

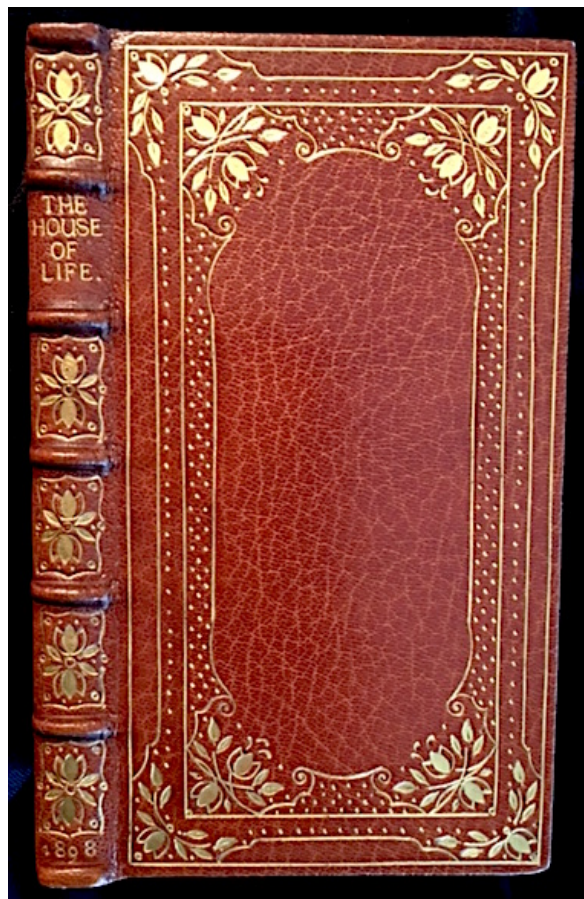
## From Florence Foote, to the Misses Kendall, to Peter Verberg: Some Bindings of Note

The Mosher Collection has hundreds of *The Mosher Books* in fine, three-quarter or full leather bindings exhibiting how his publications became a staple of many an American bookbinder's diet. Meaningful literary content wedded to a handsome text block, quality paper, at an inexpensive price, were all factors in the felicitous merger of book with hand binding. Many overseas binders felt so too, but the Americans are closest to my heart and I've always strived to acquire examples, like these shown.

### Florence Foote:

It was the end of September 2015 and I'd been garnering a number of 'small peanuts' purchases for the Mosher Collection when I received an email from a fellow collector in Massachusetts. He had been looking over his shelves and decided to pull one of his bindings which happened to be on a Mosher imprint: Dante Gabrielle Rossetti's *The House of Life—A Sonnet-Sequence* (Mosher, 1898). The binding has been in his collection for the past 20 years. The price to me was stiff, and I had a few days to mull it over. I saw some pictures and still remained on the fence until I finally decided to take the plunge. "Sure, why not." After all, it did have a decided "Doves Bindery" look about it and he did say it was by Florence Foote. I already had a small FF binding, but this one being offered was pretty elaborate, even though it had some drawbacks in tooling, like the long curvilinear gouges used at the four corners of the cover's inner frame which were not precisely positioned. I still liked the overall appearance of the binding. He actually thought I wouldn't take it at the price he was asking, and he might have been correct except for the fact that I really do appreciate the books done by Cobden-Sanderson's students and maybe I could find something on it in the 'literature' on bookbinding in America. First things first though. He would send it on approval.

Upon receipt and taking a closer look, I decided it probably was a keeper and then began looking into whether or not the binding was recorded anywhere. I emailed the owner and told him a check was in the mail, and then I really took time to search for any clues on this binding's background. The time and research was rewarded! The binding was indeed done by Florence Foote shortly after she returned to America after training at the Doves Bindery under Cobden-Sanderson. Foote had been a close friend and pupil of Evelyn Nordhoff (who previously trained at the Doves Bindery) and studied binding at Nordhoff's studio at 39 Washington Square in New York until Nordhoff's tragic death in November 1898, followed by the memorial formation of the Evelyn Nordhoff Bindery and Binding School of which Florence Foote was named director. She trained at the Doves Bindery in 1899 and returned to the Nordhoff Bindery to resume her leadership as head of the bindery which reopened on 42<sup>nd</sup> Street and took on as many as ten pupils.<sup>(1)</sup> So far as I can tell, the first appearances of this binding was in *The Independent* where—and this is where the story gets good—it's pictured in the New York weekly publication, *The Independent* (Dec. 13, 1900, p. 2965) within the article "Art in American Book-Bindings" by W. G. Bowdoin. The caption under the book reads:





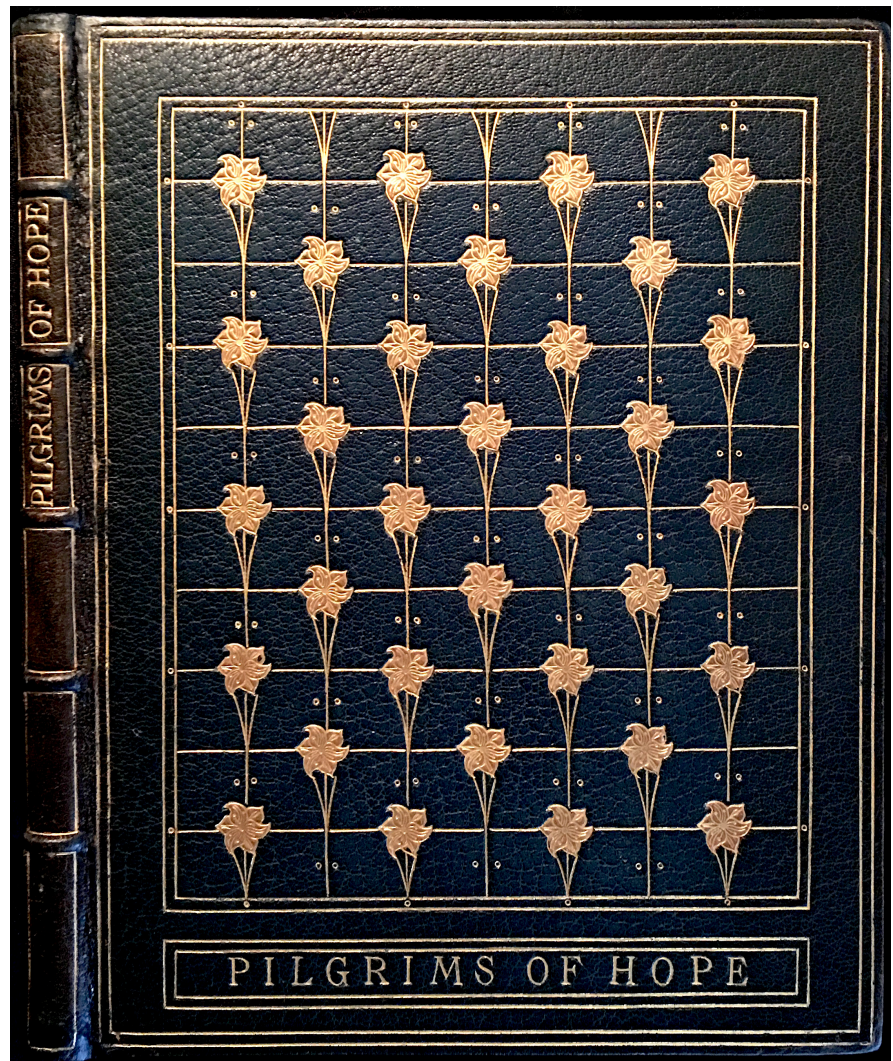
Binding by Miss Florence Foote, of the Nordhoff bindery,  
in golden brown crushed levant morocco. Floral motifs  
with powdered tooling in gold panels.



Likewise in the April 1902 issue of Stickley's *The Craftsman* (Vol. 2, No. 1) there appeared the article "The Binding of Books" written by Florence Foote herself. It immediately followed two other articles: "Beautiful Books" by Irene Sargent and "Cobden-Sanderson and the Doves Bindery" by Emily Preston. Foote's article runs from page [33] and proceeds through to the end on p. 40. Then on the very next (unnumbered) page two of Florence Foote's bindings are pictured (there are four altogether in all in this issue of *The Craftsman*) with Rossetti's *The House of Life* being on top. On the verso there appears a full page picture of the Nordhoff Bindery. So although this new acquisition is not a binding of precise exactitude, it is nevertheless very pleasing and a part of the bookbinding literature with accompanying photos.

### **Kendall Sisters:**

Another rather special binding entered the collection back in November 2015, but what's particularly curious is how it got here to begin with. On October 22 a fellow bindings collector sent me an email indicating he had been offered a binding but "thought it had some potential for your [the Bishop] collection." It has some flaws, but he thought it "a particularly beautiful arts & crafts binding by the Kendall sisters / The Golden Bindery." After looking at several pictures, and even knowing it was not in fine condition, I tended to agree and so there started an exchange of emails meant to secure the binding. He indicated he was open to suggestions. Since money was never talked about in connection with this binding, I sent him several proposals involving exchanges for some of my other bindings for sale at my Mosher Books business. I also said I'd buy it outright from him, or some combination of payment and bindings. He turned down all those proposals. What he wanted, in particular, was something I didn't have. He collects the bindings of a particular accomplished binder of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and so I proposed he keep the Kendall binding aside for me until I found one of his coveted bindings and then we'd make the trade if he was satisfied. He



suggested a revised version this last plan and indicated:

I will send it your way tomorrow or Friday, and if/when you find something like an LS binding, we can settle up then. Speaking for myself, I'd be perfectly happy with that arrangement. Does that work for you?" [and later added] If you're unable to get your hands on any LS binding in the next year or two, let's figure it out then. I'm not worried in the least—you come across some great stuff!

Now that's about as liberal and trusting a proposal I can think of, and so I received it on October 30<sup>th</sup> but only opened the package taking me into the wee hours of the next morning. I wrote him:

By the way, I did open the package last night. Started at 11:45 and kept going with the Kendall binding until about 2:30 AM. One of the things I attended to was to repair the repair [of loosened Japanese paper repairs]... and it's always best to fix them before more begins to unravel. I also did some light retouching / refreshing to the boards and spine. Looks lovely. The rest of the time I just studied the design, pictured the two sisters performing this work realizing that in just a few years the one sister would be dead. I wasn't expecting all page edges gilt, so that was a real treat. I also appreciated the "heft" of the binding. It has some weight, and to me that always adds some extra enjoyment—something about the solidity, the feel of a substantial product of the binder's hands. Right now it rests in a small glass showcase that I reserve for all newcomers which I like so I can view them in passing through the library. Like I said, I rather like the binding despite it's warts, and thank you so much for sending prior to our eventually settling on it. Hopefully it is with an LS binding that I'm able to complete the exchange, but time will tell.

So with this acceptance I had my mission papers: "Go find me one of those LS bindings." Then came the November Boston shows, and I set up at the alternative show and the evening of the 13<sup>th</sup> my wife and I went over to the big-top tent of the ABAA show. You have to realize just how exhausting the whole preparation is for Boston, driving there though the night, setting up, and getting over to the big show, then collapsing at the hotel, only to know that it all has to be done in reverse at the show's conclusion the next day. Anyway, keeping my eyes opened with toothpicks, Sue and I entered the ABAA show about 20 minutes after it started at 5 PM. Each time I enter the Boston ABAA, I come across old chums, or dealers with whom I find it obligatory to chat, so it's not like one can roam the isles unimpeded. This is how it goes isle after isle in our race for time, so I don't have the luxury to visit every booth. I'm selective with booths deemed most probable, the most likely to have what I'm looking for. My wife was at another booth somewhere down the line and I alone was infiltrating each booth selected. I walked into a double booth shared by two dealers. The usual white wall showcases lined the back. Stepping to the back, about waist high, I spotted a two-volume set standing up on its own, and quickly recognized the tooling emanating off the spine. The first word uttered to myself was "LS" and then I saw the placard with the wording (I know the exact wording because I took it along with the set):

Hawthorne, Nathaniel.  
**Mosses From an Old Manse.**  
Boston, 1900.  
In a lovely binding  
By the Monastery Hill Bindery  
[Price]

That's it!, thought I. Must be an LS. I slide aside the glass door and examined the inside back cover and there it was, the LS monogram. Yes! I closely looked at each volume, took it over to the dealer, asked for what would be my dealer-to-dealer price, and handed it over for wrapping and invoice. They weren't wrapping it properly, so I asked if they'd mind if I wrap it and asked for some plastic bags, carefully wrapped each volume, stuck in the invoice, and they supplied the paper bag over everything sealing it with the ABAA 'paid' sticker. I walked out of the booth and was immediately accosted by two gentlemen with whom I knew I'd have to stop and chat. Then after that little delightful schmoozing ended, along came another bindings collector colleague and I stopped to talk a bit with him. He asked me if I have found anything and I told him that I found two Mosher items, both of which I passed on. He looked at the bag and I said, "And I got an LS binding." "Really?" he said, and asked me where I



managed to find it, if it was on a shelf or what, and I discussed the showcase find. I did sort of explain the circumstances under which I was operating, and the sort of tit-for-tat arrangement I had with our mutual friend. He also asked me from what dealer I had gotten it. That kind of who-I-buy-from information I never pass along. Some cards you keep close to the chest. I also did not open the bag because all purchases had to remain sealed. So at the end of the exhausting evening I took the sealed package out the door and Sue and I walked back to the hotel. The next morning —we got up at 5 AM, breakfast by 6, took our belonging back to the parking garage, and the alternative show started at 8 AM. I packed the volumes into my suitcase and they remained there until we got back to Ephrata. I never, ever expected to nearly complete my mission in just a couple weeks.

I emailed the party from whom I got the Kendall binding and cryptically notified him that I need to mail “something” to him on Monday. At first he seemed not have thought much of it, then it must have dawned on him that it might be an LS binding. I kept quite, answering only what I had to answer, let him know a package was on its way but little else. He began firing back email after email in quick succession, obviously getting rather excited. I didn’t want to break the news. He said he was amazed I had found an LS binding so quickly. I wanted to write back, “nope, not *a* binding but *two* bindings” (it’s a two-volume set). They do look mighty pretty, but are obviously of the quirky kind of design we come to expect of LS. Another email came in from him. “Giddy as a schoolgirl” says he, “HOLY COW” he blurts out. Keep in mind, I never said what I sent. Gave no clues. Only thing he knew for sure was that there was a package he was supposed to receive on Wednesday. Another email: “Am I right?” and “I need to know more!!” He was hooked but I didn’t intend to respond to his entreaties, but I didn’t know if I could hold out much longer. ‘Twas all kind of cruel fun, I know, and I ended by saying:

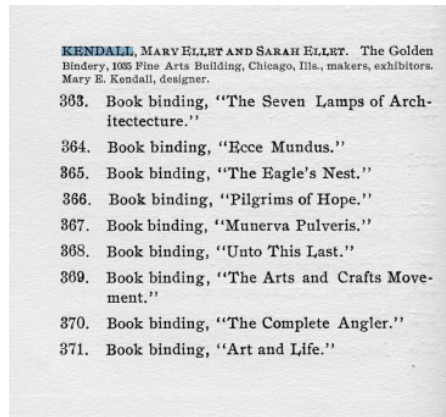
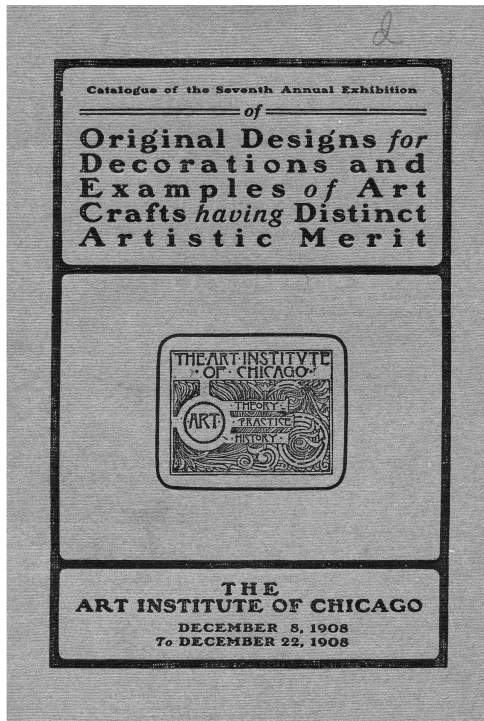
My silence, particularly in the midst of your exuberant expressions via email, is designed to heighten the mystery with corresponding increase of excitement, unrest, anticipation, and overall gleeful expectation. Gets the mind whirling and the juices flowing. Perhaps a bit of cruel playfulness on my part, but enjoyable when I put myself in your place and ponder, “what would I be thinking?” In the end, providing prompt and safe delivery, all will be revealed and I think you’ll be quite pleased and we’ll all be in a state of biblio-bliss. Have fun my friend.

After seeing what arrived, he agreed, we are both indeed in a state of biblio-bliss! He LOVED the bindings and we exchanged a number of emails about the features of the bindings, how many tool impressions were used, how idiosyncratic the design and yet how characteristic of this binder. For myself, I was thankful that my burden of recompense had been lifted and as he added, “so quickly to almost be beyond belief.” Yet there in his possession was the evidence. I added one further codicil, that being that I hoped we will continue looking out for one another’s collections. Over time I have received several lovely items from him, and reciprocally supplied him with good material. It seems to work, this mutual aggrandizement of Mosher stuff to me and LS bindings to him, and we’re both looking forward to its continuance.

So that’s the story about how the Kindall binding came into my possession. But what of the book itself? What’s its background? The binding is on one of Mosher’s larger productions: William Morris’s *The Pilgrims of Hope—A Poem in XIII Books* (Mosher, 1901). The book was bound by Sarah Ellet Kendall and Mary Ellet Kendall, two sisters who had a studio called “The Golden Bindery” in Chicago’s Fine Arts Building.<sup>(2)</sup> Both were students at the Doves Bindery from 1906-07 (and under French binder Jules Domont in October 1907). While pursuing this training in London they lived there with their mother. It’s fitting that this binding executed as a joint effort, is further gifted to their mother, for on the back cover one sees the boldly gilt-tooled “E·E·K·May 22, 1908.” Those are the initials of Elvira Ellet Kendall, their mother, whose birthday was May 22, 1908. The binding was then exhibited (entry 366) alongside eight other Kendall

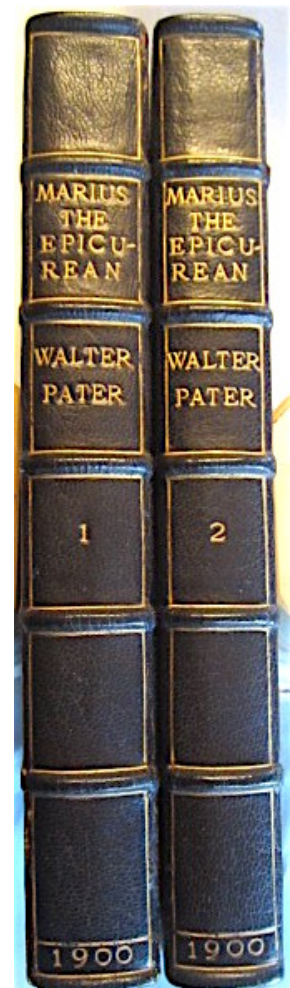


bindings at the seventh annual exhibition of “Original Designs for Decorations and Examples of Art Crafts having Distinct Artistic Merit” held at the Art Institute of Chicago from December 8-22, 1908. Sarah Kendall died a few years after this binding was produced, but Mary Kendall (Mary Kendall Valentine in 1910) continued to produce bindings into the 1920s. Twenty-three of her binding are now part of the Haas Family Arts Library Special Collections at Yale. The Newberry Library in Chicago has a rich archive of their 1900-1910 correspondence covering the time the sisters trained in England.

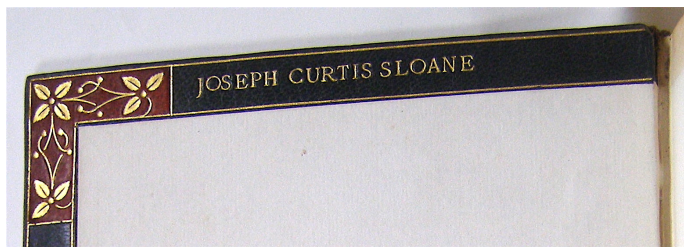


### Peter Verburg binding for Joseph Curtis Sloane:

Not much of a story in terms of how this set was added to the collection, except for the fact that the auction house grossly miscataloged the two-volume binding, indicating that it was bound by Joseph Curtis Sloane. The auction was outside of Philadelphia and I couldn't travel to it on December 3rd. I had been alerted to the binding by a colleague who also wouldn't be present, and I didn't want to leave a bid so I contacted another bookseller who said he was going to the sale. Great, he'd call me and let me know more about it. The report wasn't overly encouraging but I at least did see a picture and was told the volumes contained the tooled Sloane name but nothing else. I never heard of that binder. So I gave him a low bid which was obviously enough to win the day, but what was the prize won? Only after the set was delivered did I clearly see that on the inside of the rear board the binding was stamped P.V. 1904. That instantly meant something to me. It was a set bound by Peter Verburg, the protégé of Ellen Gates Starr (another Cobden-Sanderson pupil) at the famed Hull House bindery in Chicago. Verburg is pictured next to Starr in a ca.1902 photo now at Smith College Library,<sup>(3)</sup> so not long before this set was bound.



The owner of the Marius set, and most likely the person who commissioned it (or gifted to him), was Joseph Curtis Sloane, Head Master at the Lake Forest School for Boys (also known as Lake Forest Academy) from 1901-06.<sup>(4)</sup> Sloane was a graduate of Princeton (A. B. Latin, 1895) and so was in close



proximity to Chicago and of Hull House in which he must have had a particular interest as part of his investigations of private schools for young people, particularly boys. Sloane was cited by the *Wisconsin Presbyterian Review* as “unusually well qualified by nature and training for this kind of work. He has brains, scholarship, character,

magnetism, a thorough and sympathetic understanding of a boy’s nature, unusual gifts as a teacher, and marked ability as a disciplinarian...” This Mosher book by Pater would have certainly been of some interest to one versed in classical studies, the contents of which was clothed in leather bindings by the young man at Hull House—Peter Verburg. The ownership name appears at the top of the inside front cover to each volume, and the binder’s mark, overlooked by the auction house and even by the person examining and bidding on my behalf, appears inside the back cover of each. Curiously, this is the second set of *Marius the Epicurean* bound by Verburg, only one year earlier in 1903 and now is likewise in the Mosher collection which contains three other smaller bindings by Verburg as well.

Footnotes:

- (1) Tidcombe, Marianne. *Women Bookbinders 1880-1920* (New Castle & London: Oak Knoll Press & The British Library, 1996), p. 179.
- (2) Ibid., pp. 184-85. Also see Tidcombe’s *The Doves Bindery*, p. 70 with picture of Mary Ellet Kendall appearing on p. 71.
- (3) Ibid., p.184
- (4) *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 21 June 1902, p.16; *The Wisconsin Presbyterian Review*, Vol. I, No. 4. July August 1903, pp. 203-04.

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