



The Curious Collector by Len Augsburger, LSCC #1271

Deluxe Edition of the Ahwash Reference

In the March 2005 E-Gobrecht, John McCloskey discussed Kam Ahwash's *Encyclopedia of United States Liberty Seated Dimes* (1977). Ahwash's book was groundbreaking in the field of Liberty Seated variety collecting – for the first time, the quality of the photography (by Roger Burdette, who is still active) was sufficient for the attribution of most issues. Ahwash presented McCloskey with a copy of the book, and I will let John pick up the story from there:

In recognition of my contributions to his research, Kam gave me a copy of the Premiere Edition of his encyclopedia when it was published in 1977. This book has a padded blue cover that is stamped with the title *Encyclopedia of United States / Liberty Seated Dimes / 1837 – 1891* in bold silver lettering. The author's name "Kamal M. Ahwash / 1977" is printed below the title. In the lower right corner of the cover, my name "John W. McCloskey / LSCC 89" is stamped in the same silver lettering. The books in this edition are numbered in the lower right corner of the first page [title page] in the text. My book is designated as "No 002."

I presume that book "No 001" was Kam's personal copy of the encyclopedia. Does anybody know who owns that book today? Does anybody know how many numbered copies were printed in the Premiere Edition of the encyclopedia? Did you buy a copy of the Premiere Edition when it was published in 1977? If so, what is its number? Did you buy a copy of the Premiere Edition second hand from another collector or dealer? If so, who was the copy initially registered to and what is its number?

As it turns out, there are two copies that come before the McCloskey copy. The most significant of these is Ahwash's personal copy. Remarkably, this volume showed up soon after John's query was published, in the George Kolbe sale of June 4, 2005, lot 62. This copy is bound in leather and identified by Ahwash's name, stamped in silver and placed in the bottom right corner of the front cover. This book sold strongly, for \$4,830. The Ahwash copy, however, does not have the "No 001" designation on the title page. While it is certain this is the Ahwash copy, the mystery remains – where is the copy with "No 001?"

We can now answer this question – Ahwash presented copy "001" to Walter Breen. As with the McCloskey and Ahwash copies, Breen's name is stamped in silver in the lower right corner of the front cover. The Breen copy bears the "No 001" stamp on the title page. Included in the book is a transmittal letter from Ahwash to Breen, dated June 14, 1977:

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“Dear Walter:

Here tis!!

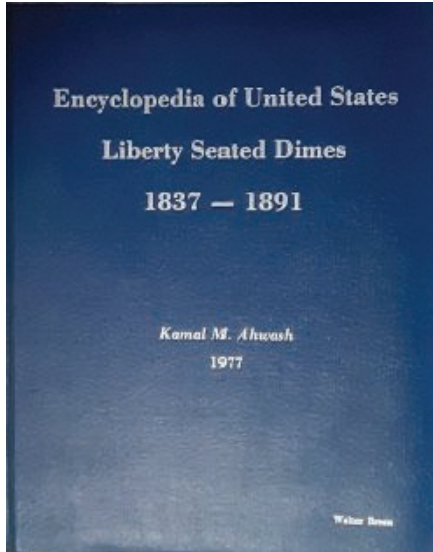
If you like it – just write something nice about it – if you don’t – well just tell me. Anyhow, they made several mistakes that I didn’t get a chance to edit – but that’s old “book bizz” for you. At any rate, I do hope you like the COVER!! Please advise.

Love and peace, Kam

Breen responded with a detailed, four-page list of recommended edits. Despite all the corrections, he noted “Thanks for the chance to see your labor of love. A magnificent effort, an excellent specimen of bookmaking!” With this new information, we can now list the early copies:

“000” [unnumbered] Kam Ahwash, leatherbound
001 Walter Breen, bound in padded blue cloth
002 John McCloskey, bound in padded blue cloth

Ahwash produced one hundred of these numbered copies (all dated 1977), and I invite any readers who own a numbered copy to contact me.



Front cover of the Breen copy of the Ahwash *Encyclopedia*.