

# Engraved Charter Number Error

## \$10 Series of 1902

### Smyrna, Delaware



Notice that the left charter number in the lower border of the C position \$10 is 2339 instead of 2336! (Photo by Douglas Mudd, Smithsonian Institution.)

ONE of the most unusual errors that I have seen on a national bank note is the one pictured here from the 10-10-10-20 Series of 1902 plate for The Fruit Growers National Bank of Smyrna, Delaware (2336). Notice that the left charter number in the lower border of the C position \$10 is 2339, not 2336.

This plate was approved for use on May 16, 1916, after the corporate life of the bank had been extended for the second time. It went to press shortly thereafter.

The error was discovered in 1920, so the plate was altered to correct it. The altered plate was approved for use on September 29, 1920. However, 870 error sheets had been printed since 1916, the last having been delivered to the Comptroller of the

Currency from the Bureau of Engraving and Printing on December 23, 1919, in a shipment consisting of sheets 711 to 870. A total of 801 of the error sheets had already been sent to the bank. The most recent lot, serial 796 through 801, went out on September 18, 1920, just eleven days before the plate was fixed.

What you might find interesting is that the Comptroller continued to issue the remaining 69 error sheets to the bank. The last was sent January 26, 1921.

Ultimately, 4227 Series of 1902 plain back 10-10-10-20 sheets were issued before the title was changed to The Fruit Growers National Bank and Trust Company on December 1, 1925. Another 2631 sheets bore the second title.

I stumbled onto this error in May 1997, through serendipity. After spending a day studying proofs at the Smithsonian Institution, I found I had a free half hour before closing time. The small holding of Delaware seemed about the right size to occupy those minutes. Leafing through the proofs, I noticed a penciled notation in the left margin of the Smyrna proof which upon reading revealed the error.

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## THE PAPER COLUMN

by Peter Huntoon