

Very Peculiar 1981 FRN Fold-Over Error

Peter Huntoon

Bob Liddell, who seriously collects misprints, obtained this Series of 1981 FRN \$10 that exhibits a most unusual fold-over. It was overprinted on a COPE (currency overprinting equipment machine). The error involves the note from the upper right corner of the sheet. The flap was unfolded before the top selvage was cut from the sheet and the notes separated.



The peculiar thing that attracted Bob to the misprint is that 524 from the left serial number is printed where the top selvage blocked the district seal so should have blocked that part of the serial number as well. The question is: How was this possible; specifically, how did the 524 get under the selvage? Notice also that the C-prefix from the right serial number that was intended for the note below was caught on the right edge of the fold-over, albeit crooked.



Figure 1. How did “524” get under the flap?

Difficult to see in the photos is an ill-formed fragment of a serial number printed between STATES and OF on the face of the note. The fragment looks like part of some number, but getting it there seems impossible. Somehow that part of the note glanced against a numbering head.

The feed stock for the COPE machines consists of two piles of 16-subject half sheets (Figure 2) that are simultaneously fed through the respective sides of the machine. When this note was processed, the two cylinders that applied the overprints were configured so that the first printed the green serial numbers and Treasury seals and the second printed the black district numbers and seals. Numbering was through the stack of notes in each plate position and the machine numbered from the high to low serial numbers in each print run so that the low numbers landed on the top in the output bins.

It is our opinion that the half sheet started to deform into some sort of soft rollover as it was passing by the green cylinder such that the left serial number printed in its entirety, but the suffix letter landed on the selvage that was later cut away from the developing flap. The printing heads and other elements on the cylinders are raised with plenty of space between them so there are innumerable opportunities for a sheet to wad or curl weirdly into those spaces when something goes wrong. See Figure 3.

The sheet continued on to the black cylinder where by now the flap had flattened with a resulting hard crease and its left edge had slid appreciably to the left thus covering the 524 in the left serial number at the moment that the black seals printed. By now the paper was not only folded over but internally stretched and deformed.

There are two indicators that the paper was deforming. The top margin of the note has a crooked cut demonstrating that after the flap was unfolded, the paper remained somewhat wadded up as the top margin of the sheet was cut away. Also, the line delineating the left edge of the selvage that blocked the seal on Bob's note is not straight as expected. Instead it is concave toward the left.

All we can say is that when an accident occurs, the outcome is unpredictable and sometimes can be very strange. We'll both guess with you as to exactly what happened in this case.

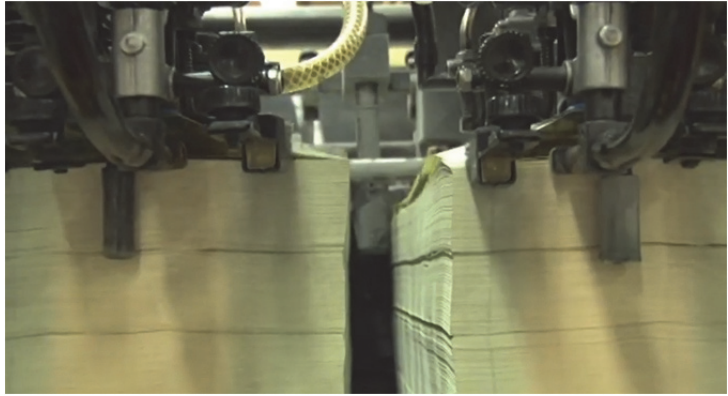


Figure 2. Two piles of half sheets being fed simultaneously into a COPE machine.



Figure 3. View of the cylinder that prints the black district letters and seals. Notice the separation in the middle because the cylinder prints both half sheets at once, which are separated from each other. It takes two posts to print the district information on each note.