

Manhattan Vintage Book & Ephemera Fair, New York City

Downtown's "Shadow Show" Makes Its Mark

by Jeanne Schinto

You could say that the New York Antiquarian Book Fair uptown is a fancy five-star restaurant, while its "Shadow Show" downtown, the Manhattan Vintage Book & Ephemera Fair, is a casual little bistro. Each serves a purpose, depending on your mood, your appetite, and, of course, your pocketbook.

At this year's downtown book show, held April 6 and 7 in the Altman Building at 135 West 18th Street in Manhattan's Chelsea neighborhood, the opening attracted a large, hungry crowd of about 300 strong, according to promoters John and Tina Bruno of Flamingo Eventz.

"When we started this show six years ago, we knew it was going to be an uphill battle, getting to become a really integral part of Book Fair Week," Tina Bruno said by phone from her office in Rochester, New Hampshire, a few days after the show closed. "Being the downtown cousin, it's kind of hard to make your mark. Well, we have made our mark, and this time we cemented it, and we're really proud of that."

As I elbowed my way up and down the aisles during the show's first hours, I could hear focused collectors asking for their specialties. Someone was looking for books on grammar, another for material on fraternal organizations, a third on prewar baseball. I also saw some dealers from the uptown show doing serious shopping. Then there was this. In the booth of Dan Gaeta of John Bale Book Company, Waterbury, Connecticut, I noticed a book called *Home Gymnastics for the Well and the Sick*. I took a couple of pictures of it, and the minute I put it down, someone picked it up and bought it. The pace and the slight bit of frenzy felt very like the Brimfield shows—in a good way.

In those same opening hours, John M. Leger of Le Bookiniste, Hopewell, New Jersey, sold all his Rockwell Kent books to multiple people, and there was more to come for him. Leger, a retired *Wall Street Journal* reporter and editor who has taken up dealing in rare books as a second career, wrote me in a post-show e-mail: "I had a really terrific show, selling to some important international dealers as well as serious collectors. I sold three volumes of poems and plays by the Belgian Symbolist author Emile Verhaeren; those went to a collector who had never encountered Verhaeren's work before but wanted to learn more. Isn't that a wonderful approach to collecting? Another good sale was Evelyn Waugh's *The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold*, featuring a compliments card signed by Waugh. I also sold a copy of John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger*. The foreign dealer who bought it said it had the best dust jacket that he had ever seen on that book." And those, said Leger, were only the highlights.

John Kuenzig of Kuenzig Books, Topsfield, Massachusetts,

whose specialty is science and technology along with a little science fiction, enjoyed good sales too. "There's energy back in this market," he said. "People weren't talking, they were buying. And we need that. It's been a while."

Like most dealers, Kuenzig is looking to expand the market as

want to do something with their hands," one of the upstairs dealers said approvingly.

"Having the fine press people with us worked out really well," Tina Bruno said. "There was a lot of cross-buying—introducing the old to the new and the new to the old. The people downstairs said it was the best show they've had in years. We fed off each other's energy."

Both upstairs and down, there was much creativity and not a little humor on display, some of it sardonic. You needed sharp elbows and sharp wits to navigate this show. For example, one of the bookshelves in the booth of rare book dealer Kevin Kinley of First Place Books, Walkersville, Maryland, was labeled "Finance, Thieves." Then there was Garry Austin of Austin's Antiquarian Books, Wilmington, Vermont, who had on display a circa 1999 portable voting machine. The sign

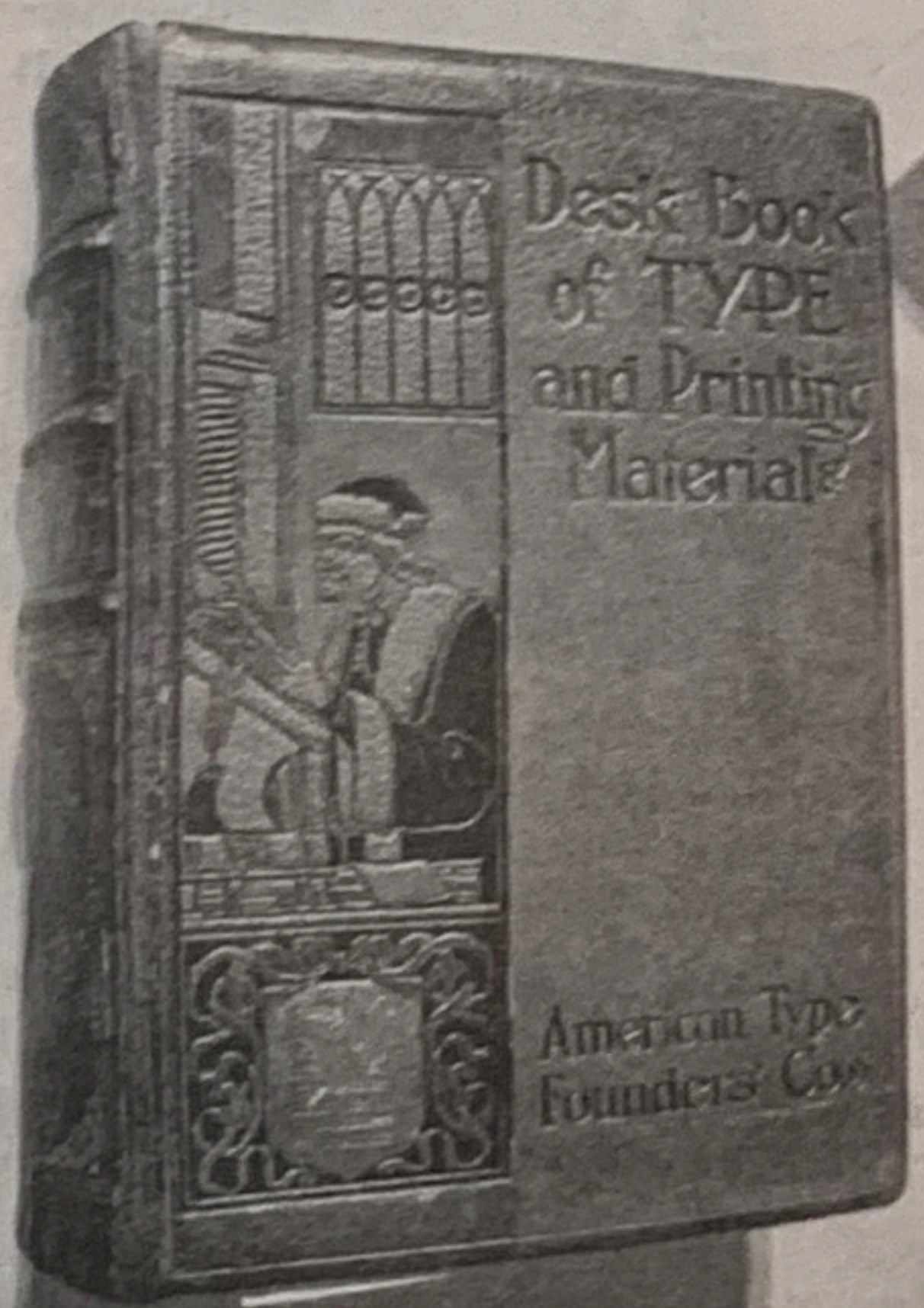
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the economy improves. "Every time we see new faces, we talk to them," he said.

Dan Gaeta, for his part, has noticed "moneyed young people" getting interested in books and ephemera. "But I don't know how to reach them yet," he told me. "They're not interested in what makes something traditionally collectible. They want to collect in their own way."

New this year, besides Flamingo Eventz's 50 dealers upstairs, there were 42 more dealers of a different kind downstairs. They were the exhibitors at the inaugural Manhattan Fine Press Book Fair, sponsored by the Fine Press Book Association. Their wares were artisan bindings, artists' books, and other book arts, and they came from all over the United States as well as from Canada, Germany, Great Britain, and Sweden.

"The young people, they



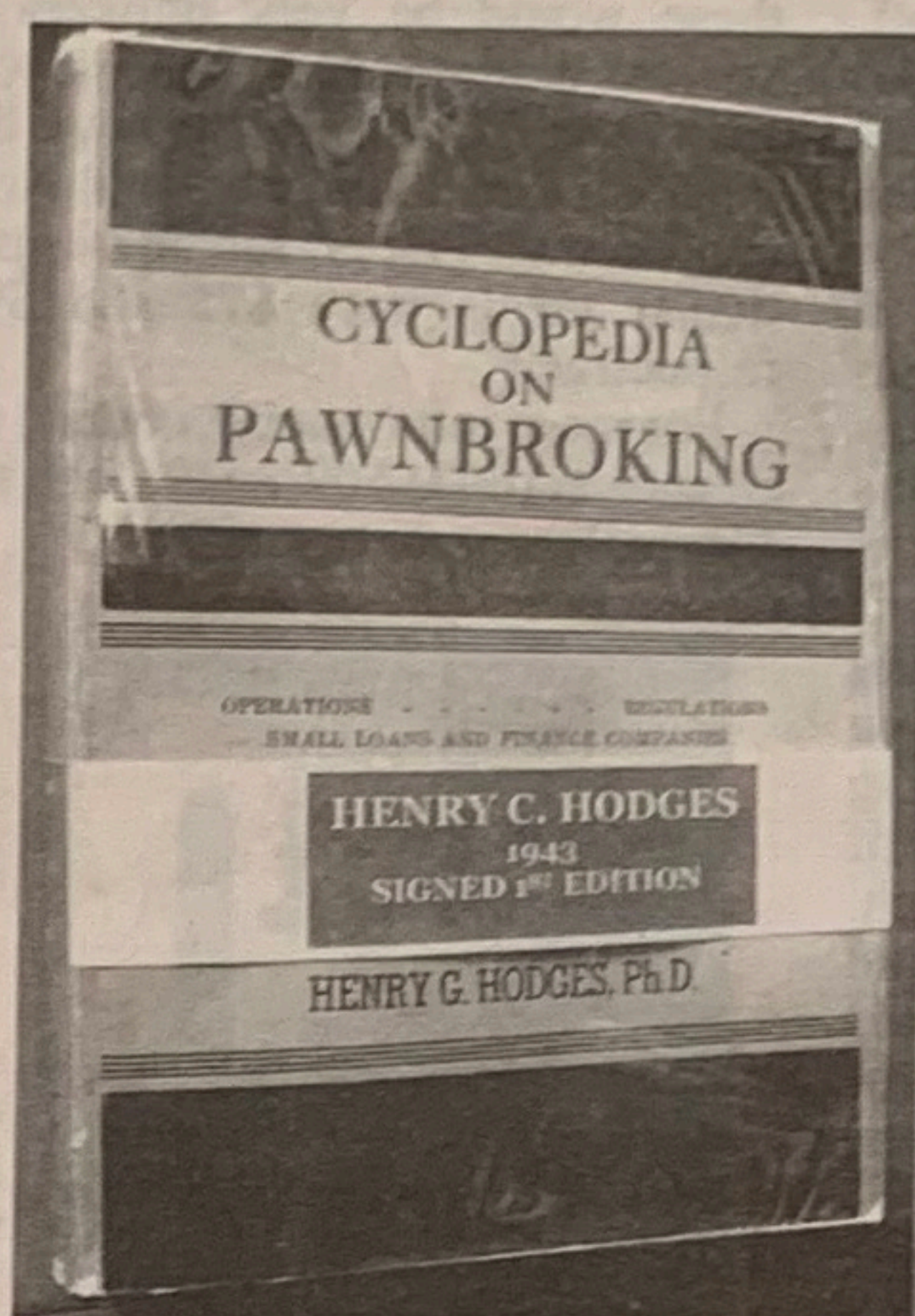
The American Type Founders' *Desk Book of Type and Printing Materials* was \$750 from Oak Knoll Books & Press, New Castle, Delaware. Published in Philadelphia in 1900, it comprises 1168 pages of type specimens, borders, ornaments, and brass rules and cuts, along with a catalog of printing machinery and printers' supplies. This copy was issued in a leather binding, the kind made for ATF's special customers, and is therefore rare, said the dealers.



Our Firemen: A History of the New York Fire Departments, Volunteer and Paid, published in 1887, was \$450 from Robert Seymour of the Colebrook Book Barn, Colebrook, Connecticut. An "authorized" publication, it has 1000 pages and includes 650 engravings.



This is a page from a circa 1902 Japanese photo album offered at \$875 by Maxine Kaplan and Howard Kopelson of Kaplan & Kopelson Books, New York City. The album contains 74 color images like this one.



Pawn Stars, anyone? Peter Austern of Brooklyn Books, Brooklyn, New York, asked \$200 for this 1943 copy of *Cyclopedia on Pawnbroking* by Henry G. Hodges, Ph.D.



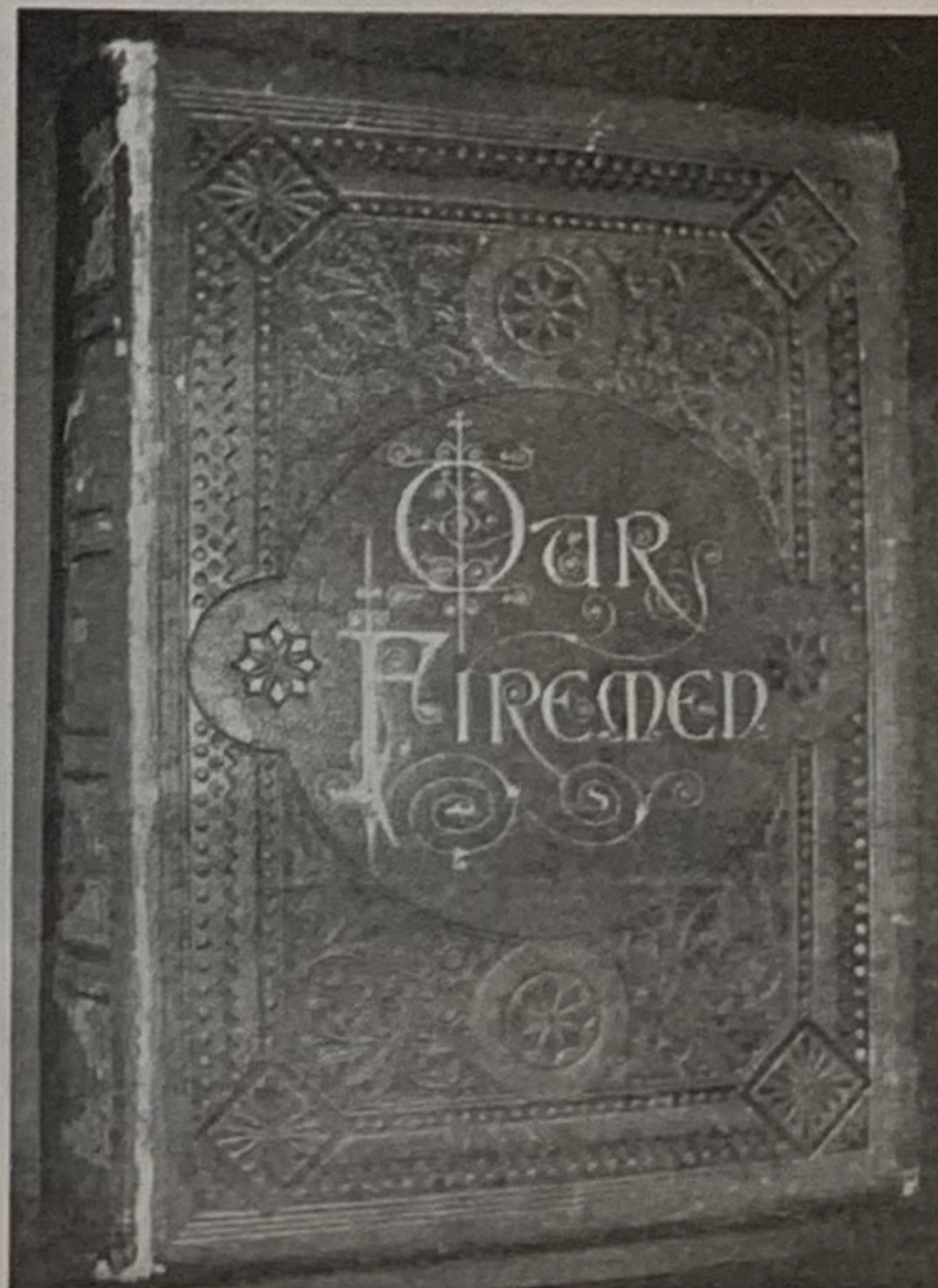
Brooklyn Books wanted \$1500 for this 1916 illustrated promotional booklet for the TE Ranch of William "Buffalo Bill" Cody (1846-1917) in Ishawooa, Wyoming. It was signed by Cody in pen on the title page.



Chicago's Ferris wheel is pictured in *Jackson's Famous Pictures of the World's Fair*—William Henry Jackson, that is—published in 1894. Kaplan & Kopelson Books asked \$475 for its copy.



Robert Seymour asked \$100 for this relic of a time long ago, i.e., when many dealers regularly issued printed catalogs. *Bibliotheca Aeronautica: A Descriptive Catalogue of Books and Engravings Illustrating the Evolution of the Airship and the Aeroplane* selected from the stock of the dealers was published by the London booksellers Maggs Brothers in 1920.



on it said: "The original hanging chad machine." I laughed when I saw it, but the Teddy Roosevelt expert said it wasn't funny, that Florida had been so embarrassed after the fiasco of the election count, the faulty equipment was quickly sold off. On offer for \$375, this example was complete with its metal legs that folded down to fit into the carrying case.

Who could have guessed that you could even buy such a remnant of recent history unless you were at a show like this one? "Very often, the experience of the show is the thing," Tina Bruno observed. "Buying something you didn't know you wanted until you saw it, seeing your friends, having the thrill of the hunt, the fun of the search. 'Oh, look what I found! And I'm touching it, and it's real.' It's not just scroll, scroll, scroll," with your mouse as you surf the Internet.

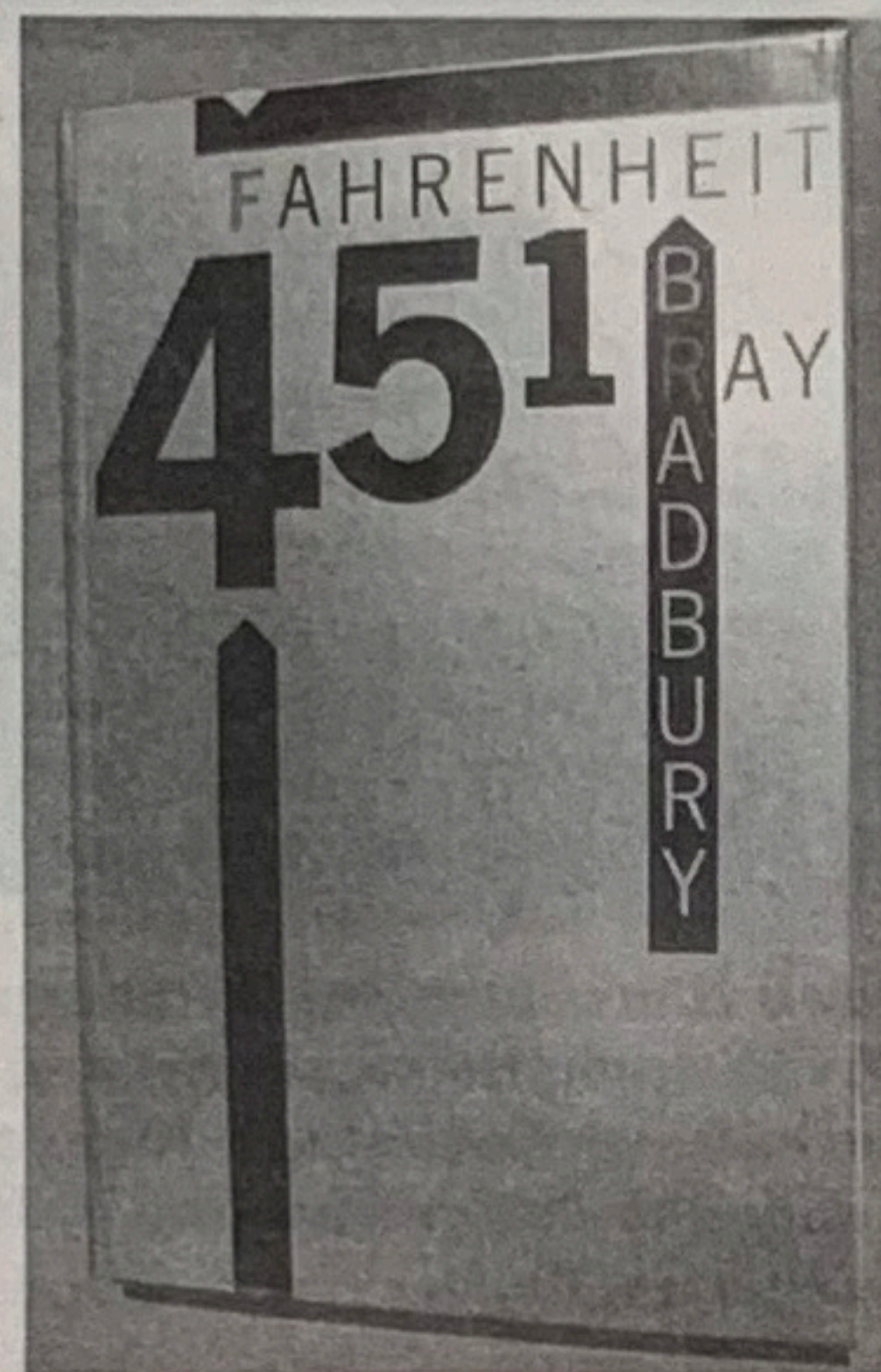
My husband, clock dealer Bob Frishman, who accompanied me to this show, looks for horology-related items for his personal collection. At this venue, he came away with two great items from Richard Thorner of Resser-Thorner Antiques, Manchester, New Hampshire. One was a 1 7/8" diameter pocket watch paper printed by Wm. P. Collyer of Pawtucket, Rhode Island. Bob said he liked it especially because it includes an image of a watch, not just text.

The other item he bought was a warranty slip issued by Charles Stratton (1809-1854), a clockmaker who did business in Holden, Massachusetts, from 1835 to 1841 and in Worcester thereafter. It is printed and has some manuscript writing. The handwritten date is July 24, 1837. The printing says, in part, "I hereby agree to warrant the

[clock] to keep good time, if regulated, for three months."

"I have seen wooden-works shelf clocks with his paper label glued inside, on the backboard, but never a separate warranty slip like this," Bob said. "Understandably, these would be very unlikely to survive unless somehow kept with the clock. I'm thrilled to have this kind of rare New England clock ephemera." Prices for these particular thrills were \$75 and \$90, respectively.

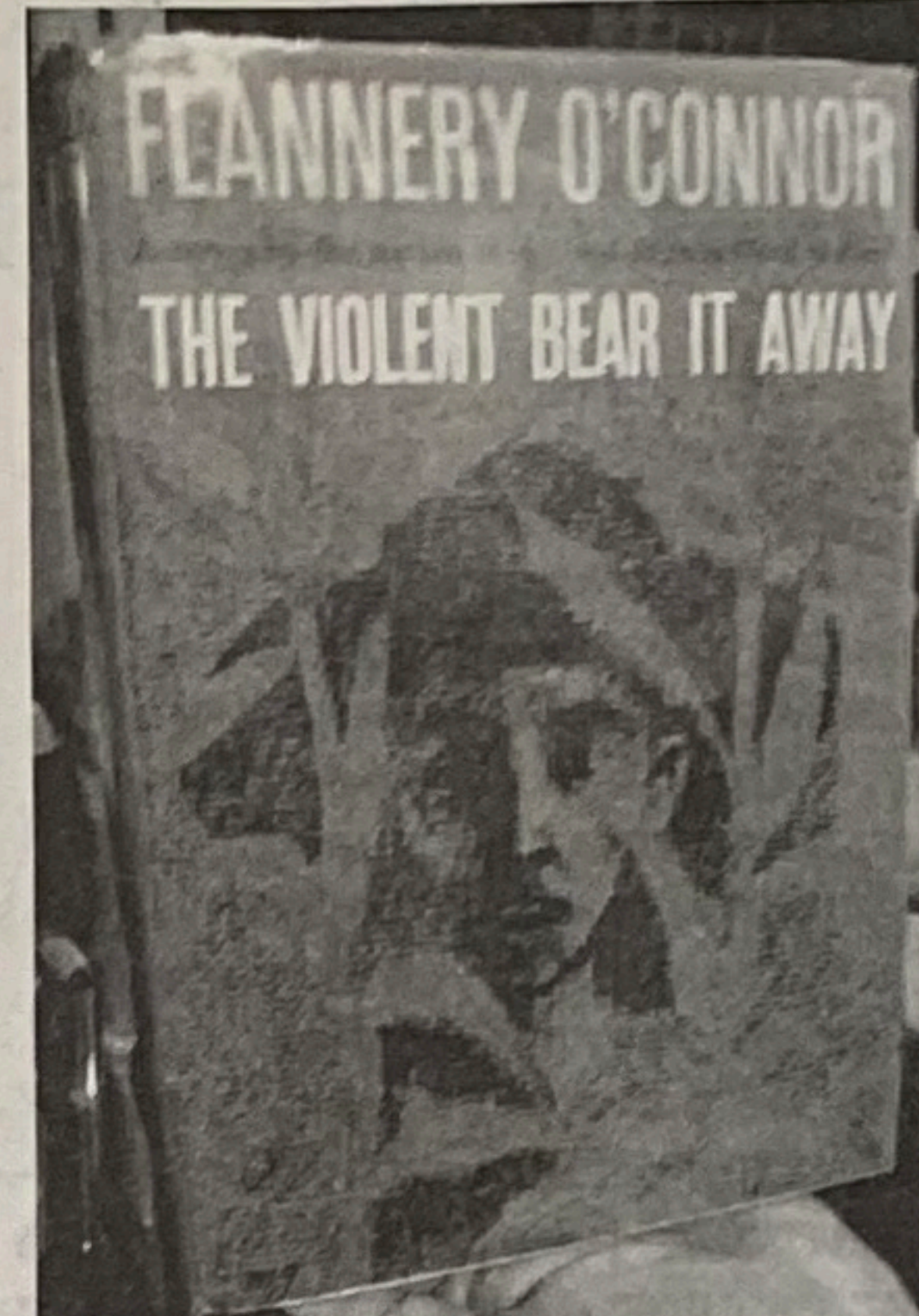
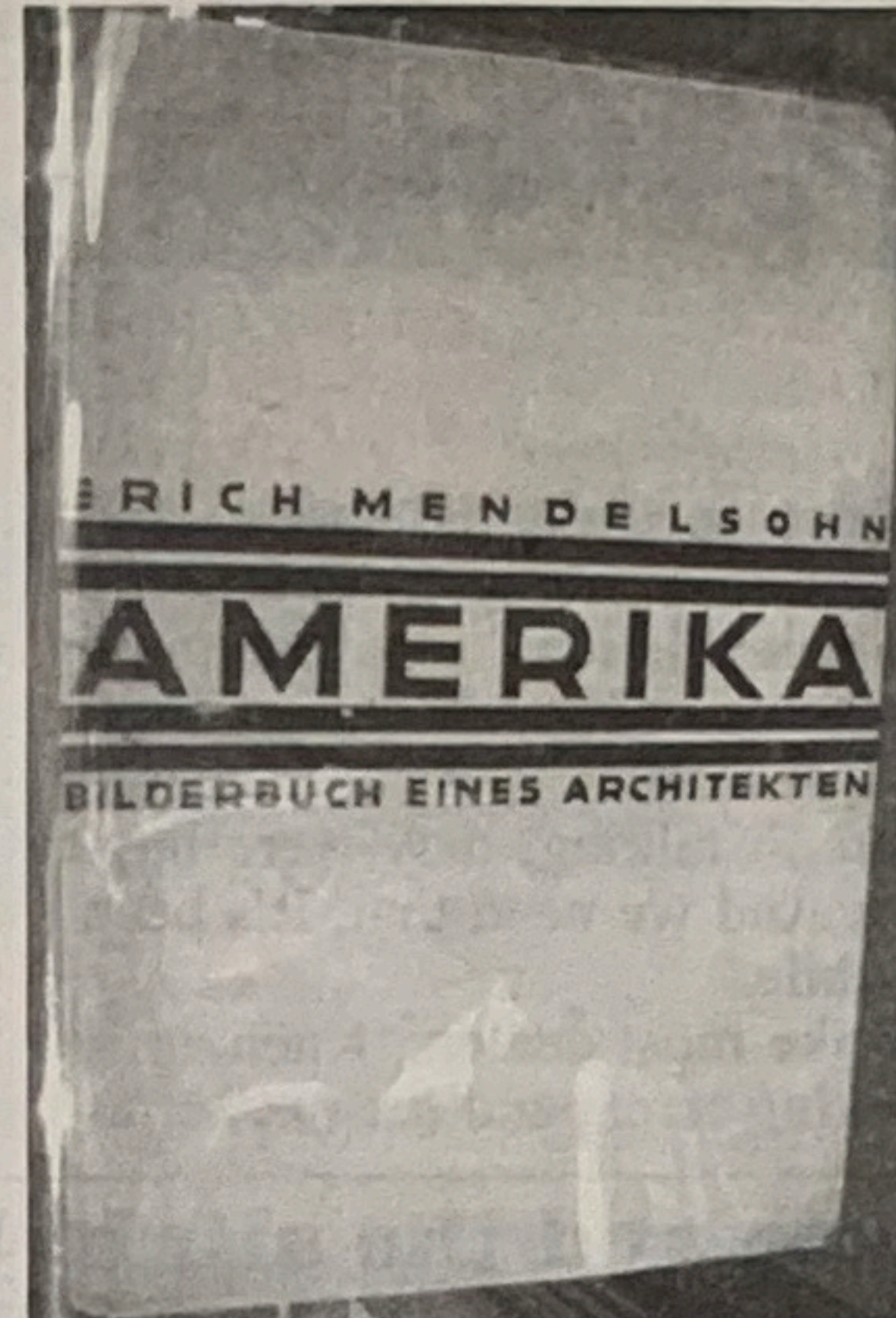
For more information, contact the Brunos at (603) 509-2639; Web site (www.flamingoeventz.com).



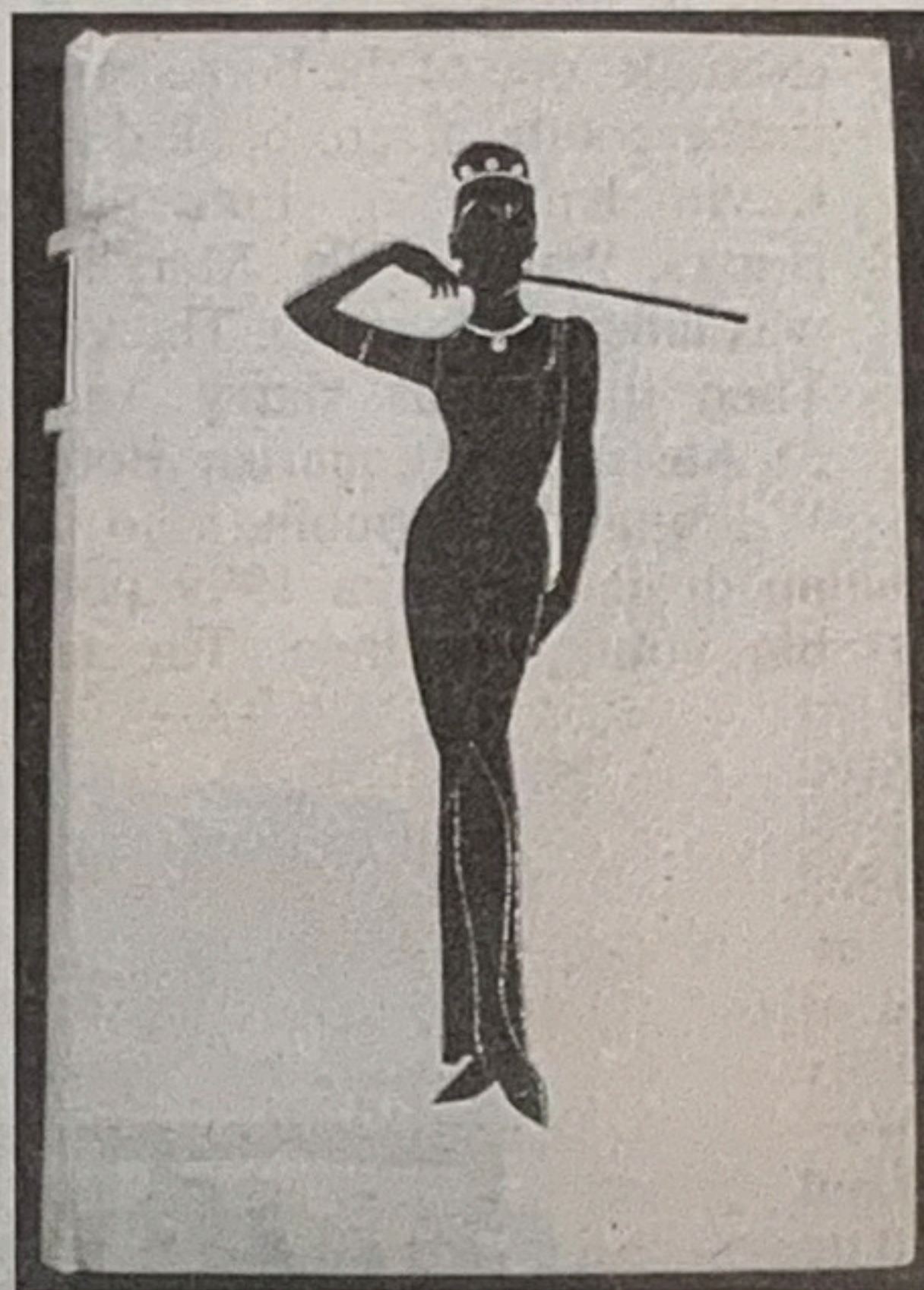
This copy of *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury, from a limited edition published in 1982, was signed by the author and the illustrator, Joe Mugnaini. Bound in full aluminum foil over paper boards, it was \$450, including its slipcase, from David W. Albert of Albert Books, Woodbury, New York. Albert said someone told him of a fire that had destroyed all the books in a collection except this one.



Erich Mendelsohn's *Amerika: Bilderbuch eines Architekten*, a book of New York skyscraper photographs published in Berlin in 1926, was \$650 from Joe Maynard of Brooklyn, New York.



Joe Maynard asked \$350 for a first-edition copy of Flannery O'Connor's second and final novel, *The Violent Bear It Away*, whose flap copy has proven over the decades not to have been hyperbolic. The *Times Literary Supplement* praised her "merciless humour, extraordinary composure, and a compassion so universal that it raises all her local characters to a universal scale." Caroline Gordon said of O'Connor, her protégée, that she was "one of the most important writers of our age." The book was published in 1960, and O'Connor died in 1964 at age 39.



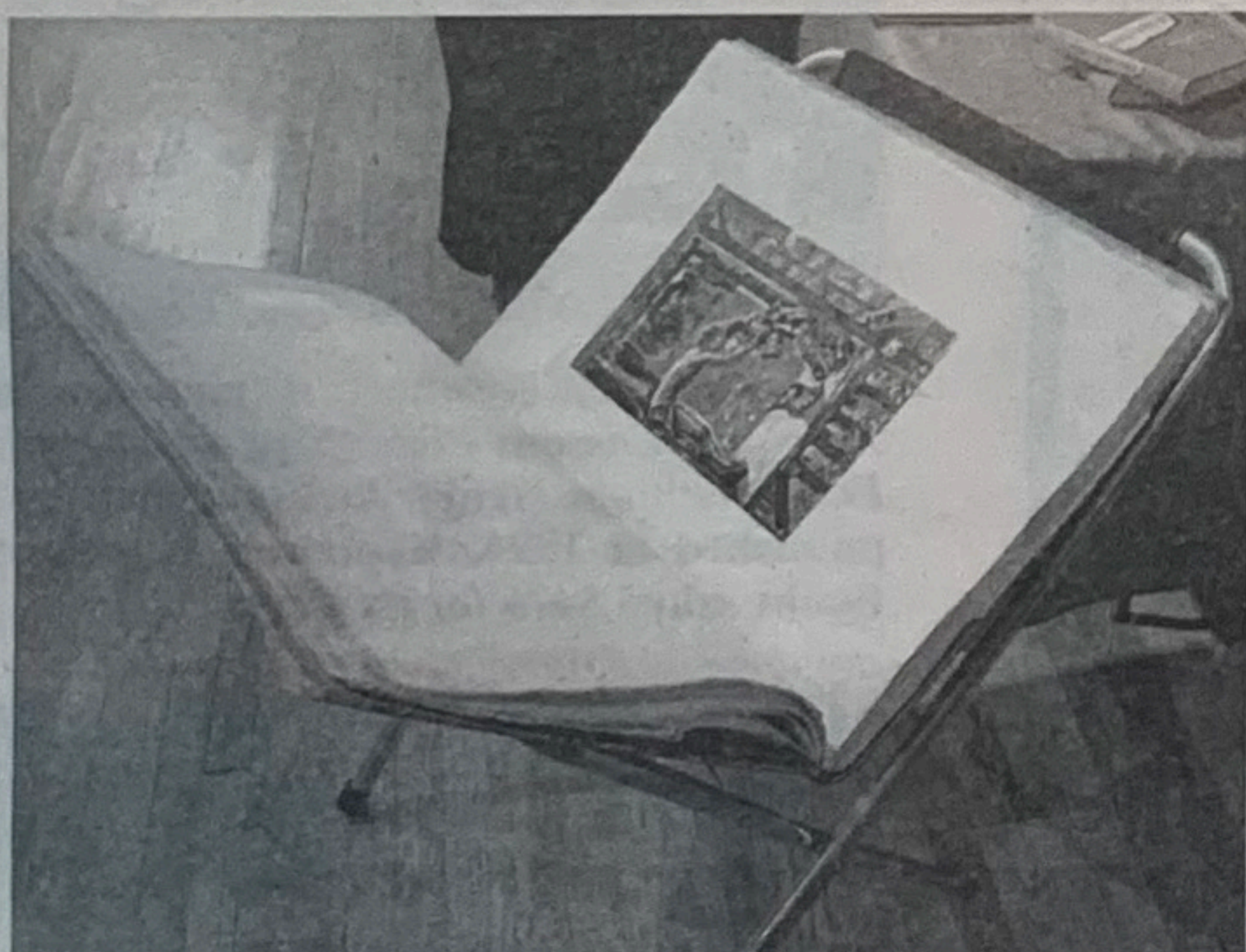
Holly Segar of Peter Harrington Rare Books, London, was showing an array of volumes finely bound by Harrington's Chelsea Bindery. This first edition, first printing of Truman Capote's *Breakfast at Tiffany's* (1958) is bound in pink morocco with a black leather onlay silhouette of Audrey Hepburn as Holly Golightly. The diamonds in Hepburn's earrings, necklace, and headress are real ones, Segar said. Housed in a custom-made black velvet drawstring bag, the book was priced at \$4500.



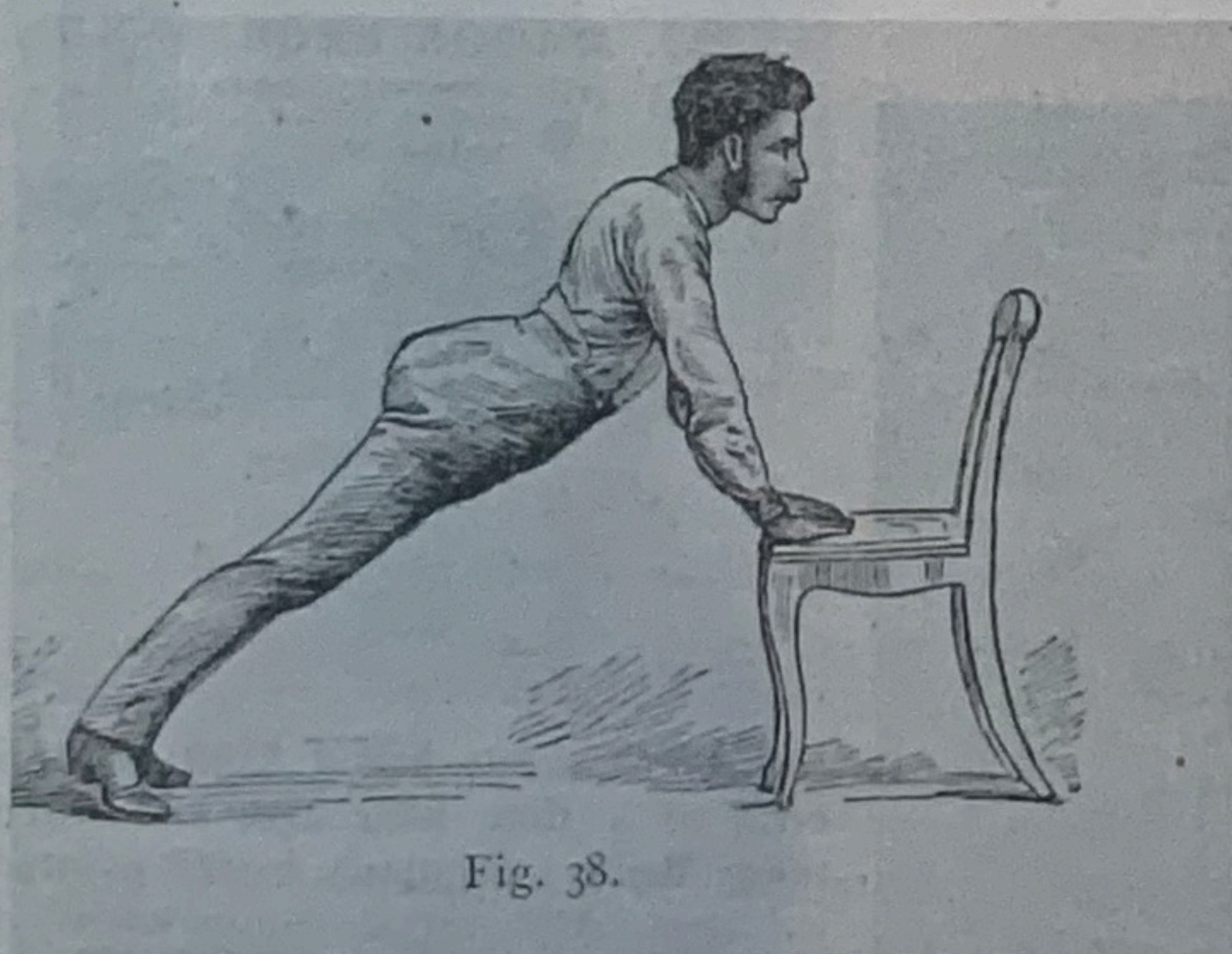
This first American edition of *Demian: The Story of Emil Sinclair's Youth* by Hermann Hesse was \$650 from Mark Brumberg of Boomerang Booksellers, Northampton, Massachusetts. Brumberg said it was issued without a dust jacket in 1923 by Boni & Liveright in New York City.



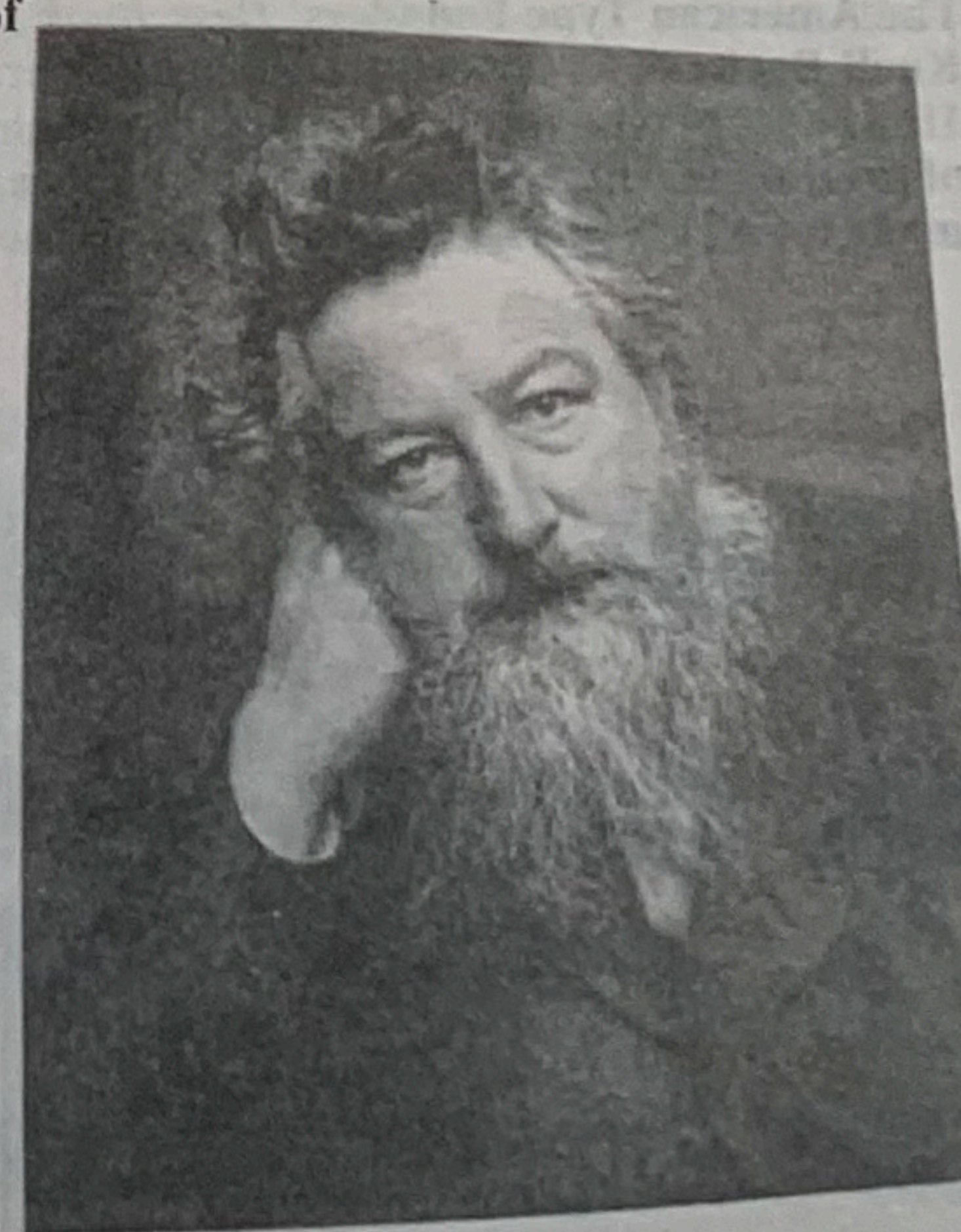
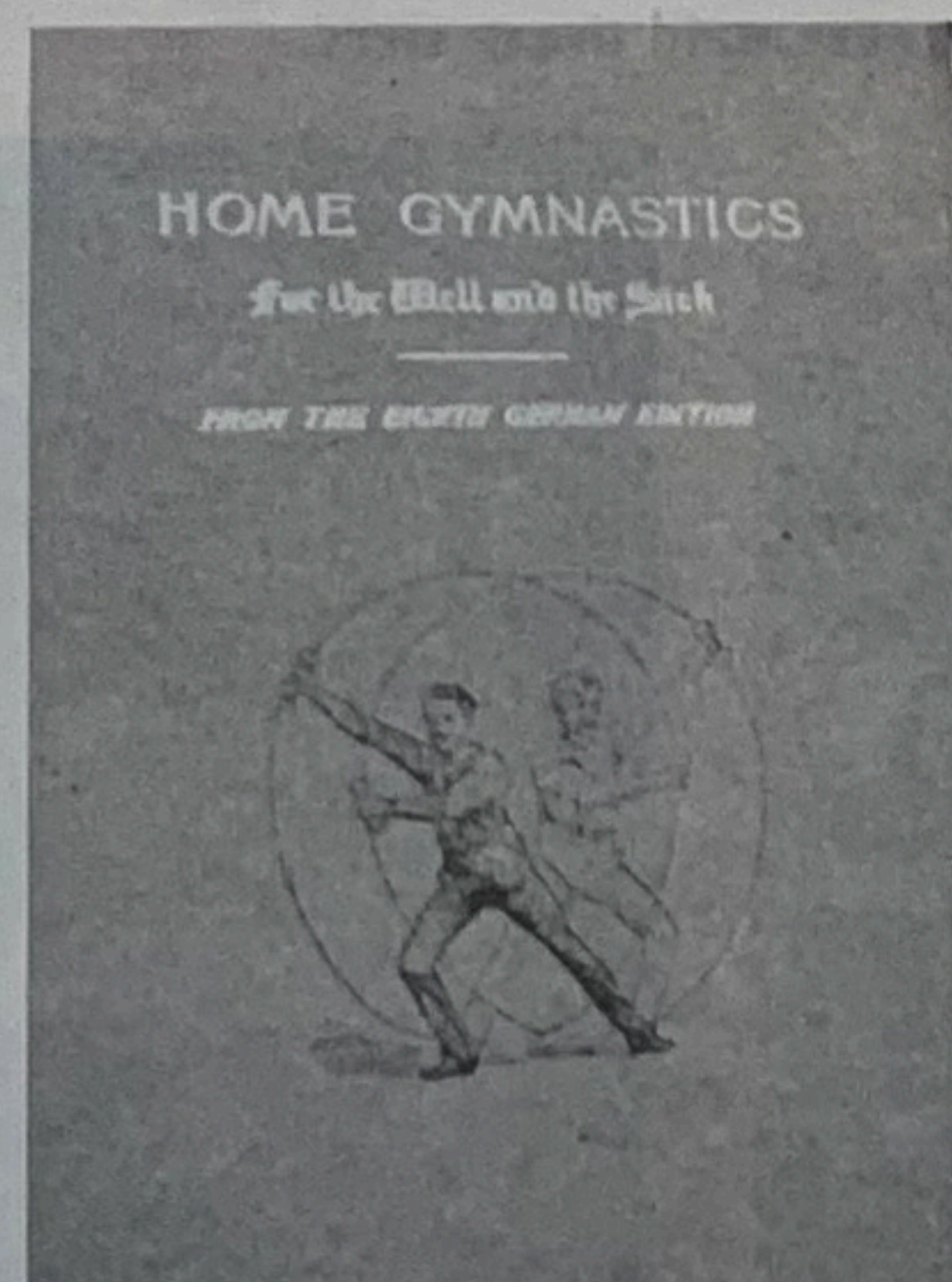
Kuenzig Books, Topsfield, Massachusetts, asked \$250 for this 20th-century, obviously larger-than-life, painted plastic model of the brain of a rock pigeon, *Columba livia*, made by Denoyer-Geppert of Chicago.



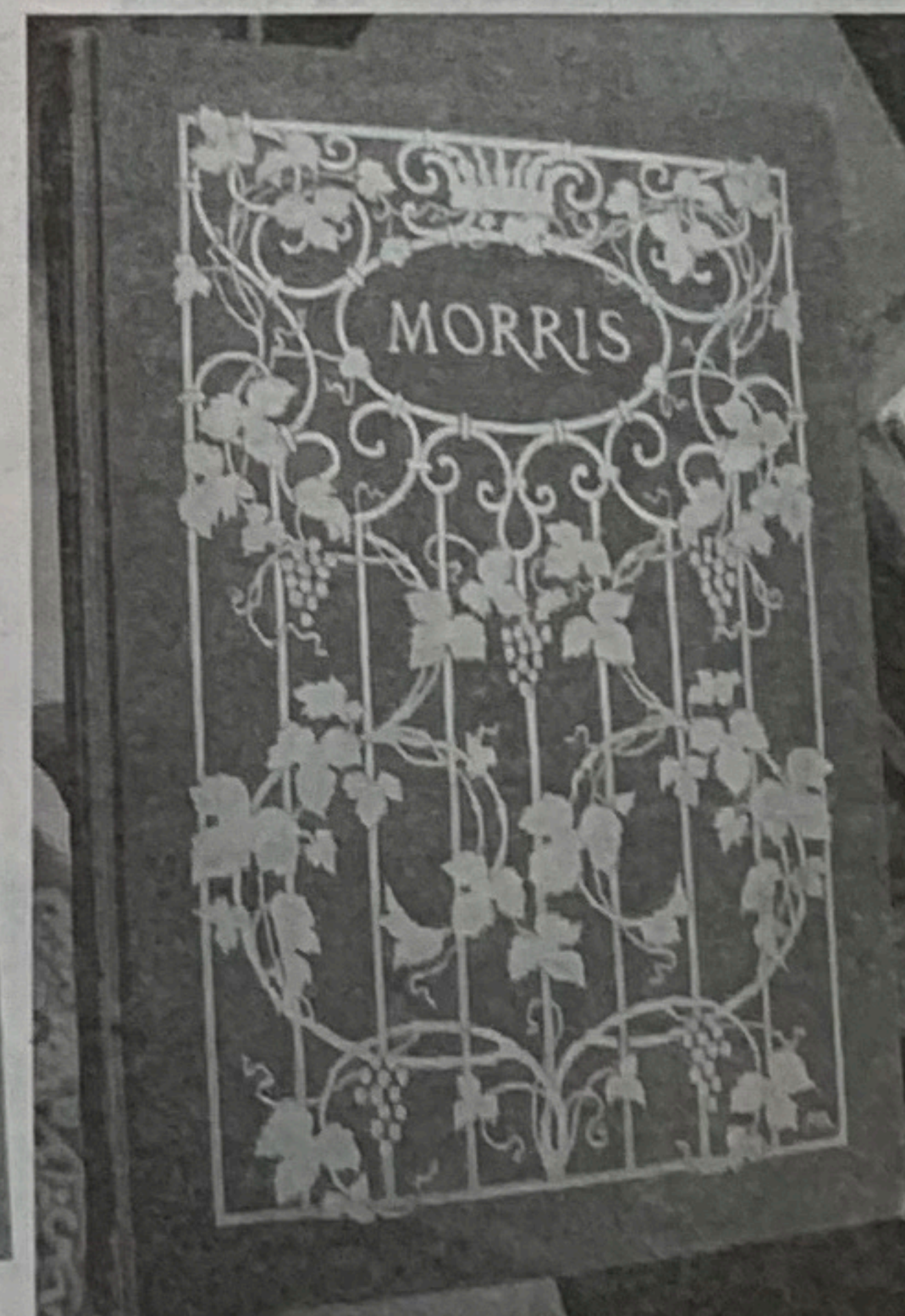
One of only 200 copies, *The Work of Edward Burne-Jones*, published in London in 1900 with 91 photogravure plates by the Berlin Photographic Company, was \$1350 from Bill Hutchison of Mendenhall, Pennsylvania.

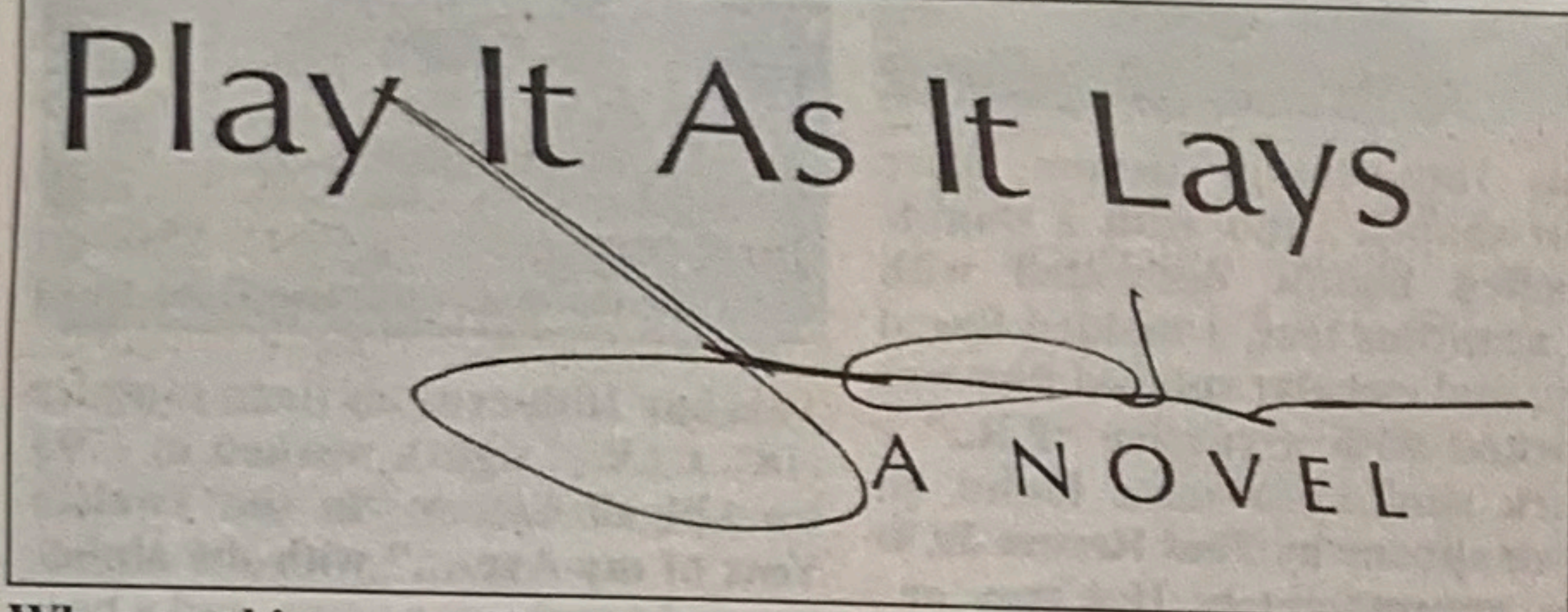
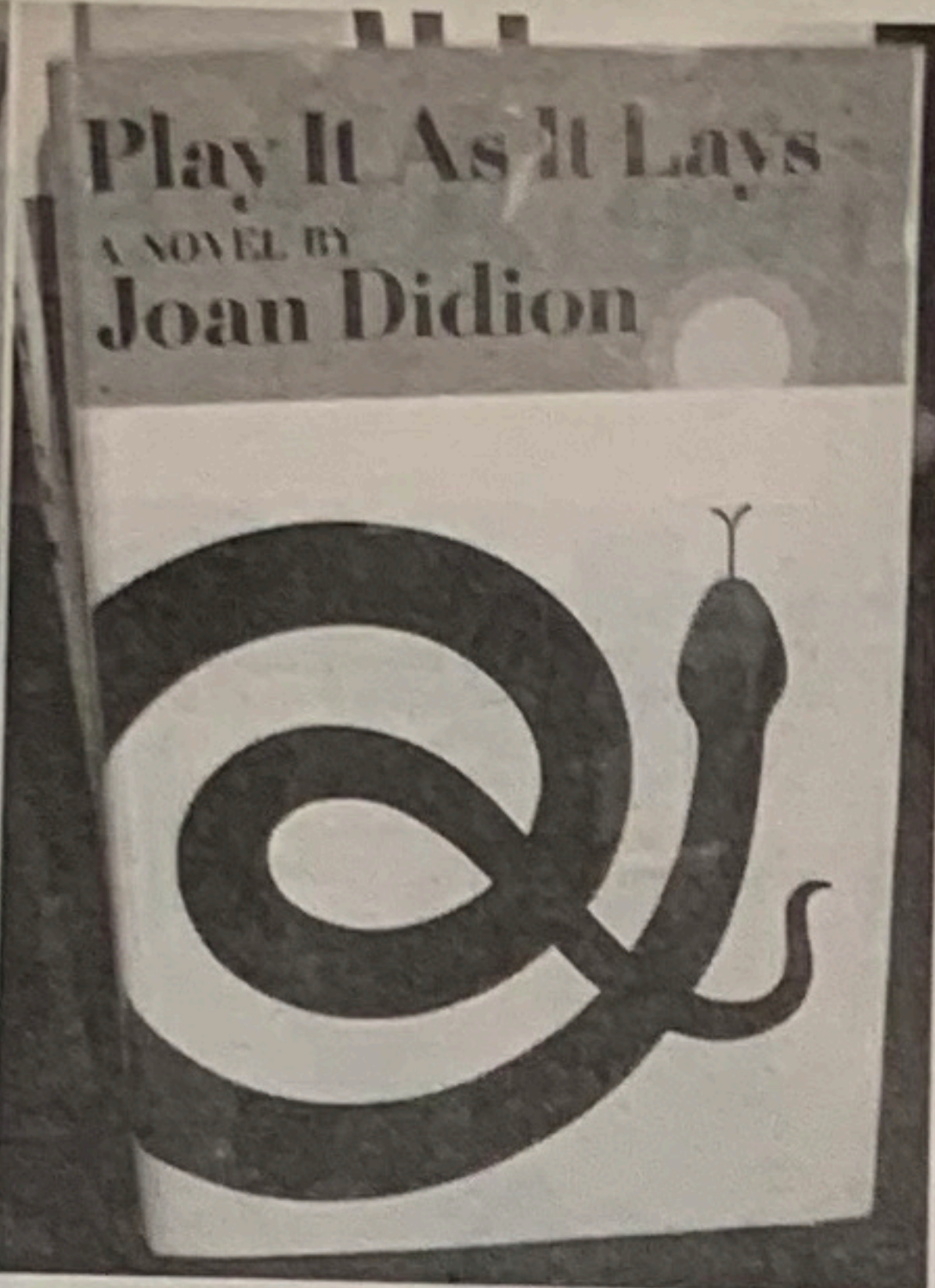
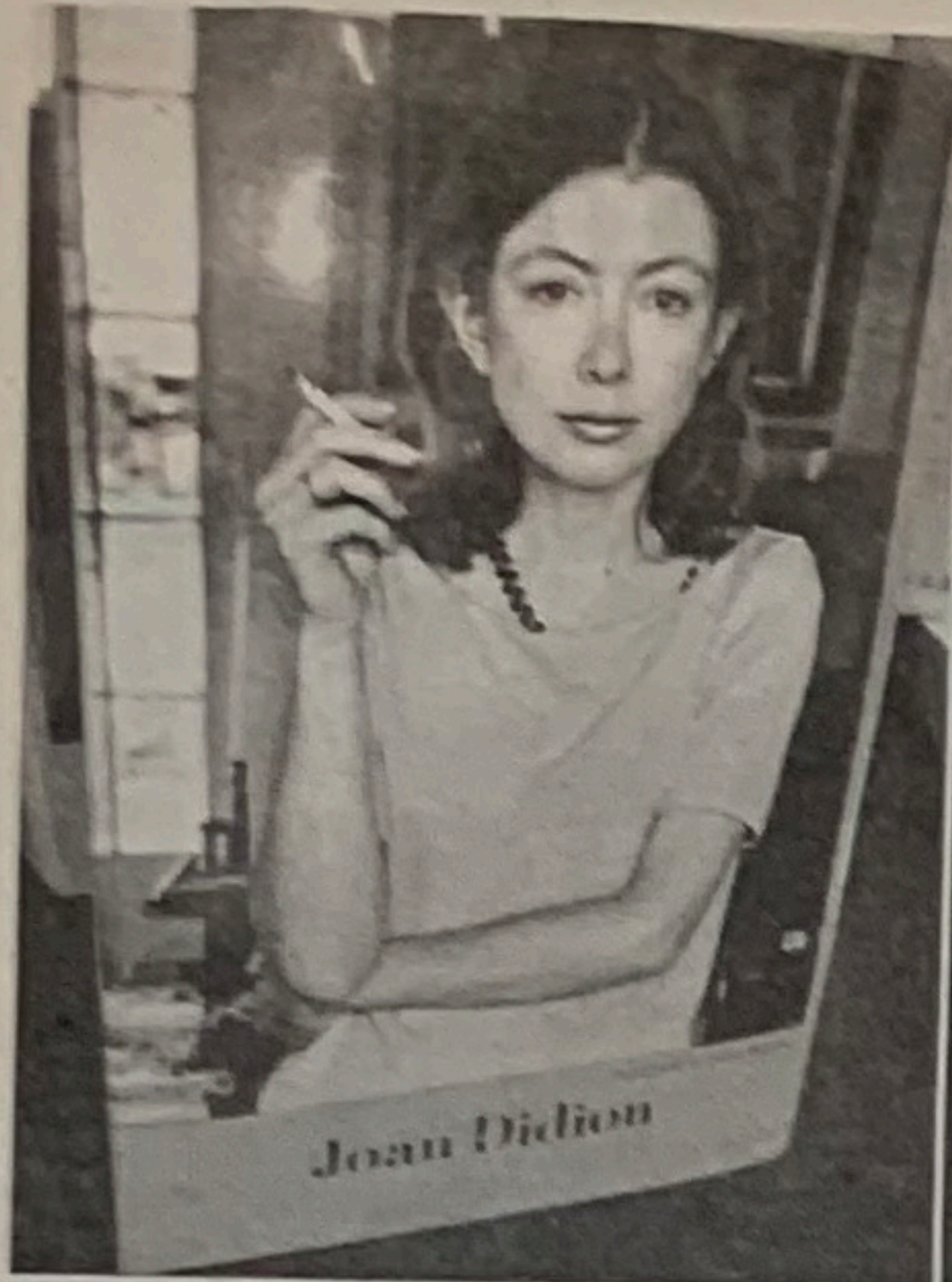


Dan Gaeta of John Bale Book Company, Waterbury, Connecticut, asked \$75 for *Home Gymnastics for the Well and the Sick*, edited by E. Angerstein, M.D. and G. Eckler. A translation from the eighth German edition, the book was published in Boston by Houghton Mifflin in 1889. It sold.

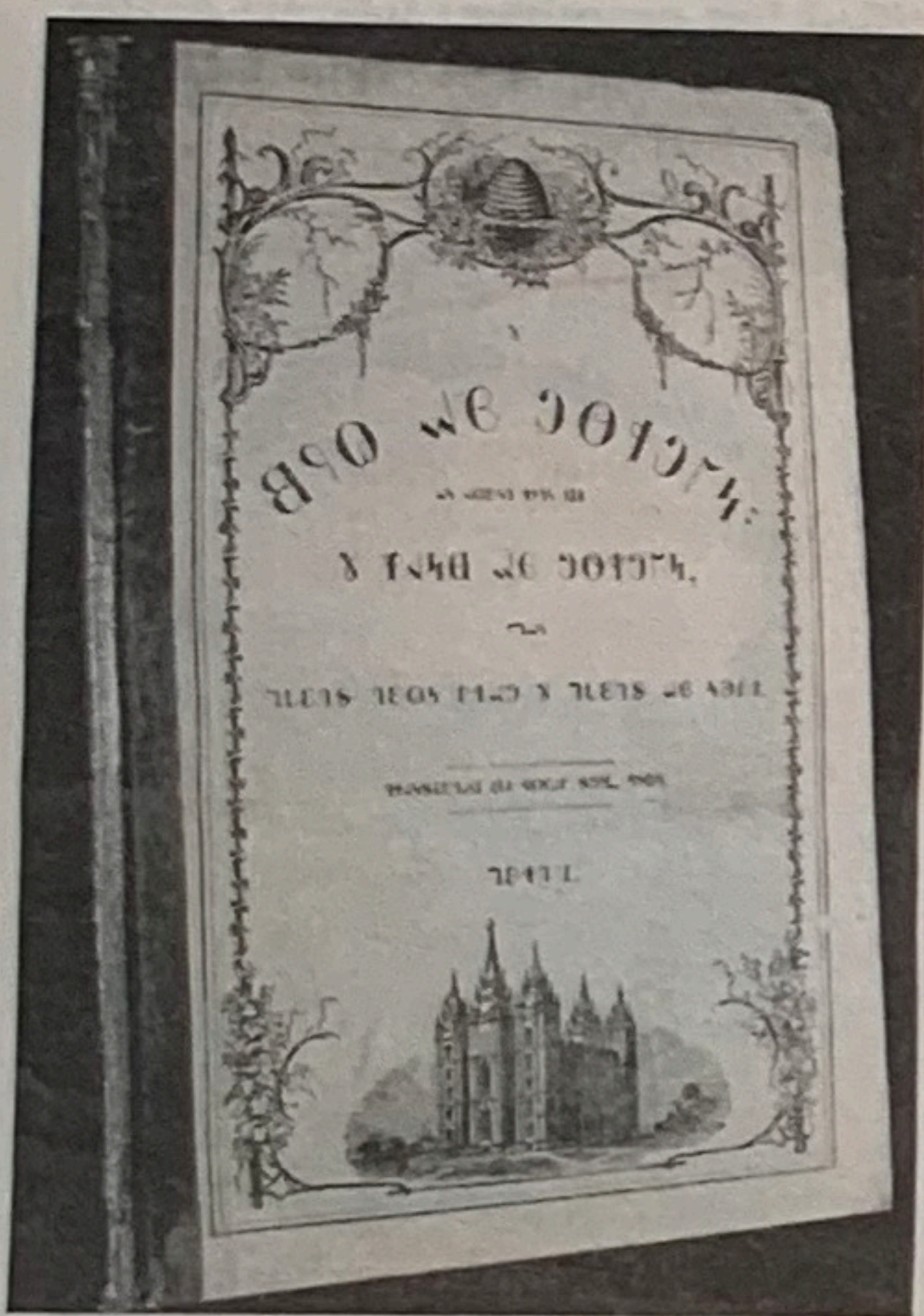


Duane A. Stevens of Wiggins Fine Books, Shelburne Falls, Massachusetts, wanted \$300 for *William Morris: Poet, Craftsman, Socialist* by Elizabeth Luther Cary, published in 1902 by G.P. Putnam's Sons. The book's cover in its original dark blue decorative cloth, stamped in gold, was designed by Margaret Armstrong.



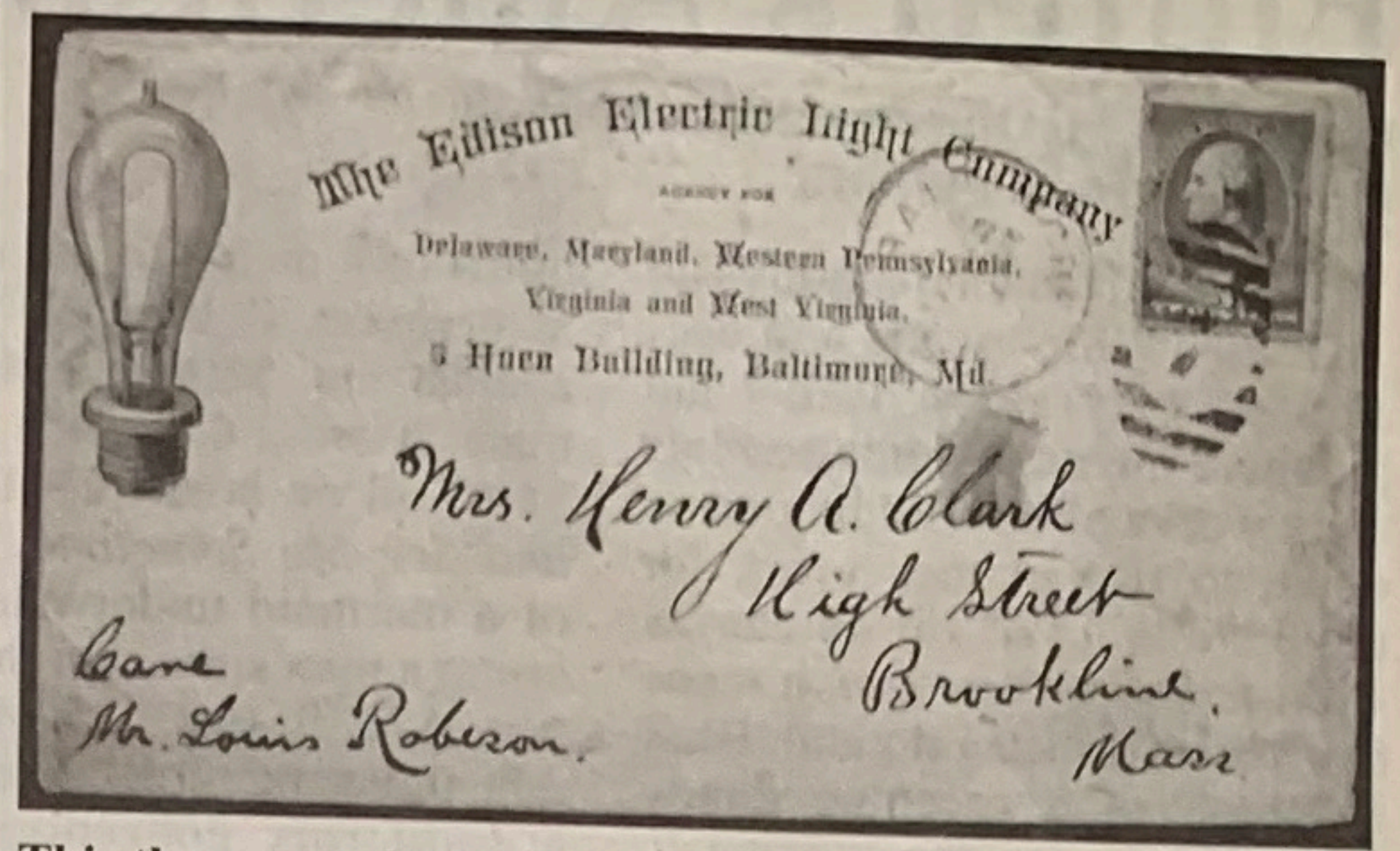
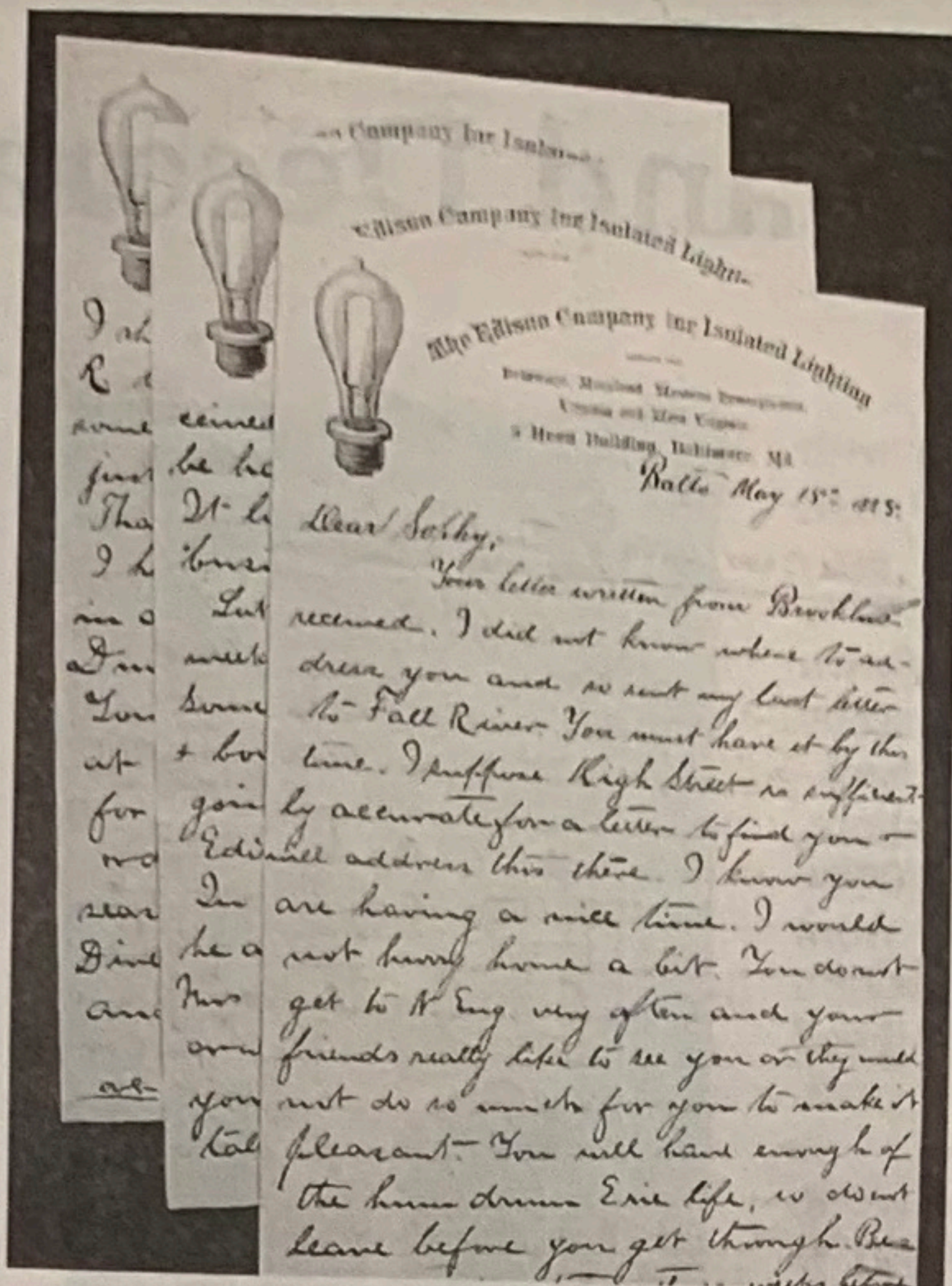
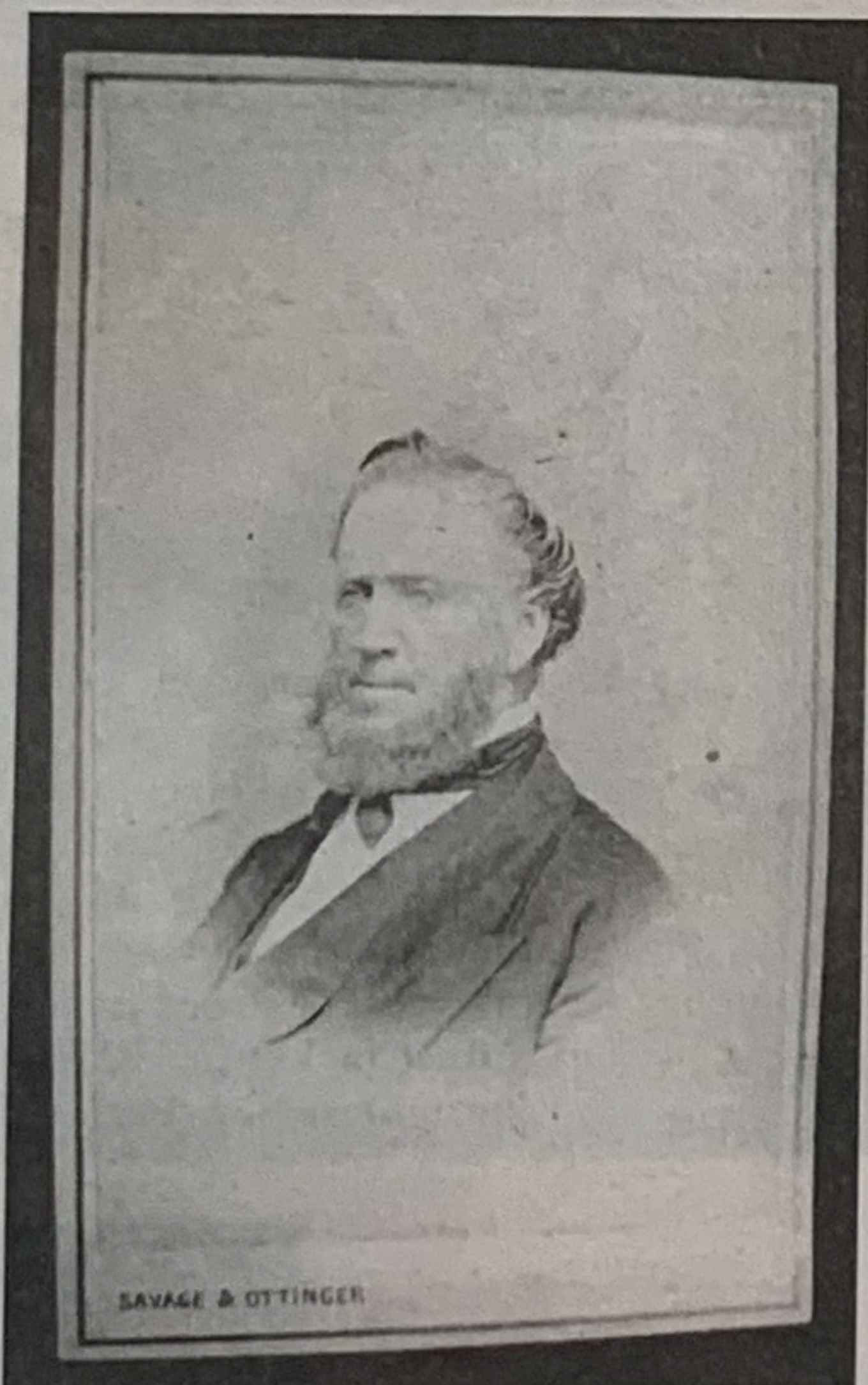


When smoking was still cool, Joan Didion signed this first edition of her first novel, *Play It As It Lays*, published in 1970. Ginger Curwen Books, New York City, had it priced at \$150.



Melissa Sanders of Red Queen Book Arts, Salt Lake City, Utah, had this carte de visite of Brigham Young (1801-1877) priced at \$600.

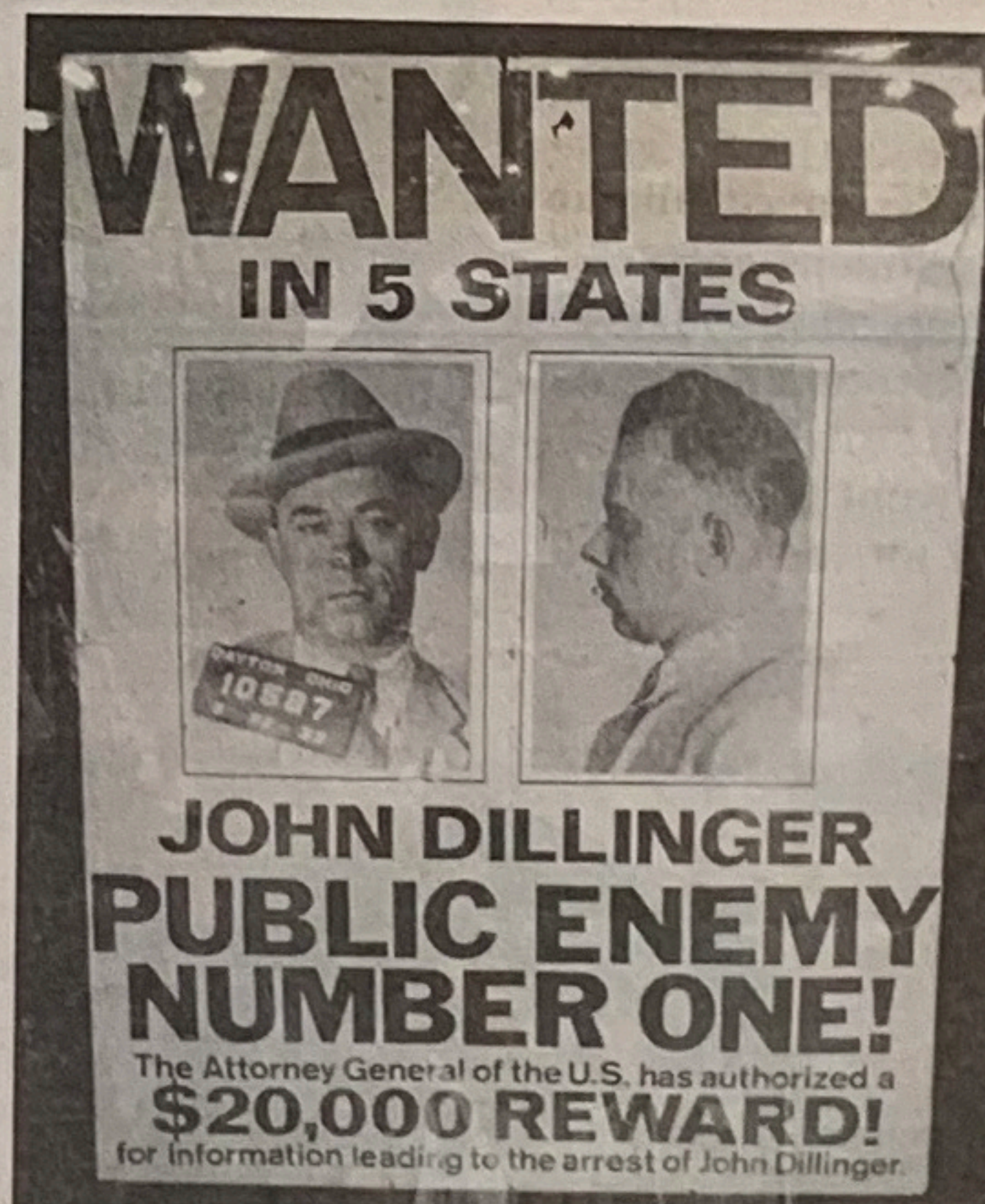
You might imagine that you could hold this up to a mirror and read what it says, but it's not written in English. Titled *Selections from the Book of Mormon in the Deseret Alphabet*, it was published in 1869 in New York City for Deseret University. The alphabet, developed at the university (now the University of Utah), was promoted by the Mormons. "One of the more unusual ideas of Brigham Young, it was wildly unpopular and died with him," explained Melissa Sanders, who had it priced at \$400. For more information, see the Web site (www.deseretalphabet.org).



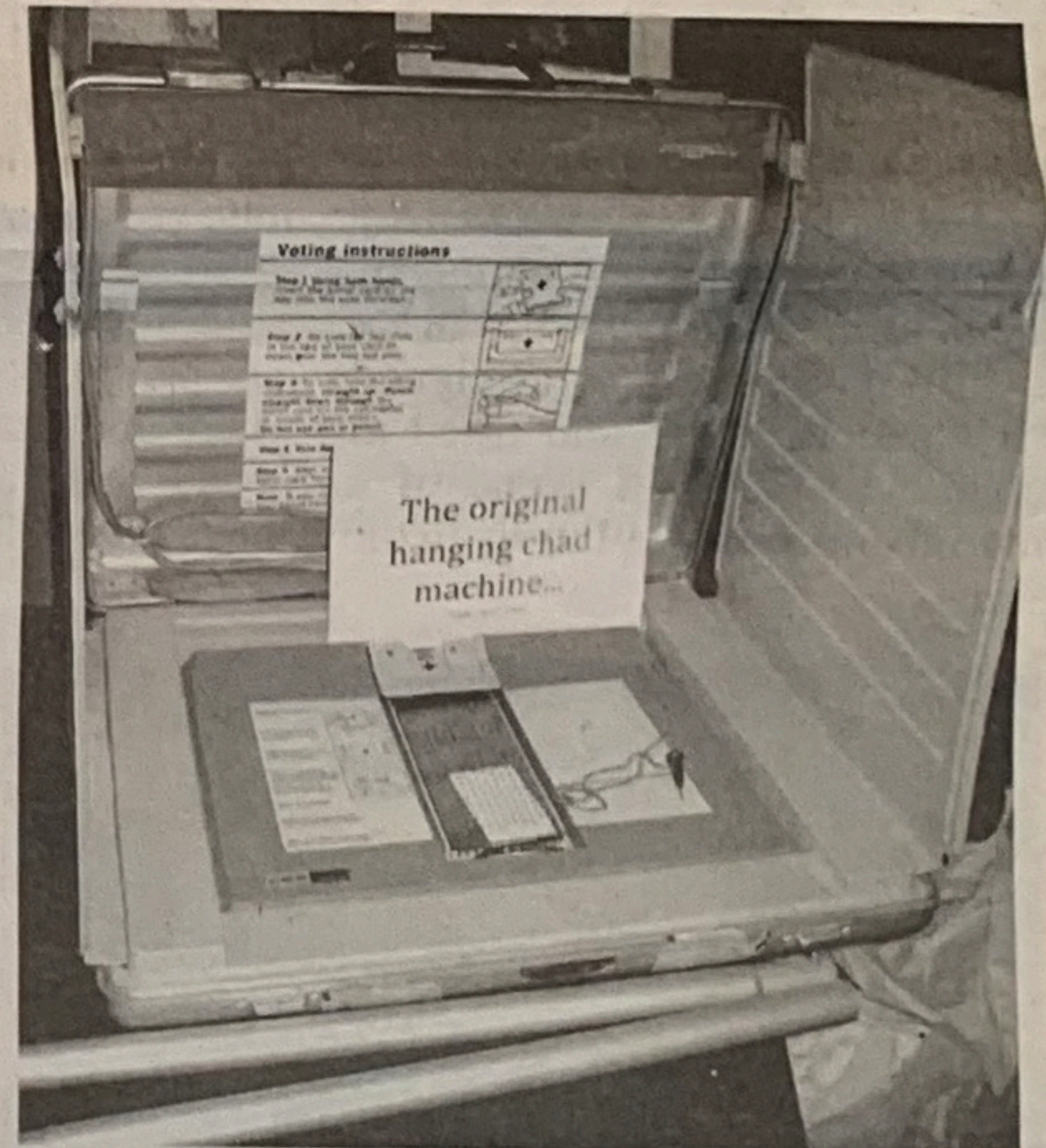
This three-page letter from Thomas A. Edison to Mrs. Henry Alden "Sophy" Clark discusses, among other things, Edison's patent infringement lawsuit. Written on great letterhead and with its original envelope, it was \$1500 from Resser-Thorner Antiques, Manchester, New Hampshire.



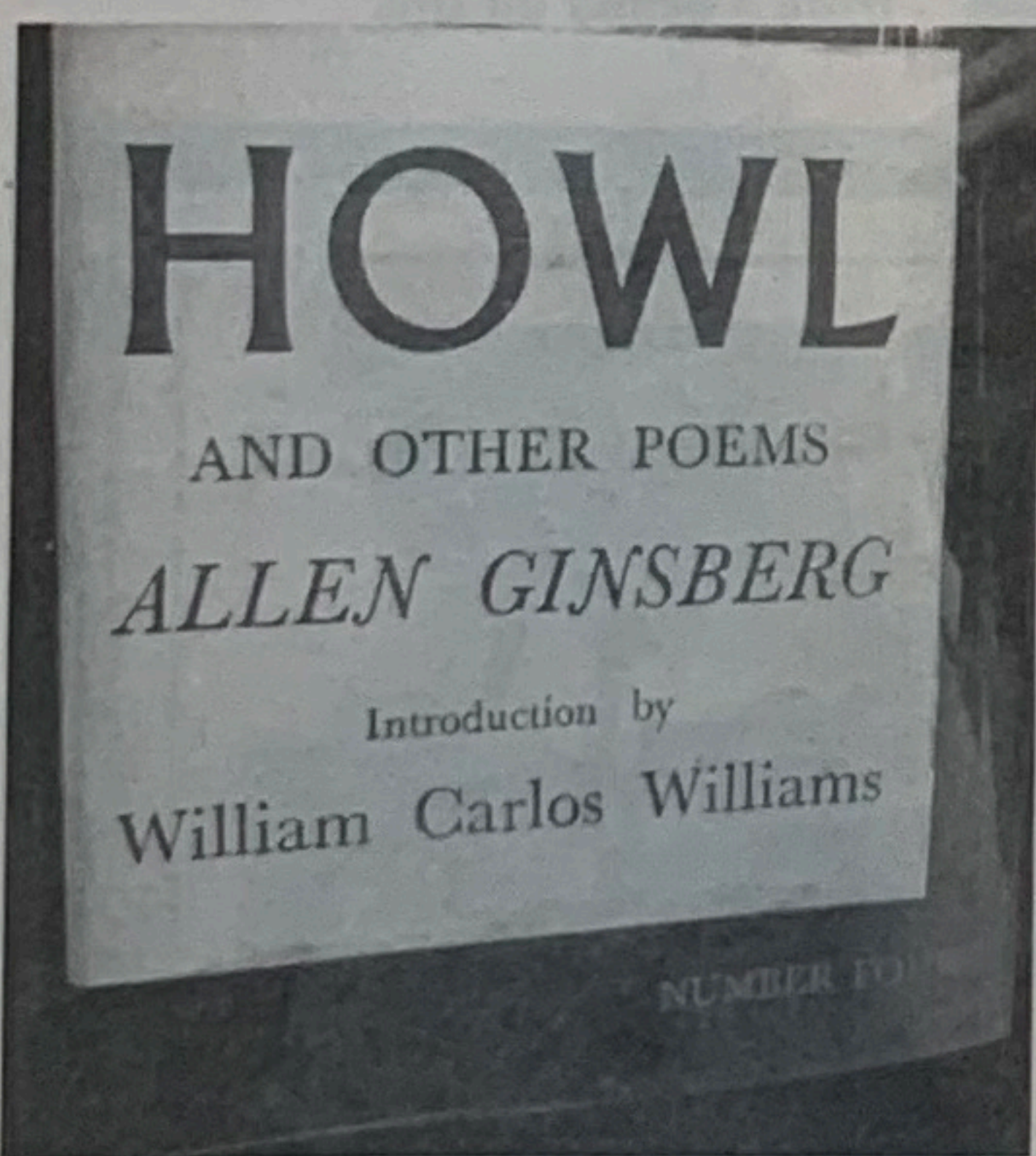
This watch paper, printed by Wm. P. Collyer of Pawtucket, Rhode Island, was \$75 from Resser-Thorner Antiques, Manchester, New Hampshire. The diameter of the paper, meant to fit inside a pocket watch case, is 1 7/8". Bob Frishman, its buyer, kindly provided this information about watch papers in general: "Watch papers, sometimes found singly or in stacks inside the back covers of 18th- and 19th-century English-made pair-case pocket watches, would identify the original seller and/or later repairers of the watch. They were printed and cut into circles of the correct size, and sometimes included handwritten dates or notes pertaining to the watch. They could also reduce rubbing, rattling, and scratching of the inner and outer watch cases, although circles of cloth were also used for that purpose. Their presence inside a watch case usually enhances the watch's value to a collector."



This John Dillinger "Wanted" poster was \$1500 from Howard Caine, who does business as Eastside Books & Paper. The New York City dealer also had such things as vintage covers of *The New Yorker* for \$1 apiece. I saw a young woman gathering up a pile of them.



This circa 1999 portable voting machine was \$375 from Garry Austin of Austin's Antiquarian Books, Wilmington, Vermont.



David Anthony Johnson of Pryor-Johnson Rare Books, New York City, said the price of his copy of Allen Ginsberg's *Howl and Other Poems* (1956) was \$12,000 because it was signed by Ginsberg and by Carl Solomon, to whom the title poem was dedicated.



Eager shoppers at the entrance to the show before the opening.



Certainly an appropriate activity for a man waiting to get into a book show: reading.