

## Another AI ‘Success Story’

By John M. Frost, LSCC #2005

**Editor’s Note:** John Frost, current President of the [Barber Coin Collectors’ Society \(BCCS\)](#), is also the coauthor of a fantastic reference on the short-lived twenty-cent piece, [“Double Dimes”](#).

A few years ago, in a Stack’s Bowers auction, there was an interesting item -- an 1836 large cent with the counterstamp, “J. FROST” on the obverse. I had to buy this coin - it had my name on it! According to the catalog, J. Frost was Jonathan Frost, a clock-maker in Reading Massachusetts during the first half of the 1800s. Given my father’s (Frost) side of the family came to the New World in the 1630s from England, and settled in the Boston area, it was quite possible that this particular Jonathan Frost might be an ancestor of mine. So, in some of my extensive “spare time” which I never seem to have, I was planning to do some research on the matter.

A week ago, I could not find my notes on this coin, so I wanted to look up the original lot description. I simply used Google and entered: “Stack’s “J. Frost” large cent” to see if I could find it quickly.

At the beginning of the results, the “AI Summary” section of the search result was quite interesting:

The reference to a “J. Frost” large cent handled by Stack’s (now Stack’s Bowers Galleries) usually refers to **John M. Frost**, a prominent numismatic author and researcher of early American large cents. **John M. Frost** is a legendary collector who built a high-end collection of **United States Large Cents**, and is a frequent cataloger of early American copper coinage for auctions.

Advanced collectors often have their names attached to a coin’s historical ownership pedigree (its provenance). For instance, the well-known copper specialist named **John M. Frost** has had their collection of large cents extensively cited by organizations like the **Liberty Seated Collectors Club (LSCC)** for major plate coin varieties. It is highly likely that high-grade or rare die-marriage large cents from this same personal collection have passed through Stack’s Bowers.



1836 Large Cent, Fine Details, Countermarked

Wow, I didn’t know I was a large cent specialist! Or that I had a legendary collection of them. Gee, I hope I had a nice Chain cent, plus an uncirculated 1799 to go with it. Somehow, I don’t remember selling a collection like that!

But at least the LSCC gets a nice shout-out. I guess AI is a wonder after all. It got bits and pieces of several different things all jumbled up into a mess. And each time I re-executed the search, I got a different response, but all along the same lines. Nothing about the *Double Dimes* book, twenty-cent pieces, or Barbers.

As someone who started working on commercial AI systems back in the 1980s at Digital Equipment Corporation, I see companies making the same mistakes now that were widely made 40 years ago: trying to rush the tools to market, deploying them before they are really ready.

I did find the lot description another way and have the information I wanted. Just for grins, I tried the Google search again today, and it was totally different. “AI Mode” is a separate tab now, and the findings of my search actually mentioned “previous confusion about John M. Frost and large cents” and now has me tied to the *Double Dimes* book with Lane Brunner. But for a while, I had a good laugh.