



Women Signers of U.S. Federal Currency

AWARENESS OF FEMALE SIGNATURES ON U.S. paper money began with the signature of Georgia Neese Clark on Series 1928F United States Notes. This lady held the office of U.S. Treasurer from mid-1949 until January 1953. Since that time it has been customary for a woman to hold this office. Since then an additional 12 ladies have been appointed as U.S. Treasurers.

Before someone corrects me and states that there are 13 female signatures on our currency since Ms Clark, an explanation is necessary. During the term of Mrs. Dorothy Andrews Elston, she married Walter L. Kabis. Consequently, the same person continued as U.S. Treasurer, however on subsequent notes her engraved signature became Dorothy Andrews Kabis. This is the only time the signature of a United States Treasurer was changed while in office.

Female U.S. Treasurers are: Georgia Neese Clark, Francine I. Neff, Ivy Baker Priest, Azie Taylor Morton, Elizabeth Rudel Smith, Angela M. Buchanan, Kathryn O'Hay Granahan, Katherine Davalos Ortega, Dorothy Andrews Elston, Catalina Vasquez Villalpando, Dorothy Andrews Kabis, Mary Ellen Withrow, Romana Acosta Banuelos, and Rosario Marin.

You might be surprised to know that signatures of females, in a non-federal treasury capacity, appeared on our currency almost 50 years earlier. This came about because National Bank Notes required the signatures of

the cashier and the president of the issuing bank. National Bank Notes were first issued in 1863. National Banks were granted 20-year charters and there were three charter periods. The second charter period began in 1882, and it was during this period and the following years that female signatures appeared on National Bank Notes.

Former SPMC President Frank Clark, an avid collector of Texas National Bank Notes, has compiled a list of woman signers of Nationals. With Frank's permission, I included his list in the most recent edition (1997) of the *Comprehensive Catalog of U.S. Paper Money*. There are 83 different names on this list; these ladies signed as cashier, assistant cashier, president and vice president, and there are 24 states and two territories represented. When the cashier or president was not available, the assistant cashier and vice president were called upon to sign the National Currency before they were issued.

Nebraska can claim the signatures of eleven women on notes for nine different National Banks. Oklahoma, another western frontier state and territory, has six female signers. We read about tough responsible frontier woman, and National Currency with their signatures confirm this. Six states have only one signature of a female bank officer on its notes. Peter Huntoon and Karl S. Kabelac have written comprehensively about two female bank officers. In *Paper Money*, No. 142, Peter Huntoon covers the life of Mary McNelis Costello who served as president of the First National Bank of Tombstone, Arizona. Her daughter served as both cashier and vice president, which means that the signatures of mother and daughter, president and cashier, can be found on the notes of this bank, rare as they are.

In the more recent *Paper Money*, No. 201, Mr. Kabelac informs readers about Kate Gleason, president of the First National Bank of East Rochester, New York. She gave the

first \$20 National Bank Note that she signed to Dr. Anna Howard Shaw, colleague of Susan B. Anthony and other suffragists. Karl has written on additional females who signed Nationals since.

If you are looking for a collecting theme, consider notes with female signatures. Recent Federal Reserve notes that are unavailable at your bank can be purchased for moderate amounts, and there will be more female signatures on our paper money as subsequent U.S. treasurers are appointed.

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