The reactions I included from social media were basically an afterthought, but it seemed like a “why not” in that the information was right there to be had and all I had to do is capture it “for the record” so to speak. More important, however, are the comments from Jeff Stikeman which cover a lot of ground and which come up with a number of suggestions as to why this binding never seems to have circulated among

auction houses, including being done for an annual exhibition. Was it owned by the binder and his own collection of books on bookbinding. For inclusion in a publication? One thing is for sure, information on the binding and reason for its creation is quite elusive, and one can understand why the Breslauer catalogues repeatedly say "Hardly anything can be discovered of the firm of Bradstreet's." It's also interesting to note that I found only a few fine bindings put on *American Bookbindings*... Perhaps binders were intimidated by the quality of the bindings represented? Who knows for sure, but Alfred W. Launder of Bradstreet's certainly stepped up to the plate and accepted the unspoken challenge, and I'm honored to have his well-considered and accomplished answer.

As far as the imprint itself, with the 39 quite exquisite color and gold images, I see its publication as a printing tour de force, not only because of the plates, but for its coverage of this remarkable time period in American bookbinding from the 1880's to the first part of the twentieth century. Beyond this there isn't any extensive treatment surveying this period of the flowering of American art bookbinding. The most coverage, albeit of only one bindery and its successors, is the treatment afforded the Club Bindery which certainly lives up to the exhibition and accompanying catalogue, *Bound to be the Best: The Club Bindery*. Catalogue of an Exhibition at the Grolier Club by Thomas G. Boss with an Essay by Martin Antonetti (Boston: Thomas G. Boss Fine Books, 2004). One of my two copies of this hard-bound catalogue is inscribed: *For The Prince of Mosher | Collectors Philip Bishop | from his friend | Tom Boss | The first inscribed | copy 1 September 2004.*" The other copy is part of the deluxe issue of the catalogue with extra binding photos and ephemera all housed in a cloth clamshell case. Jeff Stikeman has a detailed website devoted to his binder-ancestor, Henry Stikeman, and then there is Paul McKenna's work on *Louis Herman Kinder and Fine Bookbinding in America* (Bird & Bull Press, 1895). Again, both of these basically covering only one binder/bindery. There is also a DVD (116 pages) called "Bio-Bibliographical List of Individual Bookbinders" published in Vol. 2 in the *Suave Mechanicals* series (no pictures). The rest is scattered throughout chapters in books (like my illustrated chapter "Bindings and Illuminated Copies of the Mosher Books" in *Thomas Bird Mosher—Pirate Prince of publishers* [1998]), essays and articles by contemporaries like Elbert A. Thompson, Lawrence S. Thompson, and W. G. Bowdoin, but to date nothing extensive, both detailing them and photo-illustrating examples of their production, covers the many binders and binderies operating across the U.S. during this time period. I should also mention the illustrated catalogues by Phillip J. Pirages Fine Books & Manuscripts and Nudelman Rare Books, both whom have proffered a wide selection of American art bindings over the years.

APPENDIX I & II

I know, this paper seems to be an interminable presentation of facts and minutiae, but I decided to bring everything I have found on the binding and the imprint. Now, I have taken things yet one step further.

I have been so pleased with the Bradstreet's/Launder binding and the mystery surrounding its ownership, and so intrigued by the book on *American Bookbindings* in the Poor Library, that I decided I'd bring another special copy into the collection. The copy in the Launder binding is signed by Henry William Poor which gives me a connection to the man who formed such a magnificent collection of bindings, but I really wanted a nice association copy inscribed by Poor. What I wanted, I got. The following is an inscribed copy brought back from my vacation in the Berkshires:

Pène du Bois, Henri. *AMERICAN BOOKBINDINGS IN THE LIBRARY OF HENRY WILLIAM POOR*. Illustrated in Gold-Leaf and Colors by Edward Bierstadt. Jamaica, New York: George D. Smith (printed at The Marion Press), 1903. First and only edition. 8vo., original pale-green ribbed cloth with decorative device gilt-stamped on the front cover; spine lettered in gold, bound by the Stikeman firm. 77 pp. + 39

beautifully printed plates using the Bierstadt process. Top edge uniformly trimmed; fore and bottom edges untrimmed. Copy No. 53 of 238 copies (#1-3 on vellum, #4-38 on Japan vellum, #39-238 on Holland hand-made paper). Inscribed by Henry William Poor (1844-1915), whose library is herein represented, to the artist, Francis Davis Millet (1848-1912).

Contents: The most important book on American bookbinding published at the time, or perhaps at any time since. A stunning example of color reproduction, containing thirty-nine covers of fine bindings in vibrant and true colors and shimmering gold from notable firms such as the Club Bindery, William Matthews, Nicholson, Smith, Otto Zahn, Alfred Matthews, Bradstreet's, Stikeman, Curtis Walters, and others of equal caliber. ❖ In 1908 the Anderson Auction Company of New York called this book "The most sumptuously printed and illustrated work on Bookbindings ever produced in America." ("Rare and Fine Books including a Portion of the Library of Chas Belden van Nostrand / New York City", Feb. 13 & 14, 1908, Source Record Number 6 32-13). ❖ In another Anderson Auction sale in 1908, Anderson Auction Co. called it "the most beautiful book of its kind ever issued in America" (656-64). ❖ For the Preston A. Perry sale, AAC said of it, "the Illustrations are remarkably well done, and represent some of the finest work in binding done in this country" (658-307). ❖ "The plates are in colors and gold, by the Bierstadt process... More faithful reproductions of book bindings have never been made. The colors and textures of the leathers are perfectly given by the impression from glass plates, while the gold tooling is carried out in applied gold leaf. The effect is so rich and true to the original materials that one gets fully as satisfactory a view of the bindings as if the originals were seen in glass exhibition cases." Another 1908 catalogue says "The plates are probably the most beautiful and accurate reproductions of bindings ever made, each having been stamped in gold leaf from brass dies." *The Literary Collector-An Illustrated Monthly Magazine of Book-Lore and Bibliography*. Vol. VII, Nov. 1903-April 1904. Greenwich, CT & New York: The Literary Collector Press, pp. 12-13. ❖ Finally, "This binding [Bradstreet's] is on a book that shows fine bindings like no other book before or after it has."—Pradeep Sebastian, author of *The Book Beautiful—A Memoir of Collecting Rare and Fine Books* (2023), *The Book Hunters of Katpadi* (2017) and *The Groaning Shelf and Other Instances of Book Love* (2010).

Inscription: Presented by the New York banker, stockbroker, investor, book collector, and author, Henry William Poor (1844-1915), was a noted collector and patron of the arts. "Mr. Poor is a man of refined and scholarly tastes and prominent in the social life of the city. He is an ardent student and a great lover of books and has, by careful and gradual accumulation, collected one of the finest private libraries in the city of New York." — Henry Hall, ed. *America's Successful Men of Affairs*, pp. 512-3, *The New York Tribune*, 1895-96. Regrettably he went broke in 1908, and his library and bindings had to be sold in 1908-09. The book's inscription reads:

To Frank D Millet | with the warmest regards of | Henry W. Poor | New York | Dec. 4, 1903

Millet was a sculptor, painter, muralist, author, a famed war correspondent and traveler. Among his many memberships and associations, he served as a trustee of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, as an advisor to the National Gallery of Art, and as one of the founders of the School of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. He certainly would have had ample opportunity to meet with Henry William Poor in New York, especially given Poor's patronage of the arts and their shared interest in design. His friendships included such personages as John Singer Sargent, Mark Twain, the sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens, and P. T. Barnum. Although married in 1879 and eventually siring three children, in 1875 Millet formed close companionship with the author, Charles Warren Stoddard in Italy. Their rather risqué correspondence with one another (now at Syracuse University) continued until Stoddard's death in 1909. Another close companion was Major Archibald Butt, a military aide to both Teddy Roosevelt and William Howard Taft. Butts and Millet lived together in Washington, D. C. and were known to host lavish parties, and both men were together on the Titanic sailing for New York and met with their fate on April 15, 1912 as recorded in the *Encyclopedia Titanica*. Millet was last seen helping women and children into lifeboats. His body was recovered, but that of Major Butt's was never recovered. It is believed that they were the only two U. S. officials who perished aboard the ship, and a memorial fountain which still exists today on the Ellipse, just south of the White House. The monument was erected by their friends with the sanction of Congress.

The dealer from whom I bought this exceptional copy basically promoted it first and foremost as a *Titanic* victim item. Understandable in that *Titanic* related artifacts or material related to those who perished and quite desirable in today's market. My interest, however, is in the exchange between the two men, one whose library and bindings formed the basis of the book, and the other being an important recipient. Here was more than just the Poor signature. It was evidence of Poor's inscribing copies of the very book which showcased such lovely bindings, many of which he commissioned himself. Given that Poor was also one of Thomas Bird Mosher's best customers and fellow Grolier Club member, well... that makes this copy of the book that much more precious to me. Imagine, a few years after the book was inscribed Henry William Poor would suffer a kind of "book collector's death" in that he had to liquidate his library and all those wonderful bindings in 1908/09. Frances Millet would tragically lose his life in 1912 as the *Titanic* went down, and in 1915 Poor would also be dead.

Francis Davis Millet



Henry William Poor

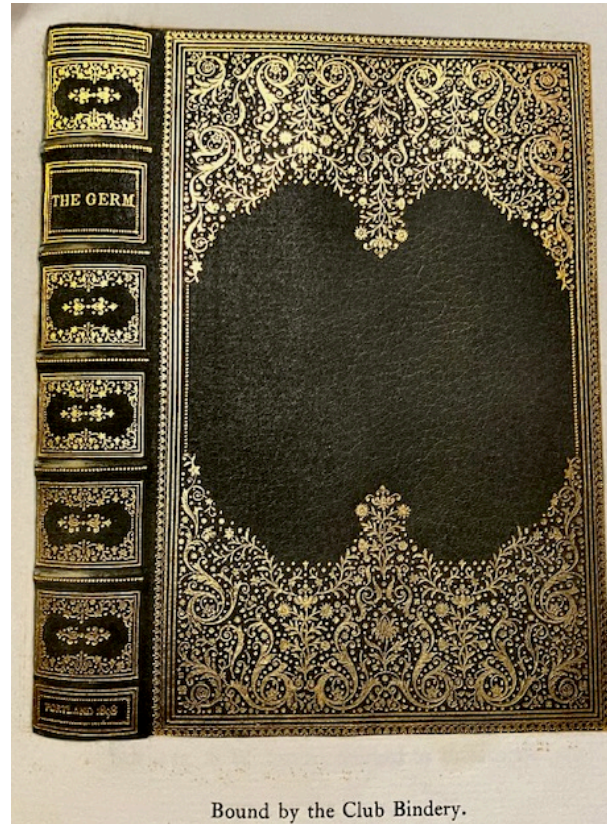
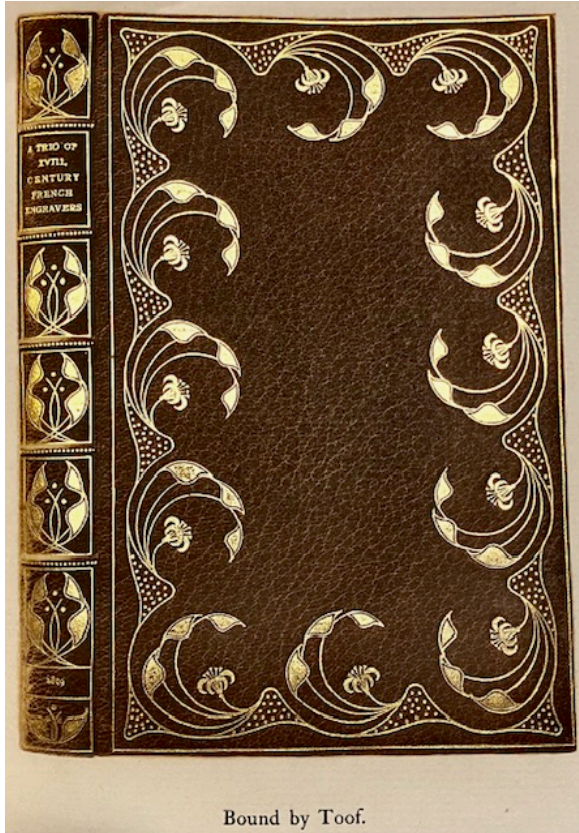


Inscription on the front flyleaf

To Frank D. Millet
with the warmest regards
Henry W. Poor
New York
Dec 4th
1906

A photograph of a handwritten inscription on a flyleaf. The text is written in cursive ink on a light-colored, textured paper. The inscription reads: "To Frank D. Millet", "with the warmest regards", "Henry W. Poor", "New York", "Dec 4th", and "1906".

A couple bindings pictured in *American Bookbindings...*
one from the Toof Bindery/Otto Zahn and another from the Club Bindery on a Mosher imprint.



Have I made too much of a fuss over this inscribed copy and the copy in the Bradstreet's binding? Perhaps, but I guess that's the prerogative of the book collector to exhibit his or her own form of this disease we call bibliomania.

APPENDIX II

I sent this Bradstreet's binding article to a couple people for their reaction and this is the response I received from the books-on-books author Pradeep Sebastian. With such a review and praise, I just had to include it with the paper and so I print it here in full here as "Addendum II" with his approval:

Phil, your latest acquisition story has quickly become a top contender for my most favorite Mosher collecting tale. Not, I hasten to add, because of your bibliophilic collegiality in including my remarks in the narrative (flattered and honored by it as I am) but really because this story is finally about a non-Mosher book that I too own a humble copy of (in a quarter leather-marbled board binding) and have venerated as the most beautiful book in my collection. Plus, this new article is studded with familiar and exciting bibliophilic references:

William Loring Andrews, Hoe, Smith, Morgan, the Grolier Club, the Club Bindery, Zahn, Poor, Breslauer and of course the 'treasured' *American Book Bindings in the Library of Henry William Poor* and its gold leaf Bierstadt plates.

'Why This Binding Was Selected for the Mosher Collection' and 'On the Way to Getting the Bradstreet's Binding' are sumptuous accounts of a collector talking about a new acquisition, made more enjoyable and thrilling for the build-up of details. The various appendices that follow - provenance, descriptions of the Launder binding by various people, including Instagram/Facebook responses, and your own feelings, remarks and painstaking cataloguing of this exquisite binding - all make up a rich bonus to this feast of a collecting tale.

I have always been at a loss to talk or write about *American Book Bindings in the Library of Henry William Poor* because of how rapturous I get about it. My own collecting memoir, *The Book Beautiful*, would have been the ideal place to have had a chapter on it, but I found I did not have the words to describe how bewitching the color and gold plates look and *feel* in the book. Now thanks to the various journals and bibliophiles you quote on the book, I can at last savor hearing other more knowledgeable dealers and collectors speak expertly about why it is so special. I cannot imagine how you wrote this article - if I with a middling copy of this finest of book productions found myself too overwhelmed by it - how did you with what is possibly the *most beautiful copy* of *American Book Bindings in the Library of Henry William Poor* out there sit down to write about it.....

But you have - and how! You did not spare us - or yourself - any of the intricacies or byways that attach themselves to this storied acquisition, from the broad strokes of your first sighting of it to the finer minutiae that layers this article. "Introducing a Bradstreet Binding" is worthy of the beautiful binding it features; both, for the words you clothe it with and for the superb photos that display the Launder binding with other handsome related bindings that showcase the work of fine binders from that period.

Lastly, may I say how glad I am that there have been deviations to the 'collecting rule' with a burgeoning sub-sub collection of not Mosher imprints in decorated leather bindings, starting with the Japan vellum copy number 1 of Zahn's *On Art Binding* from the hand of Lorenz Schwartz to the Alfred William Launder marvel now. No one else in the bibliosphere- and I mean *no one* - but you could have done justice to this 'treasured book' and its technically masterful binding. As the book's former owner, Jeff Stikeman, said when letting go of this copy to you, "It's going to the best place." And it will now, after having wandered for over a century, stay put here in the Bishop-Mosher collection, having at last found not just a fitting, worthy home but companionship, too, as it shares shelf space with your row of gorgeous Mosher books in fine decorated bindings.

Pradeep

—Pradeep Sebastian, author of *The Book Beautiful—A Memoir of Collecting Rare and Fine Books* (2023), *The Book Hunters of Katpadi* (2017) and *The Groaning Shelf and Other Instances of Book Love* (2010). He's currently working on his next book, tentatively titled: *The Secret Bookshop & Other Tales for Bibliophiles*.