Off The Shelf: The 1893 Frossard & Hays

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As in coins, the more one studies numismatic literature the more one realizes that books come in varieties of one sort or another. In the publication of a modern book, every copy is usually printed in one press run and then sent to a binder who identically binds the entire edition, making for a uniform edition. With many older books, however, copies were printed in smaller batches as demand dictated and little changes may have been introduced between printings. A few mistakes may be corrected. The paper used may change. Advertising pages may be added at the end. Sometimes the changes aren't so little. Maybe the printer had a falling out with the binder and the next batch was sent to someone else to bind. Perhaps some photographic plates were added. Or deleted, for whatever reason.

Varieties of 19th-century American numismatic publications have been on my mind lately due to a recent personal acquisition.

In late 2012, I purchased a copy of Ed Frossard's *Varieties of United States Cents of the Year 1794*, written with William Wallace Hays and published in 1893. I already had a copy of this work in my library, but was intrigued by this example, which was inscribed by Frossard in 1893 to Henry Phelps. For whatever reason, the Frossard-Hays volume is very rarely encountered signed by Frossard, despite being the most significant of his three published books. The book must have been published late in the year, as Frossard did not advertise it in *The Numismatist* during 1893 and it was only reviewed in the April 1894 issue.[1] As the inscription on this copy shows, however, it must indeed have appeared in 1893, the date given on the book's title page.

It has been well-known for quite some time that the 1893 Frossard-Hays is encountered in two similar yet distinct bindings. Both binding variants feature horizontal decorative bands near the top and bottom of the front cover. On the one variant, these bands are about one inch thick; on the other, they are closer to 0.75 inch. Both feature slightly different decorative devices in the basic shape of a Greek Γ, but the second has filigree work in the interior angle of the device. While both covers are more or less red, the first is distinctly more crimson and the second more maroon. Both feature the same endpapers. As the different bindings have not been depicted before in *The Asylum*, they are reproduced here (Figures 1 and 2).

My 1893-dated copy is in the first binding described above (inch-thick bands, crimson, no interior filigree). Is this an indication that it was the first binding, chronologically speaking? Perhaps. But it isn't proof. The plates and text are identical, so there are no further clues to be found there.

The review of the book in the April 1894 issue of *The Numismatist* includes an interesting

[1]Strangely, the book doesn't seem to have been reviewed in the *American Journal of Numismatics*.

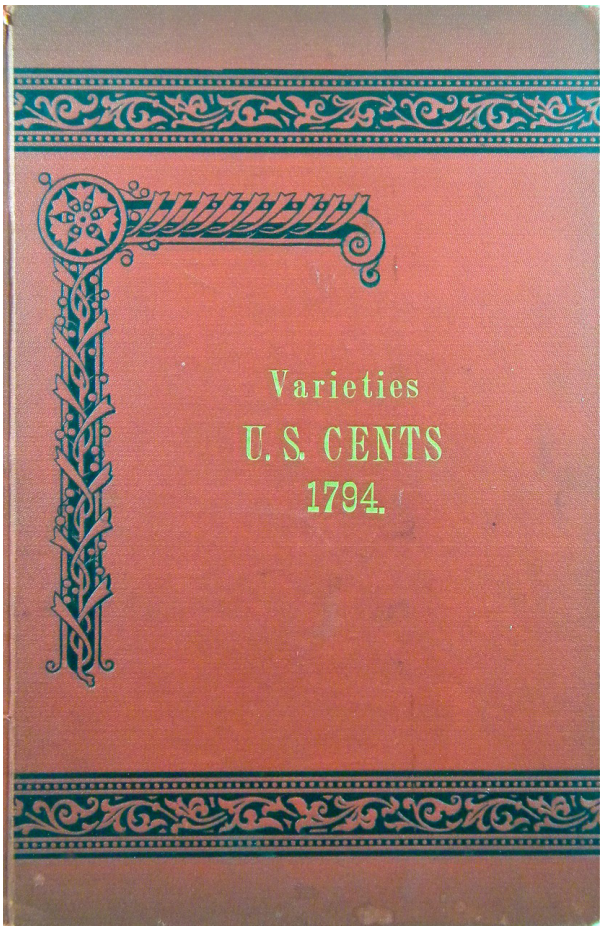

Figure 1: Frossard and Hays Variant I: crimson cloth, inch-thick bands, no filigree.

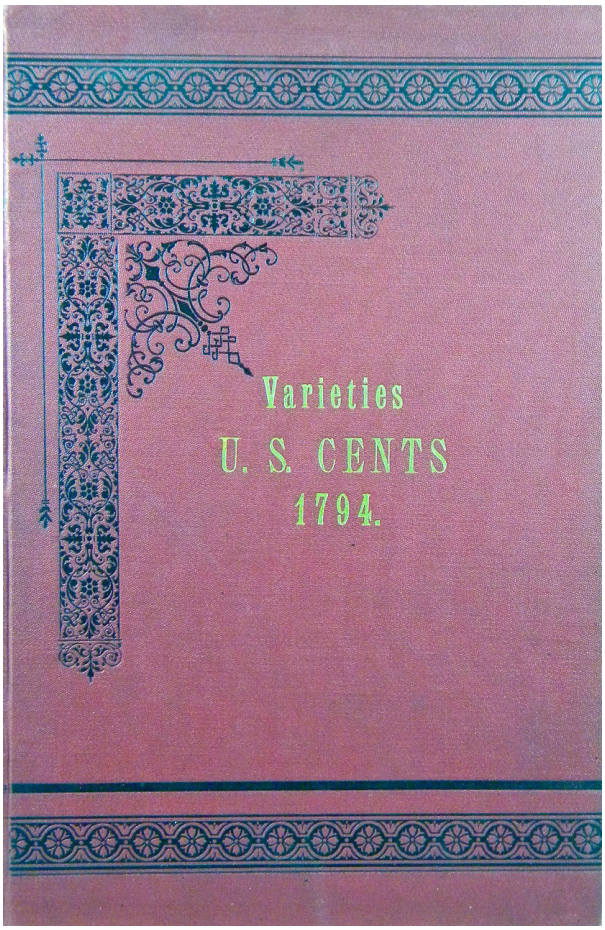

Figure 2: Frossard and Hays Variant II: maroon cloth, 0.75 inch bands, filigree.

statement that could provide a clue:

> Since the publication of Dr. Mavis' [*sic*] work on the cents of 1794 which so long has been the authority on the cents of this year, several new varieties and combinations of dies have been discovered rendering a new edition almost a matter of necessity. This has been accomplished by Messrs. Frossard and Hays, two men as well qualified by study and research on the subject as we have. Two photogravure plates of forty obverses and forty reverses taken from excellent specimens faithfully illustrate the text. In all fifty-six varieties are illustrated and described. A table is presented giving the corresponding number in Dr. Mavis [still *sic*] work. The Scott Stamp and Coin Co. L't'd., of N.Y., have bought up the remaining edition and will send copies of the work postpaid for $1.25.[2]

One wonders if the change in binding might be related to the change in distributor, with the second binding coming about after Scott S&C took over. If Scott simply bought the unbound pages, this may well be the case. Odds are, however, that we'll never know for certain.

[2] *The Numismatist*, Vol. VII, No. 4 (April 1894), page 67. Thanks to ANS Librarian Elizabeth Hahn for assistance in locating this review.