

National Bank Notes from Bowling Green, KY

Part I

J. Fred Maples

Introduction

I CAUGHT THE BUG ABOUT 15 YEARS AGO. A GOOD FRIEND, Howard Daniel, introduced me to paper money collecting and I've been hooked ever since. I'm originally from Bowling Green, KY. Howard taught me that collecting one's home town is a neat way to start a paper money collection. I had collected coins for years, but once I started researching and collecting nationals, I was hooked. In this article I share what I've learned about national bank notes from Bowling Green.

Bowling Green is located in Warren County, about two hours south of Louisville, and one hour north of Nashville. Bowling Green is a college town, and home to Western Kentucky University.

I've collected as many Bowling Green nationals as I can afford. I've collected 24 of the 25 known combinations of type and denomination, and have a fair number of duplicates and signature combinations. Bowling Green supported six national banks, with notes reported from four of the six banks. Notes from two of the four known banks are fairly common, while notes from the other two banks are rare. Bowling Green had large notes from all three charter periods – although the first charter notes are unreported. Bowling Green had small notes including Type 1s and Type 2s. I've had fun with all my notes, but I've especially enjoyed studying Brown Backs and Red Seals. My only disappointment involves not being able to collect \$5 Brown Backs – no Bowling Green bank issued them.

Even for notes that I couldn't acquire, I've learned as much about them as possible. I've learned about the different bank officers and their signature combinations. I've contacted several descendants of the officers hoping notes were passed down as heirlooms. I've learned which notes had the S-South geographic letter. I've learned which notes had treasury numbers different from serial numbers. I've researched many records from the Kentucky Library on the banks and officers. I've researched records from the U.S. National Archives and National Numismatic Collection at the Smithsonian Institution. I've retrieved officers' names from many of the Comptroller of Currency Annual Reports. Through all this research I've kept a detailed census of all notes I've seen, including serial and treasury numbers, grade, and owner.

The Citizens National Bank, charter #5900

I begin with the large notes of Citizens National Bank, chartered July 1901, with charter #5900. The bank succeeded the Warren Deposit Bank and was organized July 6, 1901, when its first board of directors held its initial meeting. Five days later, the Comptroller of the Currency in Washington, D.C., certified his approval of the new organization. Within four days the bank was open for business, at 10 a.m., July 15, 1901, in the same location it occupied for 56 years. Despite two world wars, a trio of financial panics, and a number of recessions, the bank was a prolific issuer of Series of 1882 Brown Backs, Value Backs, and Date Backs, and 1902 Series Plain Backs. The bank issued \$3,064,830 with \$250,000 unredeemed in 1935.

The idea for the bank first came from Max B. Nahm. Nahm was a member of Citizens' board of directors, but was never president or cashier, and therefore never signed notes. So I haven't researched Nahm very much. Citizens National Bank was indeed a wonderful bank for Bowling Green. I agree with a 1957 *Park City Daily News* article that reported: "It is a notable tribute to the soundness of the Citizens Bank that it was one among 31,000 banks in 1921 and when it reopened in 1933 following the bank holiday declared by President Roosevelt, it was one of only 15,000 banks that survived the turbulent twenties and the Black Friday of 1929." The bank never failed to open, except during the bank holiday in 1933 declared by the President when every bank in the United States was ordered to close. The bank reopened on the first day the President permitted banks to reopen.

Describing the administrations of Citizens National Bank is pretty simple. There were only three presidents and one cashier during the entire national

Figure 1: Series of 1882 \$10 Brown Back, charter #5900, Fr. 490. Pen signed by Robt Rodes, Jr., President, and T.H. Beard, Cashier. This bank issued 4,900 sheets of 10-10-10-20 Brown Backs. Notice the Kentucky state seal on the left side of the back and the American eagle on the right side.





banking period. Thomas J. Smith served as president from 1901 to 1904. Robert Wells Covington served as president from 1904 to 1906, and Robert Rodes, Jr. served as president from 1906 to 1950. Thomas H. Beard served as the only cashier from 1901 to 1950. The vast majority of large notes (and all small ones) were signed by Rodes and Beard. I'm aware of only two notes signed by Covington and Beard. I know of no notes signed by Smith and Beard.

Citizens National Bank issued 4,900 sheets of 10-10-10-20 1882 Brown Backs, 8,700 sheets of 1882 Date Backs and 5,100 sheets of 1882 Value Backs. Citizens National Bank issued 26,923 sheets of 10-10-10-20 1902 Plain Backs. There are several Brown Backs on Citizens available and three nice examples are pictured in **Figures 1, 2, and 5**. Rodes or Beard must have put aside several sheets of Brown Backs because there is a nice run of Uncirculated notes known, from serials 3376 – 3394. There are a few 1882 \$10 Value Backs known, but only one \$20 Value Back known. Finally there are a few 1882 \$10 Date Backs known, but only two \$20 Date Backs known.

Geographic lettering occurred for all national banks from March 1902 to March 1924. The nation was divided into six regions: N-Northeast, E-East, S-South, M-Midwest, W-West, and P-Pacific. Bowling Green was in the S-South region. The Brown Backs from Citizens were issued 1901 to 1908 and straddle the beginning of geographic lettering. All the known Brown Backs (serials 1695 and above) have the S-South lettering, so they must have been issued March 1902 or later. All 1882 Date Backs and Value Backs from Citizens have the lettering since they were issued 1908 to 1916 and 1916 to 1921 respectively. The Plain Backs from Citizens were issued 1921 to 1929 and straddle the end of geographic lettering. So the early Plain Backs had lettering while the later Plain Backs did not. I don't know exactly which sheet of Plain Backs received the last overprint lettering (obviously about March 1924), but I know bank serials 11495 and higher don't have the lettering.

Treasury serial numbers were used for all national banks until August 25, 1925, when treasury serials were replaced with duplicate bank serials. All 1882 Brown Backs, Date Backs, and Value Backs from Citizens contain treasury serials. Most of the Brown Backs contain treasury serial numbers like N000000N, where they are prefixed with an N, then followed by six digits, and suffixed with an N. Notice the Brown Back in **Figure 5** where only five digits are between two Ns. Treasury serials on the 1882 Value Backs and Date

Figure 2: Series of 1882 \$20 Brown Back, Fr. 504. Also pen signed by Robt Rodes, Jr. and T.H. Beard. This bank issued 4,900 sheets of 10-10-10-20 Brown Backs. In later notes, Rodes dropped the "Jr." signing as Robt Rodes or Robert Rodes. The left vignette is titled *Battle of Lexington*, and the right vignette is *Loyalty*.

Figure 3. Postcard from the Citizens National Bank, Bowling Green, KY.



Backs are prefixed with a letter, then follow with six digits, and no suffix (see **Figures 6 - 7**).

The 1902 Plain Backs from Citizens were issued 1921 to 1929 and straddle the period of treasury serials. So the early Plain Backs had treasury serials while the later Plain Backs did not. In my research at the U.S. National Archives, I reviewed the Comptroller of Currency's Delivery Schedules which are the official records showing when the Comptroller received printed notes from the BEP. From the Delivery Schedules, I know Plain Back sheets 1 - 14800 have treasury serials and sheets 14801 - 26923 don't have treasury serials. Treasury serials on the Plain Backs are prefixed with a letter, then followed by five or six digits (usually six), and suffixed with another letter (see **Figure 9**).

All of the 1882 Brown Backs on Citizens used plate positions A-B-C-A. The Brown Back plates for Citizens were altered to support Date Backs and later Value Backs, so all 1882 Date Backs and Value Backs have D-E-F-B plates. All 1902 Plain Backs on Citizens used plate positions A-B-C-A.

Now I'll describe the presidents and cashiers of Citizens National Bank. I'll begin with Robert Rodes, Jr., then follow with Thomas H. Beard, Robert W. Covington, and Thomas J. Smith.

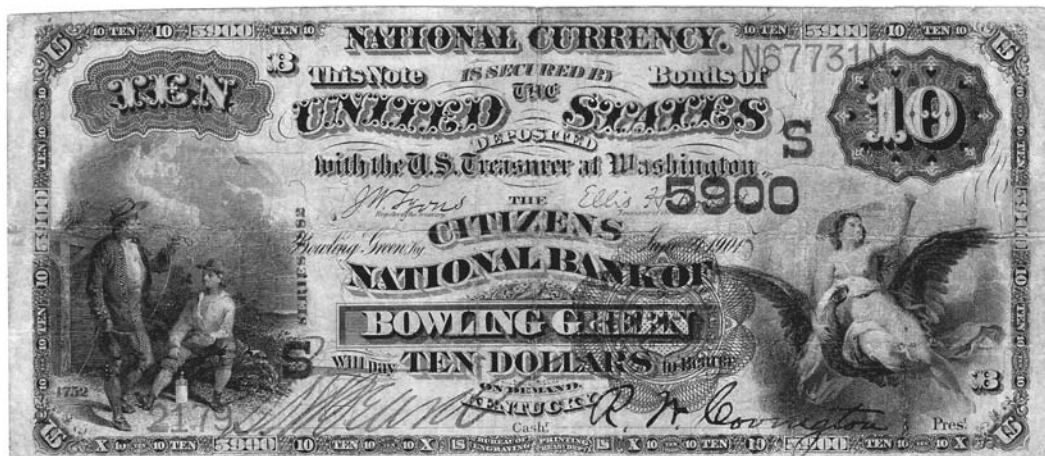
As a long time banker, Robert Rodes, Jr. was well known in Bowling Green. Rodes was born in Bowling Green on February 16, 1868, the son of attorney Robert Rodes and Mary Grider Rodes. He was one of six children. Rodes attended Ogden College before entering business. He was married and had three daughters. Rodes was county sheriff for a period, then spent a phenomenal 45 years as president of Citizens National Bank. Rodes was also associated with the Bowling Green Bank and Trust Co., a trust company affiliated with Citizens National Bank.

Surely Rodes was proud of a *Park City Daily News* article of March 1, 1911, that said: "Conservatism has signalized the management of this institution since the first and placed it in the front ranks. Its policy is to extend courteous treatment alike to the humblest depositor as well as the capitalist."

After his years of service as president, Rodes continued as chairman of

Figure 4: A c. 1950 photograph of Thomas H. Beard, left, and Robert Rodes, Jr., right. Rodes is holding a \$10 1882 Brown Back signed by them. Rodes spent a phenomenal 45 years as president of Citizens National Bank (1906 to 1950). Beard served as its only cashier during the national banking period (1901 to 1950).





the board of directors for many years. Indeed Rodes worked well into his 90s. A more colorful side of Rodes's life involved his 50-year love of dog breeding and fox hunting. For many years Rodes bred and raised the popular Trigg hounds, and eventually produced a national champion. "Robert Rodes still loves to hear the full cry of the hunt from a pack of hounds hot on the trail," a close friend said at Rodes' 90th birthday party. Rodes even set aside a separate "fox huntin' room" in his bank – a kind of customer lounge – that housed pictures and drawings of prized dogs he owned. Rodes died in February 1963 at the age of 94 or 95.

Rodes signed his name three different ways including Robt Rodes, Jr., Robt Rodes, and Robert Rodes. Notice the 1882 Brown Backs in **Figures 1 and 2** with the Jr. Next see the vanity signatures on the 1882 Date Back in **Figure 7**, and the 1902 Plain Back in **Figure 9**, where Rodes dropped the "Jr." And finally look at **Figures 8 and 10** where he used a smaller signature and spelled out Robert.

Thomas H. Beard was also well known in Bowling Green as a banker. He was born in Butler County, Kentucky on April 2, 1872, the son of William P. and Mary Porter Beard. Beard was a banker for 58 of his 84 years, and served as the cashier from 1901 to 1950. At the time of his death on April 26, 1956, Beard was the bank's executive vice president. Although twice married, Beard had no children. I've contacted a nephew of Beard, who canvassed the family and found no heirloom notes that were passed down. The nephew reported the bank gave Beard a gold watch for his years of service that remains a family heirloom. Beard signed his name T.H. Beard on all the notes. **Figure 5** shows an example of a large size note signed by Beard and **Figures 10 – 13** show examples of small size notes.

Robert W. Covington was born on the family farm in Warren County, Kentucky, on August 3, 1856, the only son of Dr. Albert Covington and Josephine Wells Covington. Covington's two sisters were also born on the 900 acre family farm which was called "The Grove." Covington married Mary Wickliffe Cooper in 1892. Together they had two sons, Euclid M., and Robert Wells, Jr., and two daughters, Margaret, and Wickliffe.

Covington attended school in Bowling Green and was tutored by private teachers. He graduated from Warren College, which later became Ogden College of Western Kentucky University, in February 1875, and the University of Virginia Law School in 1877. Covington practiced law for nine years with a partner, Virgil Potter, until Potter's death in 1886. Soon afterward Covington took over the family farm when his father died in October 1887.

Covington farmed full time until 1901 when he helped organize the Citizens National Bank. Covington was a vice president and charter director. When Thomas J. Smith passed away about three years later, Covington became

Figure 5: Series of 1882 \$10 Brown Back, charter #5900, Fr. 490. Pen signed by R.W. Covington and T.H. Beard. Most of 5900's Brown Backs have a six digit treasury serial, but this Brown Back has only five digits. The left vignette is titled *Franklin and Electricity* and the right vignette is *America Seizing Lightning*.



Figure 6: Series of 1882 \$10 Value Back, charter #5900, Fr. 577.

Faded signatures of Robert Rodes and T.H. Beard. Treasury serials on Value Backs are prefixed with a letter, then six digits, and no suffix. This bank issued 5,100 sheets of 10-10-20 Value Backs.

president. Covington held the office only until his cousin, Robert Rodes, Jr.'s term expired as county sheriff. Then Rodes became president and Covington became vice president. Covington continued as vice president and director until he resigned in January 1945.

While maintaining his banking duties Covington continued farming. Interestingly Covington and his partner Argo Claggett were well known for having the largest strawberry farm in the area. Just before the first World War when refrigeration became available, the farm harvested 16,000 boxes of strawberries for shipment.

Here are some interesting facts about Covington and his family. During World War I, Covington was appointed food administrator for Warren County by

Figure 7: Series of 1882 \$10 Date Back, charter #5900, Fr. 545. Signed by Robt Rodes and T.H. Beard. Treasury serials on the 1882 Date Backs are prefixed with a letter, then six digits, and no suffix. This bank issued 8,700 sheets of 10-10-20 1882 Date Backs.





Figure 8: 1902 Series \$10 Plain Back, charter 5900, Fr. 633. Notice the stamped black signatures of Robert Rodes and T.H. Beard. Purple ink was sometimes used. This bank issued 26,923 sheets of 10-10-10-20 1902 Plain Backs.

Senator Frederick M. Sackett. Everyone called him “Major,” a title he secured in an old militia company at Bowling Green. Covington’s grandfather, Elijah M. Covington, was known as General Covington for his service in the militia. Covington’s maternal grandfather was U.S. District Judge Robert W. Wells of Jefferson City, Missouri, who first decided the famous Dred Scott Case. Covington was a trustee of Mammoth Cave before it was bought by the State. The Covington name is well known in Bowling Green – there is a municipal park and golf course called Covington Woods Municipal Park.

A flattering August 4, 1936, *Bowling Green Times-Journal* article said “The *Times-Journal* does not know of a man in Warren County who is held in higher esteem, not only as an able, conscientious and splendidly equipped banker, but as a gentleman of the highest type, whose word is his bond and who has the utmost confidence and respect of all those who’ve known him.” Covington was an active member of the Episcopal Church and served as a delegate from the Diocese of Kentucky at 12 general conventions over 36 years. For some time Covington was president of the Board of Trustees of Ogden College.

Covington died March 19, 1949, at the age of 92. I’ve contacted one of Covington’s granddaughters, who canvassed the family and found one note that was passed down, a Series of 1882 \$20 Brown Back. See **Figure 5** where Covington penned his name R.W. Covington on a second note, a Series of 1882 \$10 Brown Back.

Thomas J. Smith was the first president of Citizens National Bank and served from 1901 to 1904. Smith, a colonel in the Army during the Spanish-American War, was called T.J. and ran a book store in Bowling Green. Smith died March 21, 1904, and had one son and one daughter. I haven’t found any-

Figure 9: 1902 Series \$20 Plain Back, Fr. 659. With Treasury Serial and stamped signatures of Robert Rodes and T.H. Beard. Charter #5900 Plain Backs were issued 1921 to 1929 and straddle the end of geographic lettering.





Top, Figure 10: 1929 Type 1 \$10, charter #5900, Fr. 1801-1. Facsimile signatures of Robert Rodes and T.H. Beard. This bank issued 7,102 sheets of Type 1 \$10s. Notice this note has a plate letter I.



Above, Figure 11: 1929 Type 1 \$20, charter #5900, Fr. 1802-1. Signed by Robert Rodes and T.H. Beard. This bank issued 1,940 sheets of Type 1 \$20s.

thing about Smith's wife. I've located a grandson who doesn't know of any notes signed by his grandfather, and I haven't located any notes. Smith's grandson tells me there were four generations of bankers beginning with Thomas J. – pretty impressive.

Among the small notes of Citizens National Bank, Type 1s were issued from July 1929 to May 1933. Type 2s were issued from May 1933 to July 1935. This bank issued 7,102 sheets of Type 1 \$10s, 1,940 sheets of Type 1 \$20s, 54 sheets of Type 2 \$5s, 1,473 sheets of Type 2 \$10s, and 290 sheets of Type 2 \$20s. None of the Bowling Green banks, including Citizens National Bank, issued small size \$50s or \$100s.

Of course all small size nationals bear two pairs of printed signatures. At the top left of each note is the signature of E.E. Jones, Register of the Treasury. At the top right is the signature of W.O. Woods, Treasurer of the United States. The bank officer signatures of T.H. Beard and Robert Rodes appear at the lower left and right. The Type 1s on Citizens National Bank are fairly common. Take a look at **Figures 10 and 11** for two examples of Type 1s. Serials on all Type 1s are prefixed with an A, B, C, D, E, or F, followed by a six digit number, and an A suffix. I know of no Uncirculated Type 1s for this bank, and no serial 1s. Known serials on the \$10s run from 8 to 7019 and serials on the \$20s run from 67 to 1762. The known notes span the grade spectrum from VG to AU.

Plate letters for Citizens' Type 1s include A-B-C-D-E-Fs and G-H-I-J-K-Ls. See **Figure 10** for an example of plate letter I. From the Delivery Schedules in the U.S. National Archives, for Citizens National Bank, I found the first delivery of 1,228 sheets of Type 1 \$10s and 402 sheets of Type 1 \$20s on September 9, 1929.

The Type 2s on Citizens National Bank are fairly rare. Type 2s were issued from May 1933 to July 1935. No notes are known from the limited 54 sheets of Type 2 \$5s. I know of only a few Type 2 \$10s and \$20s and **Figures 12 and 13** are two nice examples. Again, all the small notes on Citizens were signed by Rodes and Beard. Of course the prefix letter of A was used on all Type 2s, followed by a six digit serial. Here is an interesting fact regarding Type 2 \$10s from



this bank. Kelly reports 8834 Type 2 \$10s were issued which isn't a multiple of six. So the last sheet was a partial sheet containing only two notes, which was cut by the comptroller before being sent to the bank.

The plate letters for Citizens' Type 2s include A-B-C-D-E-Fs and G-H-I-J-K-Ls. See Figure 12 for an example of plate letter E.

The American National Bank, charter #9365

The American National Bank was chartered February 1909, with charter #9365. The American National Bank and Trust was organized on September 6, 1886, as the Barclay-Potter & Company's Bank. A new partner was introduced in 1895 and the name was changed to Potter-Matlock & Company Bankers. The bank began to offer trust services, which soon made up a large part of the firm's activities. The institution's name then became Potter-Matlock Bank and Trust Company in 1905. On April 1, 1909, the firm was divided into two companies: the American National Bank to handle the commercial banking affairs and the Potter-Matlock Trust Company to handle trust responsibilities. The two companies shared the same president and a common lobby.

During the depression years, both institutions weathered the financial storms that caused so many other institutions to fail, including the bank holiday of 1933. Kentucky Governor Laffoon ordered a bank holiday March 1, 1933, and restricted withdrawals to 5% per month. American National Bank had special checks devised by March 3, that could be used to pay bills within Warren County, and a local committee set up a plan for the use of scrip money during the emergency. The scrip was available by March 8, in two denominations: 20 cents and \$1, and was the size of regular bills. The difficult period ended on March 18, when banks were allowed to reopen.

The American National Bank issued \$1,989,870, with \$125,000 total unredeemed notes in 1935, and just \$6,900 in unredeemed large notes in 1935. This bank had only three presidents and two cashiers during the national banking period. J. Whit Potter served as president from its founding until February 19,

Top, Figure 12: 1929 Type 2 \$10, charter #5900, Fr. 1801-2. Signed by Robert Rodes and T.H. Beard. This bank issued 1,473 sheets of Type 2 \$10s.

Above, Figure 13: 1929 Type 2 \$20, charter #5900, Fr. 1802-2. Signed by Robert Rodes and T.H. Beard. This bank issued 290 sheets of Type 2 \$20s. No notes are known from 54 sheets of Type 2 \$5s.



Here is a nice advertising postcard from the early days of The American National Bank that says "Thrift and Economy will enable you to take the vacation you have been promising your family and yourself for so long past." Signed by S.M. Matlock who served as cashier from its founding until 1915.

1923, when he died. Then, S.M. Matlock was elected president and continued until April 16, 1924, when he resigned. Then, Garland D. Sledge, who had served as cashier since 1915, was elected president and served until 1948. S.M. Matlock served as cashier from its founding until 1915, followed by Garland D. Sledge until 1924. Roy Cooksey served as cashier from late 1924 to 1935. Most of the large notes and all the small notes were signed by Sledge as president and Cooksey as cashier (see **Figures 19 – 21**). I'm aware of a few notes signed by Potter as president and Matlock or Sledge as cashier — see **Figures 14 – 16**. I know of no notes signed by Matlock and Sledge.

The American National Bank issued 11,700 sheets of 10-10-10-20 1902 Date Backs, but only a handful remain today. The 1902 Date Backs for this bank were issued from 1909 to 1915. All of the Date Backs were probably signed by Potter as president and Matlock as cashier. I certainly have no evidence otherwise. I've seen other banks where the vice president signed, but I have no evidence that occurred here. The Plain Backs had three different president-cashier signature combinations: Potter-Sledge, Matlock-Sledge, and Sledge-Cooksey.

I have a copy of the initial 1902 Series proof sheet for American from the Smithsonian showing approval April 6, 1909. A second proof sheet was approved November 13, 1924, with a "Heads Reentered" notation. Presumably the plates were worn near McKinley and McCullough's images.

Again, geographic lettering occurred for all national banks from March 1902 to March 1924, and Bowling Green was in the S-South region. All 1902 Date Backs from American have the lettering since they were issued 1909 to 1915. The Plain Backs from American were issued 1915 to 1929 and straddle the period of geographic lettering. So the early Plain Backs had lettering while the later Plain Backs did not. I don't know exactly which Plain Back sheet received the last overprint lettering (obviously about March 1924), but I know bank serials 24788 and higher don't have the lettering.

Treasury serial numbers were used for all national banks until August 25, 1925, when treasury serials were replaced with duplicate bank serials. From the Delivery Schedules in the U.S. National Archives, I know sheets 1 – 24800 have treasury serials and sheets 24801 – 31612 don't have treasury serials. Treasury serials exist on all of American's 1902 Date Backs and are prefixed with a letter, then followed by five or six digits (usually six), and optionally suffixed with another letter. The 1902 Plain Backs from American were issued 1915 to 1929 and



straddle the period of treasury serials. So the early Plain Backs had treasury serials while the later Plain Backs did not. Treasury serials on the 1902 Plain Backs are prefixed with a letter, then followed by five or six digits (usually six), and suffixed with another letter. Bank serials on American's Plain Backs range from 11701 to 31612.

I've seen a \$20 Plain Back with serial 17934 signed by Potter and Sledge, so I know at least serials 11701 to 17934 were signed by them. Again, I know of no notes signed by Matlock and Sledge. All of the 1902 Date Backs and Plain Backs on American National Bank used plate positions A-B-C-A.

Now I'll describe the presidents and cashiers of American National Bank. I'll begin with J. Whit Potter then follow with Samuel M. Matlock, Garland D. Sledge, and Roy Cooksey.

J. Whitfield Potter, American National Bank's founder, was born near Bowling Green on November 6, 1851, one of 13 children of David and Deborah Potter. Before J. Whitfield there were 150 years of Potters in Bowling Green and a number of them were bankers. Indeed as of 1923 a bank in Kentucky had been named for a Potter for more than 75 years. Potter's great-grandfather, Thomas Potter, was born in Virginia in 1748 and moved his family to Bowling Green around 1780, just five years after Daniel Boone settled Boonesborough, Kentucky. The early Thomas produced an impressive family tree. A newspaper article from 1923 reports that 353 descendants of the early Thomas held a family reunion at the old home in Bowling Green. One of the children of the early Thomas, the grandfather of J. Whitfield, had 13 children, and three of these children married three sisters, each of whom had 13 children. There should be no superstition about this supposedly unlucky number, for most of these children lived to a ripe old age. One lived to be 104 and several passed 90.

Potter was also involved in business matters separate from banking.

Figure 14: 1902 Series \$10 Date Back, charter #9365, Fr. 618. Stamped purple signatures of J. Whit Potter, President, and S.M. Matlock, Cashier. This bank issued 11,700 sheets of 10-10-10-20 1902 Date Backs.



Figure 15: 1902 Series \$20 Date Back, charter #9365, Fr. 644. Illegible signatures of J. Whit Potter, President, and S.M. Matlock, Cashier. This bank issued 11,700 sheets of 10-10-20 1902 Date Backs.

Potter served as deputy sheriff of Warren County from 1873-79 and then entered into business for himself selling livestock, real estate and insurance. In 1886 he opened his own bank, in partnership with James P. Barclay, as Barclay, Potter, and Company's Bank. Barclay-Potter became immediately successful with the small merchants and farmers of Warren County, and the bank prospered, even though the country was entering into some of its hardest times. When Barclay left Bowling Green in 1895, Potter brought S.M. Matlock into the firm for the beginning of a thirty-year business friendship and partnership. Renamed Potter, Matlock and Company, on January 1, 1895, the bank continued its service and success. With the close of one century and the beginning of another, the bank's popularity and reputation grew steady.

In 1911 the *Park City Daily News* wrote about Potter and his bank: "Its growth in business and in popular favor was little less than phenomenal, but has always had its head men noted for their financial ability, for their conservative methods and for their disposition to adhere to only legitimate banking." Perhaps Potter's most important work was his successful efforts in having the Western Kentucky Normal School (now Western Kentucky University) founded in Bowling Green in 1906, against substantial local opposition.

Potter married Blanche Jamison on January 12, 1881. Potter and his wife had a daughter Nellie who died in infancy, and a son Julian W. who died unmarried at age 36. So Potter didn't leave any direct descendents and I've not found any indirect descendents. Potter was one of Kentucky's most active and beloved citizens and even mentioned as a potential Democratic nominee for Governor of Kentucky. Potter died of pneumonia in February 1923. One of Potter's friends kindly eulogized him with "The passing of this man was a person-

Figure 16: 1902 Series \$10 Plain Back, charter #9365, Fr. 626. Notice the stamped black signatures of J. Whit Potter and G.D. Sledge. Purple or green ink was also used on notes of this bank, which issued 19,912 sheets of 10-10-20 1902 Plain Backs.





Figure 17: 1902 Series \$10 Plain Back, Fr. 626. Signed by G.D. Sledge (now as president), and Roy G. Cooksey.

al loss to all of his townspeople, to whom he had been a father, adviser, and friend.” Potter had a nice signature and signed all his notes as J. Whit Potter.

Potter's son Julian was quite the banker himself. Julian Potter was born in Bowling Green on April 14, 1889. Julian graduated from the Kentucky Military Institute and later the University of Virginia. At age 15 Julian obtained his first banking experience in his father's institution working as a messenger in the summer when not attending school. On leaving the University of Virginia he served as a bank clerk, and in 1917 at the age of 28, became Vice President of the American National Bank. Remarkably, young Julian left Bowling Green for big city Wall Street banking of New York in 1920. The Guaranty Trust Company recruited Julian Potter to New York to become their Assistant Treasurer. Reflecting on this important milestone in his career, Julian said the move “caused me considerable concern. You see I was the first member of my family to leave Bowling Green. It was quite a step for me to take. But I finally decided it was the thing for me to do, and now I am sure of it. Although I can tell you a city bank is quite different from a country bank.”

Julian was very successful at the Guaranty Trust Company. Indeed Julian was instrumental in the rehabilitation and reorganization of one of the largest Italian banks in the country. Julian's success in this task won him the decoration of the Order of the Chevalier of the Crown from the King of Italy. Julian was so successful that he was elected president of The Coal and Iron National Bank of the City of New York, charter #7203. At the age of 33, Julian was the youngest bank president in the city. Describing his own rapid climb in life, Julian was quoted as saying that he hadn't attained success, but merely improved the opportunity offered him to be successful. Julian and J. Whitfield were wonderful men and wonderful bankers. Julian W. Potter died January 1, 1926, age 36, of typhoid fever.

Samuel M. Matlock was born around 1859. Matlock was known as “Cage.” Matlock married Elizabeth Matlock around 1885, and had three daughters, Elise, Louise, and Florence. I've been unable to determine when Matlock died and unable to locate any direct descendents. I have talked with indirect descendents of Matlock (related by marriage) who believe no heirloom notes exist. See **Figure 14** where Matlock signed his name as S.M. Matlock as cashier.

Garland D. Sledge was born July, 6, 1883, in Allen Springs, Kentucky, the son of Miles Henry Sledge and Georgia Ann Myers. Sledge had two brothers, Excell, and Felix, and one sister, Jewel. As a young man Sledge displayed a keen interest in public affairs. As a teen Sledge served as an attendant in the Kentucky General Assembly while his father served as a representative. Sledge received his education in the public schools and Bowling Green Business University. Sledge became associated with Potter-Matlock and Company

bankers in January 1904, and served through the reorganization of that company into the Potter-Matlock Bank and Trust Company. Sledge also served through the separation of the bank and trust departments when the banking division was converted into the American National Bank and the trust department became the Potter-Matlock Trust Company. Sledge was the first secretary-treasurer of the trust company. Sledge married Mamie Lou Hall on January 24, 1906, and had two children, a daughter named Mary Catherine, and a son named David. In October 1947, Sledge married Genevieve Taylor, presumably after becoming a widower.

Sledge became president in 1923 and served in that capacity until his retirement in 1947. The only interruption in his service with American National and Potter-Matlock institutions came in 1914, when he became cashier of the Warren National Bank, which was merged into American National Bank 12 months later. At that time, Sledge became cashier of the enlarged institution. Sledge's genius for organization was displayed in December 1923 when he directed the transaction of American National Bank assuming the assets of Liberty National Bank. Sledge died April 12, 1950, age 66, after a long illness. Sledge's death was deeply regretted by the hundreds of friends he made during his banking career.

Frequently Sledge was asked by friends for his secrets to success. On one occasion he replied "Whatever little success I may have attained so far, I attribute largely to my getting a real pleasure out of doing business with my friends and acquaintances, taking an interest in their welfare or troubles and being able to keep in close touch with them. This is largely an agricultural town and I am just one of the 'country boys' with them." I like those words, and I'm sure I would have liked Garland D. Sledge. Sledge signed all his notes as G.D. Sledge.

Roy G. Cooksey was born April 2, 1887, to Clint and Mattie Goode Cooksey. Cooksey was educated in public schools in Bowling Green and graduated from Ogden College. After completing further studies at the Bowling Green Business University, he studied law under James A. Mitchell, attorney for the Louisville and Nashville Railroad Company. Following the death of Mr. Mitchell, Cooksey was associated with the law firm of James C. Sims and Judge John B. Rodes (Rodes Jr.'s brother). Cooksey married Lillie Haley Cooksey, who was born around 1894, and died December 23, 1988. Cooksey had a son and daughter. Cooksey died December 20, 1949. He became connected with Citizens National Bank in 1914, and was an assistant cashier when he joined American National Bank January 1, 1925 as vice president and cashier. Cooksey was elected executive vice president of the Bowling Green Bank and Trust on March 1, 1935, and was named president January 1, 1948, when Robert Rodes retired.

Cooksey served as president of the Kentucky Bankers Association in

Figure 18: 1902 Series \$20 Plain Back, Fr. 652. With nice signatures of J. Whit Potter and G.D. Sledge. This bank issued 19,912 sheets of 10-10-20 1902 Plain Backs.





1943-44 and as vice president in 1942-43. Cooksey was also treasurer of the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce. A veteran of World War I, Cooksey was active in affairs of American Legion and the Forty and Eight Society. I have talked extensively with Cooksey's son, who has a nice collection of large and small notes signed by his father. Outside my own collection, Cooksey's son has the broadest collection of Bowling Green nationals. Cooksey signed all his notes as Roy G. Cooksey. See **Figures 17 and 19** for two examples.

American National Bank also issued small size notes. This bank issued 3,504 sheets of 1929 Type 1 \$10s, 998 sheets of Type 1 \$20s, 854 sheets of Type 2 \$10s, and 234 sheets of Type 2 \$20s. I know of several Type 1 \$10s from this bank, ranging from VG to XF condition, and a few Type 1 \$20s.

I know of no Uncirculated Type 1s, and no serial 1s from this bank. Known serials on the Type 1 \$10s run from 478 to 3202 and serials on the \$20s run from 329 to 811. **Figures 19 and 20** show nice examples of a Type 1 \$10 and \$20.

Again from my research at the U.S. National Archives, I found official ledgers showing when the Comptroller received notes from the BEP. For American National Bank I found the first delivery of Type 1s was October 31,

Top, Figure 19: 1929 Type 1 \$10, Fr. 1801-1. Signed by G.D. Sledge and Roy G. Cooksey. This bank issued 3,504 sheets of Type 1 \$10s.

Middle, Figure 20: 1929 Type 1 \$20, Fr. 1802-1. Signed by G.D. Sledge and Roy G. Cooksey. This bank issued 998 sheets of Type 1 \$20s.

Bottom, Figure 21: 1929 Type 2 \$10, Fr. 1801-2. Signed by G.D. Sledge and Roy G. Cooksey. Charter 9365 issued 854 sheets of Type 2 \$10s. No notes are known from the limited 234 sheets of Type 2 \$20s.

1929, for 1,204 sheets of \$10s and 420 sheets of \$20s.

The Type 2s on American National Bank are fairly rare. Type 2s were issued from May 1933 to July 1935. No notes are known from the limited 234 sheets of Type 2 \$20s. I know of only a few \$10s. Serials range from 646 to 2830. **Figure 21** shows a nice example of a Type 2 \$10. Again, all the small notes on American were signed by Sledge and Cooksey.

Here is another interesting fact regarding Type 2 \$10s from this bank. Kelly reports 5119 Type 2 \$10s were issued which isn't a multiple of six. So the last sheet was a partial sheet containing only one note (cut by the comptroller).

The Liberty National Bank, charter #11589

Liberty National Bank was chartered January 1920, with charter #11589. In the late teens and early '20s Bowling Green experienced an "oil boom" economy which brought many new people to town. The oil boom lead some to feel there was room for another bank in Bowling Green. Thus Liberty National Bank was organized. In 1923 Liberty Trust Company was formed as an adjunct institution. The Liberty National Bank issued \$479,900 in 1902 Series \$10 and \$20 Plain Backs. There were two administrations during Liberty's brief history. Henry H. Denhardt was president and Roy Claypool was cashier from January 1920 to April 1923. Bun P. Eubank was president and Nixon Pickard was cashier from April 1923 to January 1924. Liberty National Bank was liquidated January 1924 into American National Bank with \$125,000 unredeemed.

A flattering April 5, 1923, *Park City Daily News* article said: "The Liberty National Bank, under the management of General Denhardt and Mr. Claypool has made prodigious strides toward first position among the financial institutions of Bowling Green since its organization some four years ago. With the trust company added the institution's opportunity for growth and development will be greatly enhanced and the prediction is freely made that an unusually bright future is in store for the bank, the personnel of the directorate being among the strongest in the city."

Liberty National Bank issued 9,598 sheets of 10-10-10-20 1902 Series Plain Backs, but only seven notes remain today, four \$10s and three \$20s. I have a copy of the 1902 Series proof sheet from the Smithsonian (**Figure 22**) showing approval June 9, 1920. **Figure 24** shows a wonderful \$10 Plain Back, with clear red stamped signatures by B.P. Eubank, President, and Nixon Pickard, cashier. Exactly how many notes were signed by each administration is unknown. I know at least serials 1 to 3350 were signed by Denhardt and Claypool. Signatures on the \$20 serial 3333 in **Figure 23** have faded, but it was signed by Denhardt and Claypool. Eubank and Pickard presided for a short period, but obviously serials

Figure 22: 1902 Series \$10 Plain Back proof impression from the National Numismatic Collection.





8075 and higher were signed by Eubank and Pickard.

All notes from Liberty National Bank have the S-South designation since they were issued within the period of geographic lettering. Again treasury serial numbers were used for all national banks until August 25, 1925, when treasury serials were replaced with duplicate bank serials. Treasury serials on the known Liberty National Bank Plain Backs are prefixed with a letter, then followed by six digits, and suffixed with another letter. All of the 1902 Plain Backs on Liberty National Bank used plate positions A-B-C-A.

Now I'll describe the presidents and cashiers of Liberty National Bank. I'll begin with Henry H. Denhardt then follow with Roy Claypool, B.P. Eubank, and Nixon Pickard.

Holy smokes, was Henry H. Denhardt a fun character to read and learn about! Henry H. Denhardt was born in 1876, in Kentucky, to distinguished parents of German descent. At the age of 22, he saw active service in the Spanish-American War. Around 1901 Denhardt settled in Bowling Green and married Elizabeth Glaze. Denhardt was an Army veteran of three wars rising to the rank of Brigadier General. Denhardt and his brother became publishers of the *Bowling Green Times-Journal* and grew to be powers in the state.

Denhardt was widely respected as a lawyer, but I've found no records where Denhardt attended law school. Denhardt was a Warren County judge for at least one term around 1915. Socially Denhardt was extremely popular in his early years, yet he had a fiery temper with a fighting nature. Gradually, through the 15 years following the Armistice of World War I, Denhardt became a heavy drinker, and prone to release his restless energy in wild bouts and parties. Later Denhardt was called domineering, officious, cruel, portly, and inhuman. Ouch! In 1933, having stood all she could during the 32 years of marriage, Elizabeth quietly divorced Henry. Denhardt had no children.

Strangely Denhardt was a devoted member of the Presbyterian Church, and was a Mason. In 1914 he again answered the call to arms and served as an officer in the Mexican border campaign under Pershing. From Mexico he went into World War I and fought with gallantry at Saint-Mihiel, France and was cited by Major General Hunter Liggett. After the war and during Bowling Green's oil boom of 1920, Denhardt helped organize Liberty National Bank and became its first president. Denhardt retired as president of Liberty National Bank in 1923 to run for Lieutenant Governor as a Democrat. Denhardt won the Lieutenant Governorship and served four years. Denhardt retained his large holdings in the bank and was elected chairman of the board of directors. Afterwards Denhardt was appointed Adjutant General during the administration of Governor Ruby Laffoon.

The most interesting part of Denhardt's story involves his death and events leading up to his death. On September 20, 1937, Denhardt was gunned

Figure 23: One of three known 1902 Series \$20 Plain Backs, charter #11589, Fr. 659. This bank issued 9,598 sheets of 10-10-10-20 Plain Backs. This note was likely signed by H.H. Denhardt, President, and Roy Claypool, Cashier.

down by the Garr brothers — Dr. E.S. Garr, Roy Garr and Jack Garr — outside the Armstrong Hotel in Shelbyville, Kentucky. The three brothers blamed Denhardt for killing their sister, Verna Garr Taylor, an attractive 40-year-old widow, and Denhardt's fiancé. On the night of November 6, 1936, Mrs. Taylor was found dead, mysteriously shot. Charged with her murder, Denhardt claimed Taylor committed suicide, and at his first trial, in New Castle, the jury deadlocked. The night he was slain, Denhardt and his lawyers were in Shelbyville preparing for the second trial, set to begin the next day. The Garr brothers admitted killing Denhardt. Even though Denhardt wasn't carrying a weapon, the Garr brothers claimed self-defense, and were acquitted. It seems Eastern Kentucky was a rough and tumble area in the 1930s!

I conversed via email with Denhardt's nephew who didn't know of any additional notes signed by his uncle. Denhardt's nephew was using email at a spry 90 years old — very impressive! Denhardt signed his name H.H. Denhardt on the known notes.

Roy Claypool was born May 15, 1879, in Warren County, the son of Thomas J. and Elizabeth C. Claypool. Claypool married Lena Motley, who died at an early age of 30. Claypool had two daughters. Claypool remarried to Sarah Mitchell in 1917 who lived to the age of 84. The 1920 Census for Warren County includes a reference for Roy Claypool at age 40 and says "Roy and Sarah living with father in law William H. Mitchell, cashier in Liberty National Bank, wife Sarah Claypool, age 31." When Denhardt retired as president in 1923, Claypool was promoted from cashier to vice president of the bank and president of the trust company.

Active in community life, Claypool served for 24 years on the City Board of Education. At one time Claypool headed the state Woodmen of the World organization. He was also a former state president of the Travelers Protective Association. At the time of his retirement, Claypool was a lumber dealer. Claypool died February 23, 1957, at the age of 77. I've been unable to locate any relatives to inquire about possible notes. Claypool signed his name Roy Claypool on the only known note with his signature.

B. (Bun) P. Eubank was born May 5, 1865, a son of the John W. and Americus Eubank. Eubank attended school near his home and later graduated with honors from Ogden College, which later became part of Western Kentucky University. Eubank married Fannie Walton around 1889, and they had three daughters. Fannie passed away in 1904, and in August 1919 Bun married Mrs. Grace Trimble Garretson, of Russellville. Eubank was connected with the Liberty and American National Banks for more than 50 years, and was American's vice president at the time of his death. Earlier Eubank worked with the great J. Whit Potter in the Potter, Matlock and Company. Eubank served as assistant cashier at American National Bank for a number of years. Eubank died July 4, 1936, at the age of 71, following several months of illness.

Nixon Pickard was born February 17, 1877, the son of Peter and Julia Pickard. Peter Pickard was an important man in Tennessee. Peter was a Colonel in the Confederate army as a sharp shooter until he was wounded and lost his arm near Dalton, Georgia in 1864. After the war Colonel Pickard held a number of important political positions including State Comptroller from 1883 to 1889 and supervisor of the 1900 Census for Tennessee's 6th Congressional District. Around 1900 Colonel Pickard moved to Ashland City, Tennessee and founded the Ashland City Bank & Trust Company, where he served as cashier and active manager for many years. The story of Colonel Pickard's children and grandchildren as musicians is interesting too. Known to listeners as the Pickard Family — Obed, Obed Jr., Ruth, and Ann — the popular group played music of the barn dance days that included melodies strummed from the mouth harp. The Pickard Family played venues as varied as Nashville's Grand Ole Opry and the sidewalks of New York. Finally I'll say that Colonel Pickard wins my award for the neatest names for sons: Obed, Nixon, and Tavel.



Before moving to Bowling Green, Nixon lived in Tennessee with his parents. For several years Nixon was a bank cashier in Cumberland City Tennessee, living with his wife and kids. Nixon married Annie Daugherty around 1900 and they had two daughters, Lula Dye and Nancy. After moving to Bowling Green, Pickard was assistant cashier of the Liberty National Bank for several years, and was elevated to cashier in 1923 when Denhardt resigned. Later Pickard moved over to American National Bank and was a vice president there for a period.

On June 30, 1913, there was a robbery at the Cumberland City bank, and Nixon Pickard was shot. The robbery was reported by national newspapers. The July 1, 1913, *Atlanta Constitution* reported "Con Barnes a railroad section worker, turned bandit today, according to his own confession, attempted to hold up the Cumberland City bank, shot the cashier, and when pursued by citizens with nothing more formidable than stones for weapons, threw down his repeating rifle and automatic pistol and meekly surrendered. Incidentally his victim, Nixon Pickard, with a bullet through his right breast and another through his arm, may die." It seems odd the *Atlanta Constitution* reported Pickard's injury as incidental. Fortunately Pickard survived the wounds from the robbery, but died September 30, 1935, at the age of 58.

Figure 24: 1902 Series \$10 Plain Back, Fr. 633, with red stamped signatures of B.P. Eubank, President, and Nixon Pickard, Cashier. This bank issued 9,598 sheets of 10-10-10-20 Plain Backs.

To Be Continued . . .