

Author: St. John del Rey Mining Company

Title: Book of Duplicate Shipment Letters

Imprint: 1949 - 51

Dimensions (binding): 26.1 cm x 30.8 cm x 7.5 cm

Dimensions (text block): 22.9 cm x 29.5 cm x 5.4 cm (maximum dimensions – actual size varies by page)

Collection: Benson Latin American Collection

Examination Date: 3/17/08

Treatment Date: April 2008

Conservator: Sarah Norris

Treatment Objective

The goal of this treatment is to stabilize the volume for storage and handling by reinforcing the hinges and spine area.

Condition

This loose leaf record book bears manufacturing marks from the Lamson Paragon Supply Co. Ltd., London. These markings indicate that the item was sold as a copyrighted “Arch Post Binder.” Examination reveals that the item’s design lies somewhere between a traditional bound volume and a modern-day notebook binder.

The item is bound half style in green textile and red sheep leather with a false impressed vertical grain. Single blind lines appear on the spine, boards, and corners. The textile on the front board bears a gold stamped “Life Leaf” trademark, along with the manufacturer’s name. The sheep shows extensive skinning and some evidence of red rot. The cloth is scratched, worn, and frayed at the board edges. Two gold stamped red sheep labels appear on the spine, the top one saying, “General Managers Letters” and the bottom one saying, “1942.” Both labels have double gold lines at their borders. Pressure sensitive tape with a paper carrier was applied over the bottom label at some time in the past and has partially worn away. Two additional stuck on labels appear in the middle of the spine. These labels appear to be contemporary with the volume’s use, but not with its manufacture. The first label is handwritten apparently in marker, but is almost completely covered by the second label. The second label appears to be pressure sensitive tape with a paper carrier. Faded black ink says “Duplicate Shipment Letters 1949.” The presence of multiple labels and the apparently deliberately obscured original date label indicates this volume may have been repurposed several times.

The boards are 6 mm thick binder’s board. More of the green covering textile shows in the gutters. Doublures feature the manufacturer’s logo and leaf patterns in light green ink. A light blue manufacturer’s note is adhered inside the front cover. This note identifies the type of binder, other similar binders, and the manufacturer’s branch shops and offices in dark green ink.

The structure has a very bulky spine ranging from 0.8 to 1.8 cm thick. The spine is actually split into two spine pieces that hinge at a joint down the center. This creates two halves of the spine that move separately. Inside each of these two thick spine pieces, a long metal plate is screwed into the structure, from which emerges two binder rings. There are four rings in all, the outer ones connected to the front spine piece and the inner ones connected to the back spine piece. At the tailcap, a notch is cut into the front spine piece

to create room for the binder latching mechanism. Here, two slim metal plates appear, from which emerge a metal peg. The peg pokes through holes in two additional metal plates, one connected to each spine piece. To open the binding, one gently flexes the spine open, causing the metal peg (attached to the front spine piece) to slowly disconnect from the metal plate on the back spine piece. When the peg is finally free, the spine flexes back on itself and the binder rings open. To close the binder, one reverses this process until the peg once again slips into the hole in the back metal plate, emitting a “click” sound familiar from modern binders.

The structure has 1.5-cm wide hinges that flex sharply as the board’s opening motion is gradually transmitted to the hinged spine. The core of the hinges is only a slim piece of cardboard, making the hinges a weak and fragile section sandwiched inbetween the thick boards and the robust spine pieces. As a result, the hinges are delaminating and tearing at the head and tail. The weakened leather is cracking and torn where the hinges meet the boards and the spine pieces. One textile lining extends across the two spine pieces, across the hinges, and under the doublures. This lining no longer appears to provide significant support, especially to the weakened hinges.

Hinge problems may have been exacerbated by previous vertical storage. When the item rests on its tail, the boards are pushed upward, causing the hinges at the head to flex and strain back toward the spine. The item was discovered shelved horizontally, so this problem may have been noted in the past during cataloguing or shelf maintenance.

The half style leather was turned in around the elaborate head- and tailcap pieces, most likely with additional onlays applied at the complex tailpiece. However, the leather appears to have originally extended as one piece across the flexing spine hinge, with a blind line tooled down the crease. The leather spine labels also spanned across the spine hinge. The leather in the spine hinge region has cracked and split. The green covering textile also appears inside the spine pieces beneath the metal binder hardware, tenting over what is most likely a metal hinge between the two spine pieces. The item still opens with a pop, indicating this hinge could somehow be spring loaded. This opening action might also be caused simply by the weight of the bulky spine piece and hardware.

The binder is filled with hole-punched typed carbon copies. Stamps and signatures appear throughout in inks of varying colors. The leaves are irregularly sized and create a “text block” with ragged edges. Grime is apparent at the leaf edges and throughout the volume.

Treatment Proposal

1. Adhere tenuously attached leather with Lascaux.
2. Remove leather covering in hinge.
3. Lift leather at hinge edges.
4. Apply toned tissue in hinge and under lifted leather.
5. Trim lifted leather so it will no longer span into flexing joints.
6. Reattach removed leather.
7. Apply leather fixative.

Materials Used

- Lascaux 498HV (Talas)

- Minogami tissue
- Liquitex Professional Acrylics
- Cellugel
- Design colored pencils
- SC6000

Treatment Steps

1. 4/4 (4 hr) Toned minogami tissue for hinges with acrylic paint. Consolidated leather with Cellugel. Decided only to insert new material and head and tail because lifting the leather all along the hinge would also lift the textile lining beneath, which is still intact. Working only at the head and tail will avoid doing more structural harm than good.
2. 4/5 (30 min) Lifted leather at front head hinge. Gently inserted toned tissue, folded it over at the head, and worked Lascaux under the tissue with a microspatula.
3. 4/7 (2 hr) Applied four more layers of toned tissue in the front head hinge to build the area up to the level of the remaining leather. Lifted leather and inserted tissue at front tail and back head hinges. Turned these hinges in. The color of the red rotted area on the outside of the hinge is very different from the less degraded color inside the hinge, so adjusted toning in situ with Design colored pencils 1618 and 1604 (for red rot) and 1619 (inside hinge.)
4. 4/11 (2 hr) Applied toned tissue in remaining hinge. Toned in situ with colored pencils as before. Coated tissue with SC6000 to avoid fraying and offset.

Total: 8.5 hours