

Large-Paper Attinelli Sighting in Boston

George Kolbe

Late last April, David Fanning, George Kolbe, and Joel Orosz were in Boston to attend the award ceremony conferring upon John W. Adams the American Numismatic Society's prestigious Archer M. Huntington Award. The day before, the trio visited Boston Public Library, having made an appointment beforehand with Susan Glover, Keeper of Special Collections, to view an original copy of E. J. Attinelli's classic 1876 American numismatic bibliography, elegantly summarized by its author in a single word "coined" by him: *Numisgraphics*.

In the early 1980s, George Kolbe had visited the library and filled out call cards for the two¹ original Attinellis then listed in their file. After waiting an hour or so, Kolbe was informed that neither copy could be located. Fast forward to April 25, 2015. From a dozen feet away, as Susan Glover took it off the shelf, it could be seen that this Attinelli was something special. It was BIG.

Clearly, it was one of "Ten Copies printed on large tinted paper." It was the first occasion that the bibliophiles present had ever seen an example of this legendary numismatic rarity, of which a dozen or so garden-variety copies are currently known to have survived. The dimensions² of most of those have been recorded at one time or another and range in height from approximately 28 to 26 centimeters (cm), and in width from 18 to 16 cm. The paper stock of regular-edition copies examined features a watermark, a five-pointed star, measuring about one inch from opposing point-to-point.

The BPL card catalogue records the dimensions of its *Numisgraphics* as being "31 cm. tall and 24.4 cm. wide." The paper is "tinted"; no watermarks were detected. While the frontispiece facsimile of the 1828 Watkins broadside in the regular edition is, of necessity, folded vertically, it

¹ One has since been deaccessioned.

² Actual height and width when in original wrappers; height and width of the binding otherwise.

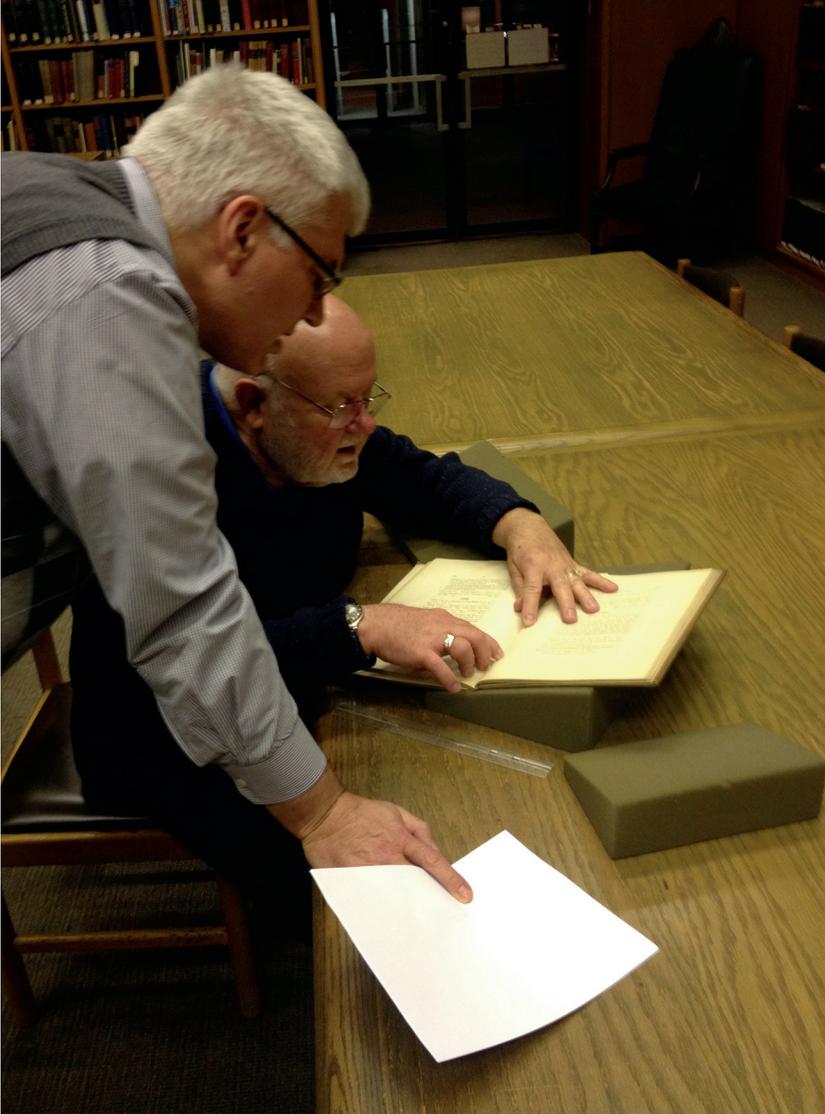


Figure 1. Joel Orosz (*standing*) and George Kolbe (*seated*), locating signature sewing.

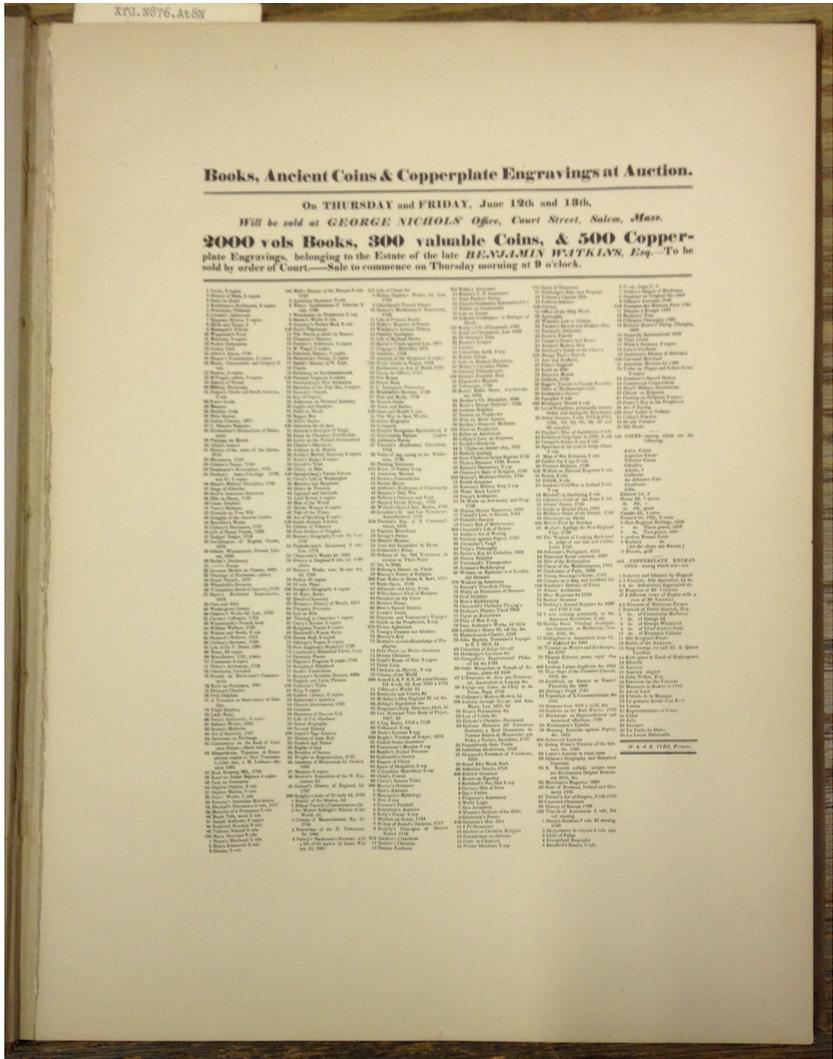


Figure 2. Unfolded frontispiece of facsimile 1828 Watkins broadside

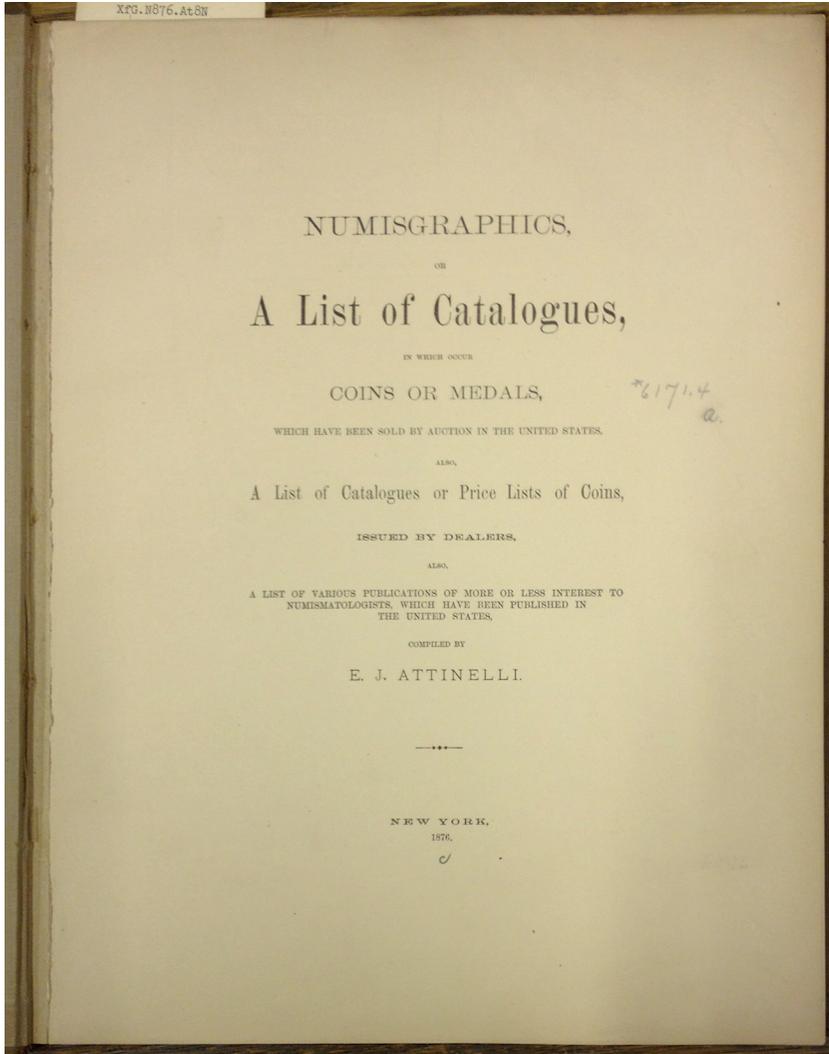


Figure 3. Title page of the large-paper Attinelli.

Figure 4 (*opposite*). The large-paper copy of Attinelli open to pages 74 and 75.

is not folded in the large-paper edition, as may be seen in the accompanying illustration. It may also be noted that, even were the margins of a large-paper copy to be severely trimmed, its capacious inner margins³ would betray its true nature. Indeed, width is the key measurement in determining a large paper copy; its height could easily be trimmed to the parameters of a regular copy. The width of a large-paper copy may be rendered indeterminate only if a binder were, horror of horrors, to guillotine the inner margins and oversee the resulting loose leaves.

The illustrations accompanying this notice are derived from photographs taken that fateful day by David Fanning on his iPhone. These images, particularly the page opening and title, eloquently illuminate the true nature of a large-paper Attinelli and may assist others in locating additional examples of what may be considered by some American numismatic bibliomaniacs to be—if a bit sacrilegiously—the equivalent of a Gutenberg Bible printed on vellum.

³ Approximately one inch in regular copies; two inches in large-paper copies.