

3rd Issue Fractional Error Notes (3¢ to 15¢) – Part 1

by Rick Melamed

In a previous edition of *Paper Money*, we explored 2nd issue fractional surcharge errors. In this issue we delve into 3rd issue errors; an even more complex subject matter. With all of the varieties in existence, we have to split this article into two parts. In this issue we will explore errors on the 3 to 15 cent fractional notes, and in a future article we will concentrate on the 25 cent Fessenden, 50 cent Spinner and Justice fractionals.

A great debt of gratitude must be extended to the father of fractional research, Milton Friedberg. His reference book *‘Encyclopedia of Postage and Fractional Currency’* contains extensive research on all things fractional with a portion devoted to errors. Unfortunately, while inverted printing errors were included, other types of errors (i.e.: offsets, misalignments, gutter folds, etc.) were not. Also the images contained were in black and white and not of optimal quality.

We combined Milton’s research along with a myriad of images collected from several SPMC members and from various auction archives. The result is a profusely illustrated and comprehensive update. 3rd issue fractionals offer a type of error found nowhere else in U.S. issued currency; the use of bronze surcharges. These bronze surcharges were one of the many anti-counterfeiting measures undertaken by the U.S. Treasury. The process was fairly straightforward; first glue was applied to the notes, then a bronzing powder was added. The bronzing that adhered to the note resulted in the familiar surcharges. The improper application of glue, as well as the multitude of inverted possibilities, produced a fascinating array of fractional errors. This array of bronzing errors, along with the more recognizable traditional currency errors, result in an extensive variety of error notes.

Thanks must also be extended to former FCCB (Fractional) President, Tom O’Mara; and SPMC and FCCB former President and current editor, Benny Bolin, for their charts of 3rd issue fractional errors. They’ve allowed me to reprint their original charts and combine them with a host of scans to give us an updated article. Benny shared some of his interesting errors from his personal collection for this article. The images from Tom’s vast error collection (auctioned in 2005 by Heritage) as well as John Ford’s large collection of error fractionals (auctioned by Stack’s from 2004-2007) were also a huge help.

3rd Issue 3¢ Errors. Despite lacking the surcharges found on the higher denomination 3rd issues, 3¢ fractional errors are quite varied.

Inverted Reverse Engraving. Inverted back engravings are the most common of inverted printing errors, as the error is simply created by inserting the sheet upside down.

3RD ISSUE - 3 CENTS

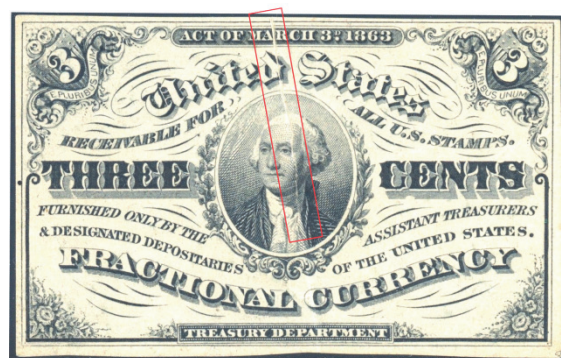
Friedberg No.	Three Cent	Inverted Back Engraving
1226	Light Curtain	Milton 3R3.1b - 6 known
1227	Dark Curtain	Milton 3R3.2d - 3 known



Fr. 1226

Fr. 1227

Gutter Folds. The first Fr. 1226 exhibits a dramatic gutter fold; the second one contains a thin, long gutter fold through Washington's portrait.



The following example of a gutter fold error is interesting. The gutter fold only shows up on the reverse but the obverse shows no trace, indicating that the fold occurred between the printing of the obverse and reverse.



Fr. 1226/Fr. 1227 – 3rd Issue 3¢ Fractional No Pearls Under Portrait. Milton 3R3.1c. This variety is a minor design variation, that has piqued collector's interest as early as the 1890s. The 'pearls' are the tiny circles beneath the small diamond below the bottom center of Washington's portrait. The 'pearls' are missing only on plate numbers 32 and 35 on the Fr. 1226 - light curtain. Subsequent 'no pearls' discoveries were found on the Fr. 1227 dark curtain variety (the Fr. 1227s were printed on plate #62-68). For the sake of transparency, there are some of the opinion that the 'no pearls' were the result of under-inking.



FR1226/7 Pearl/No Pearl

Inverted Reverse Sheet Plate #2. On the bottom right corner is an Fr. 1226 with an inverted plate #2. Numbers were engraved on each sheet plate as an accounting method to track the plates used. Engraved in the design portion of the plate (rather than the selvedge), they show up from time to time on individual notes when cut from the sheet. This is an engraving error, and is the only plate number out of the 71 used on the 3¢ note that displays an inverted number.



Fr. 1226 with Black Reverse Design. The following regular issue Fr. 1226 contains an intriguing error. The normally green reverse is printed in black ink. Close examination by the fractional experts at Heritage indicate that there is no trace of green ink and they have self-designated it as Milton number 3R3.3. It seems when the plate was prepared for printing, the worker applied the same black ink used for the face for the reverse.



Fr. 1226 with Cutting Error. The face is normal, but the back of the note is shifted enough to display a portion of a second note. A minor error. Since fractional sheets were cut into individual notes by hand, we often see small parts of an adjacent note. In this example however, the fractional was badly trimmed... $\frac{1}{4}$ of the adjacent 3¢ note was left attached. Perhaps this note should be valued at 3 $\frac{3}{4}$ ¢?



Fr. 1226 Specimen Error with Inverted 'SPECIMEN' Surcharge.

Milton designated this as #3S3R.1a with a rarity 7. The 'SPECIMEN' surcharge on the reverse makes for an interesting oddity especially since the error is so prominent against the blank back.



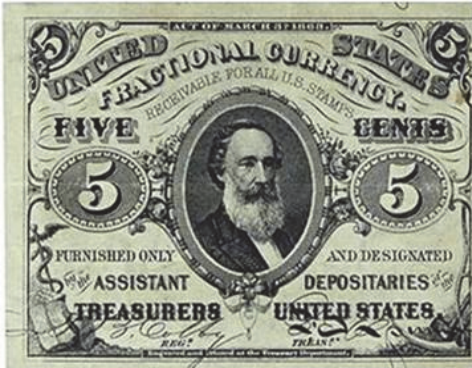
FR1226 (Milton 3S3R.1a) Specimen Error

3rd issue 5¢ Errors. 3rd issue Clark errors are quite scarce. Since they lack the bronze surcharges found in the higher 3rd issue denominations, the amount of error varieties are limited. As with the red back 10¢ 3rd issue, there are no known inverted reverses on the red back 5¢ Clark. The alpha-numeric designations listed under each type of error category are the Milton Friedberg catalogue numbers (i.e. 3R5.2f).

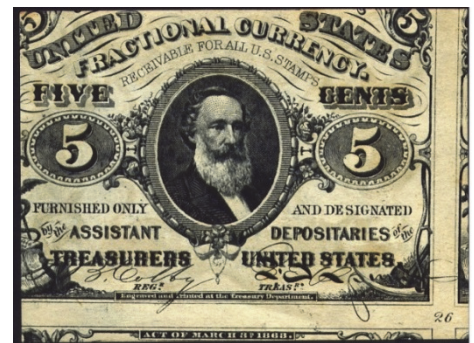
3RD ISSUE - 5 CENTS

Five Cent	Fr. No.	Inverted Back Engraving
Red Reverse	1236	Unknown
Red Reverse w/'a'	1237	Unknown
Green Reverse	1238	3R5.2f - 9 known
Green Reverse w/'a'	1239	3R5.2i - 4 known

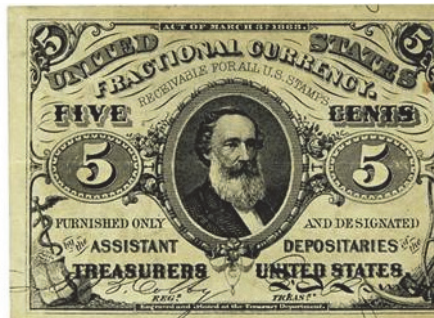
Inverted Reverses



3rd Issue 5¢ Cutting Errors. This interesting Fr. 1238 is a severe cutting error that displays portions of (4) different notes. It's likely that the person cutting the sheet into individual notes wanted to preserve the sheet plate #26 prominently displayed in the lower right corner.



This Clark note displays a normal face, but the back is mis-cut rather significantly.

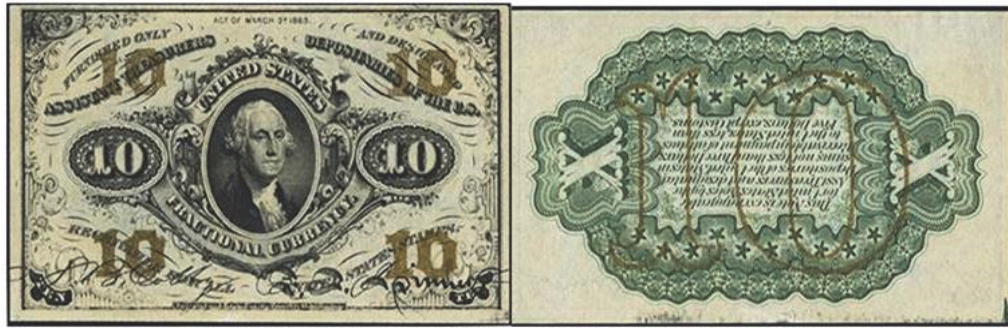


3rd issue 10¢ Errors. Because of the bronze surcharges on the 10¢ face (4 – 10's on the face) we have a possibility of six surcharge errors per Friedberg number: three varieties on the face and three varieties on the back. The headings of the chart explain the varieties succinctly. We are fortunate to have examples of each of the six types of inverted errors on the Fr. 1255/56.

3RD ISSUE - 10 CENTS

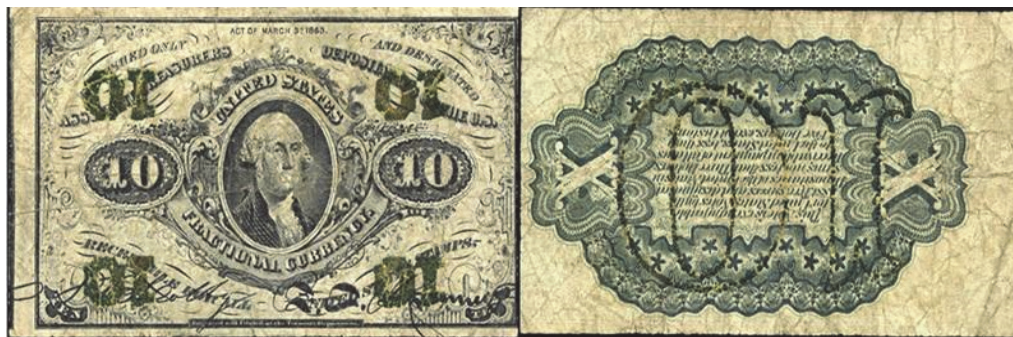
Fr. #	Inverted Back Engraving	Inverted Back Surcharges	Total Back Inverted	Inverted Face Engraving	Inverted Face Surcharges	Inverted Back & Face Surcharges
1251-1254	There are no known red back inverters for any third issue 10 cent notes					
1255	3R10.6m 3 Known	3R10.6d Reported	Unknown	3R10.6i 4 Known	3R10.6o Unique	3R10.6e 4 Known
1256	No Milt # Unique	Unknown	3R10.6l 1 Known	Unknown	Unknown	3R10.6f Unique

Inverted Reverse Engraving and Surcharge Errors. Only the back design is inverted. Note: In Milt Friedberg's reference, he has this incorrectly attributed to an Fr. 1256; it should be an Fr. 1255.



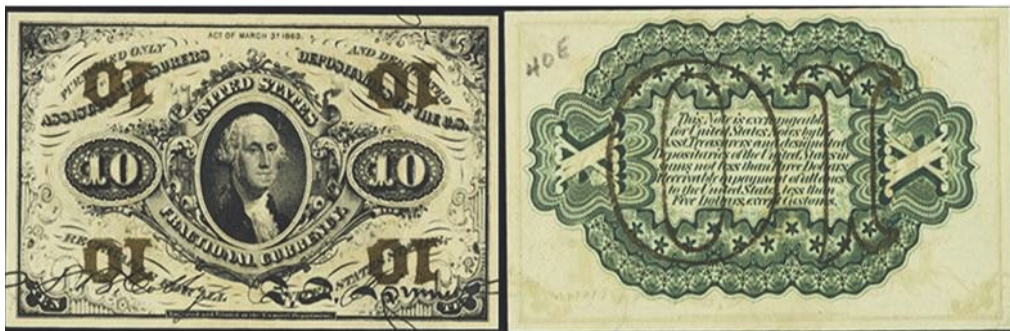
Fr. 1255 – Milton 3R10.6m – Inverted Back Engraving

While the image of the **four** inverted 10's is eye catching, in reality the Fr. 1255 - 3R10.6i shown has the face design inverted; the rest of the note is correct.



Fr. 1255 – Milton 3R10.6i – Inverted Face Engraving

Slightly different than the note shown above, this example has just the face and back surcharges inverted.



Fr. 1255 – Milton 3R10.6e – Inverted Back & Face Engraving

This example from the Stack's Ford sale was unknown to exist until it appeared in 2005. The face of the Fr. 1256 - 3R10.6l is normal; the back design and surcharges are inverted.



Fr. 1256 – Milton 3R10.6l – Inverted Surcharge & Back Engraving

The following inverted error has the front and back surcharges inverted. It is a unique as an Fr. 1256; the Fr. 1255 with inverted surcharges has 4 known examples.



Fr. 1256 – Milton 3R10.6f– Inverted Back & Face Surcharges

The last surcharge error note, which pedigrees to the January 1997 Milton Friedberg sale, is a stunning error. With no bronze surcharges on the front and the back, it could be considered a double error.



Fr. 1255 – Milton 3R10.6g – No Front or Back Surcharges

Shifted Surcharges. The four 10's are shifted dramatically up and to the left on the note on the left and the '10' bronze surcharge on the reverse of the following fractional is shifted so low that it nearly touches the bottom margin. Also, please notice that on the very top margin, the bottom of the bronze '0' from the note above (as positioned on the sheet) is displayed.



Fold Over Error. This slight fold over error on the Fr. 1255 has the bottom right corner missing part of the design.



Gutter Fold Error. The note shown has a long horizontal gutter fold on the base of the note. It is clearly evident on the front and back.



Offset Error. This spectacular offset error not only has the face design offset on the back (indicated by the mirror image of the obverse design), but it also lacks the bronze surcharges. While offset errors are common on small sized notes, on fractionals they are exceptionally rare.



Plate Numbers Errors. The first plate number error note is an Fr. 1255-WM-REV green specimen with inverted sheet plate number 11. The second example is an Fr. 1251-WM-REV red specimen with the same inverted '11'. It is the only known 3rd issue red back fractional with an inverted plate number. Note the long tails of the '11'. The Fr. 1255 reverse (right) displays a prominent inverted plate number 83 on the bottom right corner.



This plate number error note is very unusual. It contains two (2) plate numbers and should be classified as an engraving error. Apparently the engraver, in a glaring memory lapse, etched plate #6 on the sheet twice. The bottom margin of the note has a rather wide selvage ensuring both plate numbers were captured.



Signature Errors. Since this series was hand signed, the omission of the titles and the autographs opens up several error possibilities. The first example is missing the Register signature (on the bottom left) which would have been or Colby (Fr. 1253) or Jeffries (Fr. 1254)

The Fr. 1254 shown is missing the usually ubiquitous Spinner signature on the bottom right:

The third missing signature example is a red back 3rd issue 10¢ fractional missing both signatures and their titles. It could be either an Fr. 1253 (Colby/Spinner) or an Fr. 1254 (Jeffries/Spinner). According to Milton Friedberg, this example is considered unique.

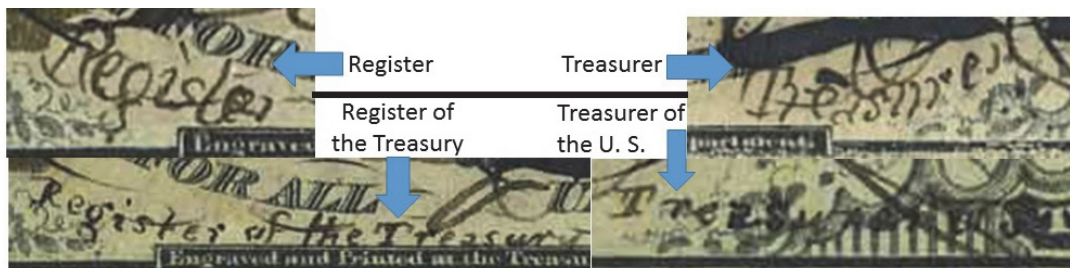
The final signature error may not really be an error, but it is certainly unusual. It contains extra verbiage under the signatories. Usually under Colby's or Spinner's name would be 'Register' and 'Treasurer'. In this example, under Colby's name is his full title, 'Register of the Treasury'; under Spinner's name hand written is 'Treasurer of the U.S.' There is some debate whether Jeffries, Spinner and Colby signed every single note; perhaps an able assistant took on the perfunctory duties of signing thousands of notes. A newly hired underling easily could have inserted the full titles instead of the usual 'Register' and 'Treasurer.'

FR1253 w/extra
verbiage in titles

Normal FR1253



Since it is difficult to see, we've greatly enlarged the image.



Printed Flaw. The back of this Fr. 1251 has an unidentified printed flaw on the back. It appears to be some type of offset.



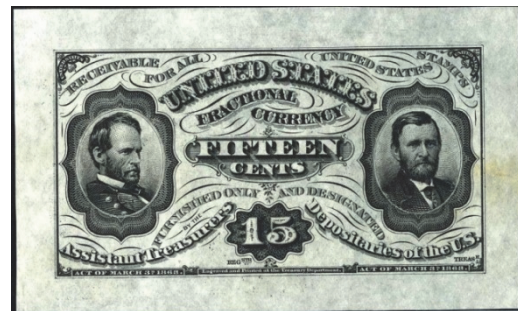
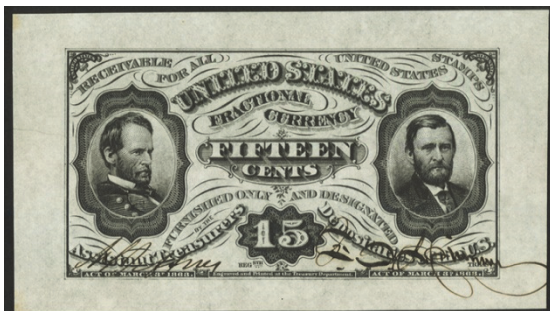
Missing Bronze 'SPECIMEN' Imprint. A rare error – Specimen reverses almost always have the bronze 'SPECIMEN' imprinted on the blank back. The example on the left does not; the red back specimen reverse on the right is the correct depiction.



Excessive Ink Error. The following note displays excessive ink; likely caused by the plate not being properly wiped down before being printed.



15¢ Grant/Sherman Error. There is only one known Grant/Sherman 15¢ Specimen error. Grant/Shermans all have either autographed or printed signatures. But not in this case. Displayed on the left is a normal Fr. 1274 with Jeffries and Spinners' signature. The error note on the right is an unsigned example (Milton # 3S15F.5). The lack of signatures usually found under the portrait is glaring in its omission.



This concludes the first part of 3rd issue fractional errors. Look for part 2 in this magazine in the near future.

Thanks to Martin Gengerke and Benny Bolin who shared many images of rare errors, to Jerry Fochtman the Fractional Newsletter editor (FCCB), to Stacks Bowers and Heritage for use of their auction archives and to the currency community whose interest in all type of errors remains strong. Thanks to my son David Melamed; his excellent editing skills continue to be very helpful in my articles. Finally, thanks are to be extended to Len Glazer of Heritage for his guidance and support. Len authored the auction catalogue of the Milt Friedberg sale in January 1997; one of the all-time great fractional references and a must have in any fractional library. My hard cover copy has been used so much, I had to have it rebound last year.