



Small engraving of angel vignette

Bank Notes with Leonardo's "Madonna of the Rocks" Angel Detail

By DR. JOHN A. MUSCALUS

Copyright 1975

ALTHOUGH vignettes of paintings of the great masters of art beautify bank notes, identification of paintings is not difficult when the entire painting was reproduced on notes. However, sometimes only a detail from a great painting was used on notes and consequently the identity of the painting has gone unrecognized for many years. Such is the case with Leonardo da Vinci's "Madonna of the Rocks" of which only the angel was used on bank notes and railroad notes.

Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519) was a great universal genius whose abilities were superior in a number of areas: art, music, sculpture, invention, engineering, the natural and physical sciences, etc. Those great talents are all the more interesting because he was born in Vinci in 1452 to an unmarried ordinary peasant girl and a father who was a notary to wealthy families. Nevertheless he was raised in his father's home and his talents provided for.

The father showed Leonardo's art work to Andrea del Verrocchio, a famous Florentine painter and sculptor known today for his "David," "General Colleoni," "Madonna and Child," etc. Verrocchio was satisfied that Leonardo was worthy of an apprenticeship in his studio. During that apprenticeship Leonardo worked with him on the painting of "The Baptism of Christ." Around 1482, Leonardo entered the court of Ludovico Sforza of Milan where he served until 1499. During that time he was given a variety of assignments, of which a major one was to sculpt an equestrian statue of Ludovico's father. Although the model of the statue was completed, it was never cast due to numerous interruptions caused by other assignments.

While in Milan, Leonardo painted "The Virgin of the Rocks" and "The Last Supper." The latter was painted on the wall of the Convent of the Santa Maria della Grazie. Leonardo also founded an academy in which Andrea del Sarto and Beltraccio were students.



It was around 1503 or so that he began painting the world-renowned "Mona Lisa" which was purchased by Francis I of France for some 4000 gold florins but eventually became one of the most prized possessions of the Louvre. In 1516, Francis I gave him a yearly pension and the use of the Chateaux Cloux. Leonardo died there in 1519.

There exists much contradictory data among the biographies of Leonardo da Vinci; even the alphabetical listing of his name differs. Consequently, one must be aware that such contradictions exist regarding times and places of his numerous travels and paintings.

Turning now to the painting on the notes, that is, "Madonna of the Rocks," there are two versions of it. The first was commissioned as an altarpiece in 1483 for the Brotherhood of the Immaculate Conception in Milan. It was finished in 1485 or so and was entirely the work of Leonardo and is now in the Louvre. The angel is very typical of Leonardo's masterly technique. It is this detail that was copied by the bank note engravers.

The second version is now in the National Gallery of London. It was begun by Leonardo and Ambrogio de

MICHIGAN



1. Detroit: The Bank of Michigan, \$2, 1839

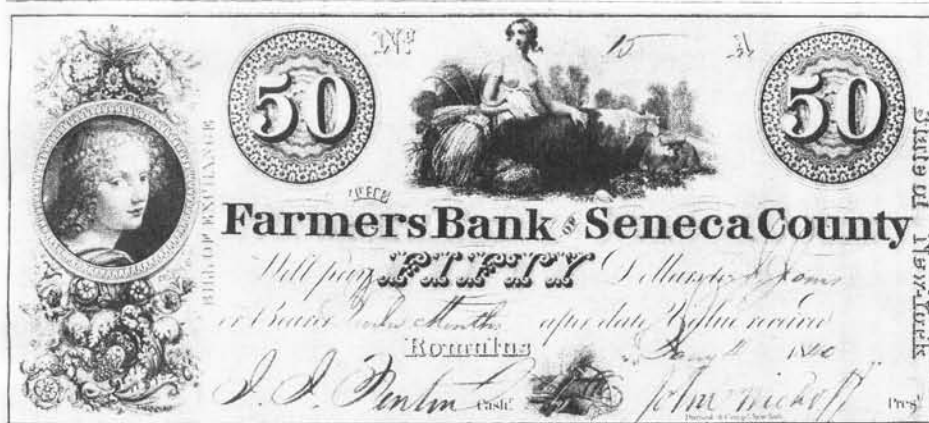
2. Monroe: River Raisin & Lake Erie Railroad Co., \$1 1840



NEW YORK



3. New York: The Chemical Bank, \$5, \$50



4. Romulus: The Farmers Bank of Seneca County, \$20, \$50



5. Steubenville: The Bank of Steubenville, \$5, 1839

Predis around 1495, but disputes arose over supplementary payments and it was not until about 1508 that it was finished and placed in the Chapel of the Confraternity of the Church of San Francesco. Later it was acquired by the National Gallery in 1880.

In the painting, the angel is looking out toward the viewers. It is said to be the first painting to have one of the subjects looking out of the picture. However, the bank note vignette portrays the angel facing in the opposite direction as if it were a mirror image of the original. Also, the angel was adorned by the engraver with a diadem consisting of a circlet of stars, which is presumably his way of indicating that the subject is someone very special, just as the halo indicates in religious art.

The following notes engraved by Durand & Company, New York, in the Muscalus Archives have the detail of the angel from Leonardo da Vinci's "Madonna of the Rocks":

Michigan

1. Detroit: The Bank of Michigan, \$2, 1839
2. Monroe: River Raisin & Lake Erie Railroad Co., \$1 1840

New York

3. New York: The Chemical Bank, \$5, \$50
4. Romulus: The Farmers Bank of Seneca County, \$20, \$50
5. Steubenville: The Bank of Steubenville, \$5, 1839

South Carolina

6. Charleston: Louisville, Cincinnati, & Charleston Railroad Co., \$500

Printing Trade Term Similar to "Syngraphics"

SPMC'er George W. Brett has called our attention to the use of the term "syngraphics" in the printing industry. It is actually the name of a concern involved in the business of printing. The headline of their advertisement in a recent trade journal reads "Signode/Syngraphics bundling system," with the first word indicated as a registered trademark. It is followed by "Signode Corporation, in cooperation with Syngraphics, has developed". . . etc. So perhaps our spanking new word for paper money—syngraphics—is not quite unique.