



**DAVID FANNING**

**Kolbe & Fanning Auctions,  
Gahanna, Ohio**

A lifelong collector, David dabbled as a bookseller to help support his collecting, but stepped up in 2010 as a full-time literature dealer when he joined forces with George Kolbe. His current research focuses on the colonial tokens of Canada, along with Cincinnati Reds baseball cards.

**WHEN DAVID WAS IN GRADE SCHOOL, HE BOUGHT A 'RED BOOK' TO FIGURE OUT WHAT A COPPER-NICKEL 3-CENT COIN WAS. HE'S STILL A BIG FAN OF BOOKS AND TODAY HELPS LEAD KOLBE & FANNING AUCTIONS, WHERE HE SELLS SOME OF THE FINEST NUMISMATIC LITERATURE AVAILABLE.**

**Q: How did you go from a PhD in English Literature to being a top literature dealer?**

**A:** I ran my first ad selling numismatic books in the May 1988 issue of the Early American Coppers publication *Penny-Wise*, before I had as much as a high school diploma. I had been introduced to the world of numismatic literature through the pages of Bowers and Merena's *Rare Coin Review* and by trying to find a copy of William Sheldon's *Penny Whimsy*, which was out of print at the time. My Mom ended up getting me a copy for Christmas 1986, which is also how I met Charlie Davis, the numismatic bookseller, who did a lot to encourage my interest. I dabbled in bookselling for some time, though I mostly disappeared from the hobby during my college years. My interests reawakened in 1999 and I returned to the hobby just as interested in the books as in the coins. I started selling books on the side again around the time I earned my doctorate in 2003. That eventually led to joining forces with George Kolbe in 2010 as a full-time numismatic bookseller.

**Q: Does the PhD come in handy in your business or collecting today?**

**A:** It does. Less so in the specifics of what I studied (mostly modern Irish literature) than in learning how to conduct research. I'm a stickler for using sound research practices in numismatics and have a difficult time with the idea that half-baked notions unsupported by evidence merit publication.

**Q: As a small firm, you have to wear many hats in your literature auctions. What's your favorite part the auction process?**

**A:** It's probably when I'm taken by surprise by something while cataloguing. I glance at a book and assume it's something fairly ordinary, only to open it and find out it's something quite special. I had, for instance, a copy of Lyman Low's *Hard Times Tokens*, the revised edition of 1899, which is not particularly rare. I thought it was a normal copy, but when I opened it I found annotations: lots of them. I start reading them and find they are very advanced and useful annotations, highly opinionated and knowledgeable. Finally, I see the annotator's signature at the end and find that this is David Proskey's copy of Low. Proskey was one of the finest numismatists in this country in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In five minutes, my opinion of this book has gone from its being commonplace to extraordinary.

**Q: Where do you see the future of collecting numismatic literature headed?**

**A:** I think future collectors will have a more sophisticated appreciation of the physical aspects of the book as artifact, and will continue to have a strong regard for the history of our hobby. As numismatists, we're all interested in history to one degree or another. Our customers tend more strongly to be historically minded, and I think this aspect will grow as the internet continues to grow as a repository for information.



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