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Descriptive Summary

Title:
Little Leather Library Collection, 1920-1924

Collection Number:
MS 160

Creator:
Little Leather Library Corporation of New York

Abstract:
The Little Leather Library Collection consists of 101 books, 3-1/4” x 4,” published by the Little Leather Library Corporation of New York. The miniature books are brownish green in color, of imitation leather, and characteristic of the Redcroft edition published between 1920-1924. There were over 100 miniature book titles published in the various editions of the Little Leather Library, but it is not known if all of these titles were included in the Redcroft edition. The collection was donated in 2008.

Extent:
The Little Leather Library Collection consists of 101 books, 3-1/4” x 4,” and is housed in two flat boxes.

Language:
English

Repository:
Special Collections, Robert E. Kennedy Library
California Polytechnic State University
San Luis Obispo, CA 93407

Administrative Information

Provenance:

Access:
Collection is open to qualified researchers by appointment only. For more information on access policies and to obtain a copy of the Researcher Registration form, please visit the Special Collections Access page.

Restrictions on Use and Reproduction:
In order to reproduce, publish, broadcast, exhibit, and/or quote from this material, researchers must submit a written request and obtain formal permission from Special Collections, Cal Poly, as the owner of the physical collection.
Photocopying of material is permitted at staff discretion and provided on a fee basis. Photocopies are not to be used for any purpose other than for private study, scholarship, or research. Special Collections staff reserves the right to limit photocopying and deny access or reproduction in cases when, in the opinion of staff, the original materials would be harmed.

**Preferred Citation:**
[Identification of Item]. Little Leather Library Collection, Special Collections, California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo.

**Indexing Terms**
The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library’s online public access catalog.

**Subjects:**
Literature – Collections
American Literature
English Literature
Hubbard, Elbert, 1856-1915
Kipling, Rudyard, 1865-1936
Morris, William, 1834-1896
Shakespeare, William, 1564-1616

**Genres and Forms of Material:**
Miniature books, 3-1/4” x 4”

**Related Materials**

**Related Collections:**
Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, Rare Books Collection
Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, Fine Printing Graphic Arts Collection

**Corporate Note**
The Little Leather Library Corporation of New York was the first company to mass-market inexpensive books in the United States. The corporation, founded in 1916 by Albert Boni, Harry Scherman and Maxwell Sackheim, made available a wide variety of classics by authors including Rudyard Kipling, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, William Morris, William Shakespeare, Edgar Allan Poe, Robert Louis Stevenson, Alfred Lord Tennyson, Henry James, Leo Tolstoy, Oscar Wilde and William Butler Yeats in miniature editions. The 101 books in this collection are brownish green in color, bound in imitation leather, and characteristic of the Redcroft edition published between 1920-1924. Only the first two editions were bound in real leather.

When first published, the little books were sold at the Woolworth’s chain. By the early 1920s, the books were advertised in popular magazines, selling in National Geographic from 1922 to 1924. Sometimes a miniature classic might appear in a cereal box as a promotion. Robert K. Hass, Inc., Publishers took control of the Little Leather Library Corporation in 1924. Boni later established Modern Library Publishing Company, of which Random House
Publishers would become a subsidiary company. Scherman and Sackheim as well as Hass were later involved in the establishment of the Book of the Month Club.

**Sources**

"Arts and Crafts Movement.” Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arts_and_Crafts_movement>


Hubbard, Elbert. *The Tale of Two Tailors: Which the Same Has the Quality of Being TRUE*. East Aurora, N.Y.: Roycrofters, 1909.

"Little Leather Library” <http://home.earthlink.net/~littlelibrary/>

"Roycroft.” Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roycroft>

Scope and Content Note

The Little Leather Library Collection consists of 101 books, 3-1/4” x 4,” published by the Little Leather Library Corporation of New York. The miniature books are brownish green in color, of imitation leather, and characteristic of the Redcroft edition published between 1920-1924.

There were over 100 miniature book titles published in the various editions of the Little Leather Library, but it is not known if all of these titles were included in the Redcroft edition. Only the first two editions were bound in real leather.

The production of the Little Leather Library enabled the masses to read inexpensive classics. The cheap imitation leather Redcroft edition, published between 1920-1924, appears to have been a take-off on the well-crafted books published by Elbert Hubbard’s Roycroft Press.

Elbert Hubbard, who was inspired by William Morris’ Arts and Crafts movement in England, became an important Reformist in the United States, beginning the Roycroft movement and community in East Aurora, New York in 1895.

Hubbard’s Roycroft Press was modeled after Morris’ Kelmscott Press. Books made from handmade paper were printed on the Roycrofter’s Golding Pearl letterpress. There is a marked difference between the finely bound, hand-crafted Roycroft volumes of Emerson, Edgar Allan Poe, Robert Louis Stevenson and Coleridge and their Redcroft edition counterparts.

Although the Arts and Crafts Movement was a reaction to the mechanization of the Industrial Revolution, there were those in the movement who felt that objects should be affordable.

Roycrofters supported those who did fine personal work in all endeavors, including design work in factories, but it is doubtful that the Roycroft seal would be applied to the volumes of the Little Leather Library.

The volumes of the Little Leather Library are stored in two boxes. The provenance, or original organization, of the books has been preserved for the most part and the collection is in one series.
Series Description/Folder List

Series 1. Book volumes, 1920-1924
Contains one subseries: A. Book volumes, Redcroft edition

Contains 101 Little Leather Library books, arranged alphabetically by author's last name, with the first five books arranged alphabetically by book title for collected works.

Box 1 Volume 1
*Fifty Best Poems of America*

Box 1 Volume 2
*Fifty Best Poems of England*

Box 1 Volume 3
*Mother Goose Rhymes*

Box 1 Volume 4
*Words of Jesus, Vol. I*

Box 1 Volume 5
*Words of Jesus, Vol. II*

Box 1 Volume 6
Allen, James
*As a Man Thinketh*

Box 1 Volume 7
Andersen, Hans Christian
*Fairy Tales*

Box 1 Volume 8
Balzac, Honoré de
*Christ in Flanders and Other Stories*

Box 1 Volume 9
Barrie, J.M.
*A Tillyloss Scandal*

Box 1 Volume 10
Browning, Elizabeth Barrett
*Sonnets from the Portuguese*

Box 1 Volume 11
Browning, Robert
*Pippa Passes*

Box 1 Volume 12
Browning, Robert
*Poems and Plays*
Box 1 Volume 13
Burns, Robert
*The Poems and Songs of Robert Burns*

Box 1 Volume 14
*Tales from the Arabian Knights, Vol. I*

Box 1 Volume 15
*Tales from the Arabian Knights, Vol. II*

Box 1 Volume 16
Carroll, Lewis
*Alice in Wonderland*

Box 1 Volume 17
Carroll, Lewis
*Through the Looking Glass*

Box 1 Volume 18
Coleridge, Samuel Taylor
*The Rime of the Ancient Mariner and Other Poems*

Box 1 Volume 19
Dante
*Inferno, Vol. I*

Box 1 Volume 20
Dante
*Inferno, Vol. II*

Box 1 Volume 21
De Quincey, Thomas
*Confessions of an Opium Eater, Vol. I*

Box 1 Volume 22
De Quincey, Thomas
*Confessions of an Opium Eater, Vol. II*

Box 1 Volume 23
Dickens, Charles
*A Christmas Carol*

Box 1 Volume 24
Doyle, Arthur Conan, Sir
*Tales of Sherlock Holmes*

Box 1 Volume 25
Drummond, Henry
*The Greatest Thing in the World*
Box 1 Volume 26
Dumas, Alexandre
*The Comtesse de Saint-Géran*

Box 1 Volume 27
Emerson, Ralph Waldo
*Essays*

Box 1 Volume 28
Emerson, Ralph Waldo
*Uses of Great Men*

Box 1 Volume 29
Fitzgerald, Edward – trans.
*The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*

Box 1 Volume 30
Gilbert, W.S.
*The "Bab" Ballads*

Box 1 Volume 31
Hale, Edward
*Man Without a Country*

Box 1 Volume 32
Hubbard, Elbert
*A Message to Garcia*

Box 1 Volume 33
Hugo, Victor
*Last Days of a Condemned Man*

Box 1 Volume 34
Ibsen, Henrik
*A Doll’s House*

Box 1 Volume 35
Ibsen, Henrik
*Ghosts*

Box 1 Volume 36
Irving, Washington
*Old Christmas*

Box 1 Volume 37
Irving, Washington
*Rip Van Winkle*

Box 1 Volume 38
Kielty, Bernardine
*The Sidewalks of New York*
Box 1 Volume 39  
Kipling, Rudyard  
*At the End of the Passage and The Mutiny of the Mavericks*

Box 1 Volume 40  
Kipling, Rudyard  
*Barrack Room Ballads*

Box 1 Volume 41  
Kipling, Rudyard  
*City of Dreadful Night and Other Stories*

Box 1 Volume 42  
Kipling, Rudyard  
*Finest Story in the World*

Box 1 Volume 43  
Kipling, Rudyard  
*The Man Who Was and Other Stories*

Box 1 Volume 44  
Kipling, Rudyard  
*The Mark of the Beast and the Head of the District*

Box 1 Volume 45  
Kipling, Rudyard  
*Mulvanney Stories*

Box 1 Volume 46  
Kipling, Rudyard  
*The Phantom Rickshaw and My Own True Ghost Story*

Box 1 Volume 47  
Kipling, Rudyard  
*Vampire and Other Verses*

Box 1 Volume 48  
Kipling, Rudyard  
*Without Benefit of Clergy*

Box 2 Volume 49  
Lamb, Charles  
*Dream Children*

Box 2 Volume 50  
Lincoln, Abraham  
*Speeches and Addresses*

Box 2 Volume 51  
Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth  
*Evangeline*
Box 2 Volume 52
Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth
*Hiawatha, Vol. I*

Box 2 Volume 53
Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth
*Hiawatha, Vol. II*

Box 2 Volume 54
Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth
*The Courtship of Miles Standish*

Box 2 Volume 55
Macaulay, Thomas
*Lays of Ancient Rome*

Box 2 Volume 56
Maeterlinck, Maurice
*Pelleas and Melisande*

Box 2 Volume 57
Maupassant, Guy de
*Short Stories*

Box 2 Volume 58
Mérimée, Prosper
*Carmen*

Box 2 Volume 59
Moore, Thomas
*Irish Melodies*

Box 2 Volume 60
Morris, William
*A Dream of John Ball*

Box 2 Volume 61
Plato
*The Trial of Socrates*

Box 2 Volume 62
Poe, Edgar Allan
*The Gold Bug*

Box 2 Volume 63
Poe, Edgar Allan
*The Murders in the Rue Morgue*

Box 2 Volume 64
Poe, Edgar Allan
*The Raven and Other Poems*
Box 2 Volume 65
Schreiner, Olive
*Dreams*

Box 2 Volume 66
Shakespeare, William
*As You Like It*

Box 2 Volume 67
Shakespeare, William
*A Comedy of Errors*

Box 2 Volume 68
Shakespeare, William
*Hamlet*

Box 2 Volume 69
Shakespeare, William
*Julius Caesar*

Box 2 Volume 70
Shakespeare, William
*King Lear*

Box 2 Volume 71
Shakespeare, William
*Macbeth*

Box 2 Volume 72
Shakespeare, William
*Merchant of Venice*

Box 2 Volume 73
Shakespeare, William
*Merry Wives of Windsor*

Box 2 Volume 74
Shakespeare, William
*Midsummer Night’s Dream*

Box 2 Volume 75
Shakespeare, William
*Othello*

Box 2 Volume 76
Shakespeare, William
*Romeo and Juliet*

Box 2 Volume 77
Shakespeare, William
*Sonnets*
Shakespeare, William
*The Taming of the Shrew*

Shakespeare, William
*The Tempest*

Shakespeare, William
*Twelfth Night*

Shaw, George Bernard
*On Going to Church*

Shaw, George Bernard
*Socialism for Millionaires*

Stevenson, Robert Louis
*A Child’s Garden of Verses*

Stevenson, Robert Louis
*The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*

Stevenson, Robert Louis
*Will O’ the Mill and Markheim*

Tennyson, Alfred
*Coming of Arthur*

Tennyson, Alfred
*Enoch Arden*

Tennyson, Alfred
*The Holy Grail*

Tennyson, Alfred
*Lancelot and Elaine*

Thoreau, Henry David
*Friendship and Other Essays*
Box 2 Volume 91
Tolstoy, Leo
The Bear Hunt and Other Stories

Box 2 Volume 92
Turgenev, Ivan
Mumu and Kassyan of Fair Springs

Box 2 Volume 93
Washington, George
Speeches and Letters

Box 2 Volume 94
Whitman, Walt
Memories of President Lincoln

Box 2 Volume 95
Whittier, John Greenleaf
Snow-bound and Other Poems

Box 2 Volume 96
Wilde, Oscar
Ballad of Reading Gaol and Other Poems

Box 2 Volume 97
Wilde, Oscar
The Happy Prince

Box 2 Volume 98
Wilde, Oscar
The Importance of Being Earnest

Box 2 Volume 99
Wilde, Oscar
Lady Windermere’s Fan

Box 2 Volume 100
Wilde, Oscar
Salomé

Box 2 Volume 101
Yeats, William
Land of Heart’s Desire