

Progression to the Misspelling Error on \$1000 Series of 1882 Gold Certificates

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Introduction and Purpose

The presentation of the letter u in the word *thousand* became progressively more ambiguous on large size notes employing a similar Gothic font to spell out thousand until the u morphed into an n on the \$1000 Series of 1882 gold certificates. The purpose of this article is to illustrate this progression and the steps taken to right the problem after it occurred.

Significantly, thousand was spelled correctly on the Series of 1882 \$5,000 and \$10,000 payable in New York notes that employed banners made with the same Gothic font as used on the \$1000s. A separate die was engraved for each denomination, thus explaining why the mistake was confined to the \$1000s.

This article is designed to be a companion and supplement to the preceding article in this volume.

LT 1862/3

GC 1863

GC 1870

GC 1875

GC 1882

GC 1882

GC 1882

TN 1890/1

TN 1890



Figure 1. Occurrences on large size U. S. currency of the word *thousand* spelled out in similar Gothic letters. Notice that the outcome on the GC 1882 \$1000s was the misspelling *Thonsand*.

Gothic Thousand

Figure 1 illustrates the word *thousand* from every series of large size high denomination note that

employed a similar Gothic font to spell out the word. All were engraved at the Bureau of Engraving and Printing except the 1862/3 legal tender face, which was prepared at the American Bank Note Company.

Six distinct engravings were involved, respectively:

- 1 \$1000 legal tender 1862/3
- 2 \$1000 gold certificates 1863, 1870, 1875
- 3 \$1000 gold certificate 1882 & \$1000 Treasury note 1890/1
- 4 \$5000 gold certificate 1882
- 5 \$10000 gold certificate 1882
- 6 \$1000 Treasury note 1890 back.

The engraving used for the \$1000 Series of 1882 gold certificates and Series of 1890/1 Treasury notes was the same except the misspelling was corrected on the Treasury notes.

A characteristic of Gothic fonts is that the letters are dominated by bold vertical strokes. Individual letters composed of two or more vertical strokes, such as o, n and u, utilize caps and boots on the strokes with shapes that visually appear to connect the verticals yet sometimes don't. This is particularly evident in the lowercase o in both Thousand and Dollars in the LT 1862/3 and GC 1863, 1870 & 1875 examples on Figure 1. Notice that the black parts of the two halves of the o don't actually connect in the ABNC engraving and barely touch in the first BEP engraving. Our minds forge those connections thanks to the use of clever foreground white outlining and fine-line background shading by the engravers.

The u on the GC 1863, 1870 and 1875 engraving is more ambiguous than on the ABNC rendering because the caps on the top of the two strokes actually touch whereas those of the boots don't. The u and n are barely distinguishable save for some subtle differences in outlining and shading. See Figure 2. This particular engraving represents an intermediate between the LT 1863 and GC 1882 \$1000s. Once we arrive at the GC 1882 \$1000, the n and u are all but indistinguishable so Thousand became Thonsand.

Figure 2. Notice the subtle means used to connect the tops and bottoms of the bold vertical strokes within letters. The u and n are virtually indistinguishable here.



The engravings for the GC 1882 \$5000 and \$10000 eliminated all confusion because the u is well formed on both. A careful letter-by-letter comparison between the GC 1882 \$1000, \$5000 and \$1000 engravings reveals that each is a distinct engraving.

It is obvious that the misspelling on the GC 1882 \$1000s was recognized by the time the Series of 1890 Treasury notes were being designed because they used the same engraving but corrected the spelling. The process used to make the correction is described in the preceding article.

The engraving used on the back of the 1890 TN \$1000s was an entirely new but smaller replica of that on the face. They were careful to avoid the spelling problem on it.

Photo Gallery

The \$1000 proofs illustrated on Figures 3 through 7 were not shown in our companion article. Figures 8 through 10 are proofs of the \$5000 and \$10000 Series of 1882 gold certificates that were payable in New York. We thought you would enjoy seeing these because the issued notes are virtually unobtainable owing to their high face value and the fact that most were redeemed.

Sources for Photos

Bureau of Engraving and Printing, 1863-1958, Certified proofs of U. S. currency printing plates: Division of Numismatics, American Museum of History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.
Heritage Auction Archives: <https://www.ha.com>

Figure 3. Face used on \$1000 1862/3 legal tender notes. Heritage Archives photo.

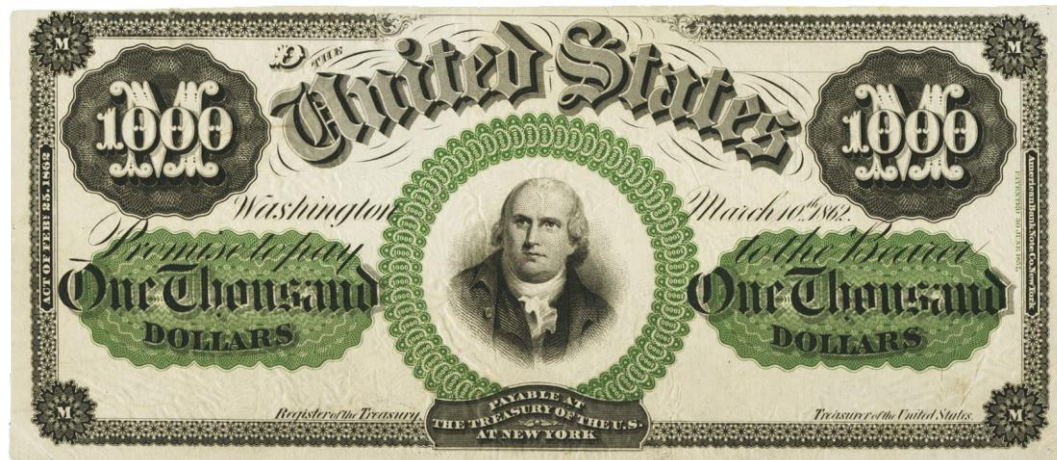


Figure 4. Back used on \$1000 1863, 1870 and 1875 gold certificates. Smithsonian photo.

Figure 5. Face used on \$1000 1863 gold certificates. Smithsonian photo.



Figure 6. Face used on \$1000 Series of 1870 gold certificates. Smithsonian photo.

Figure 7. Face used on \$1000 Series of 1875 gold certificates. Smithsonian photo.

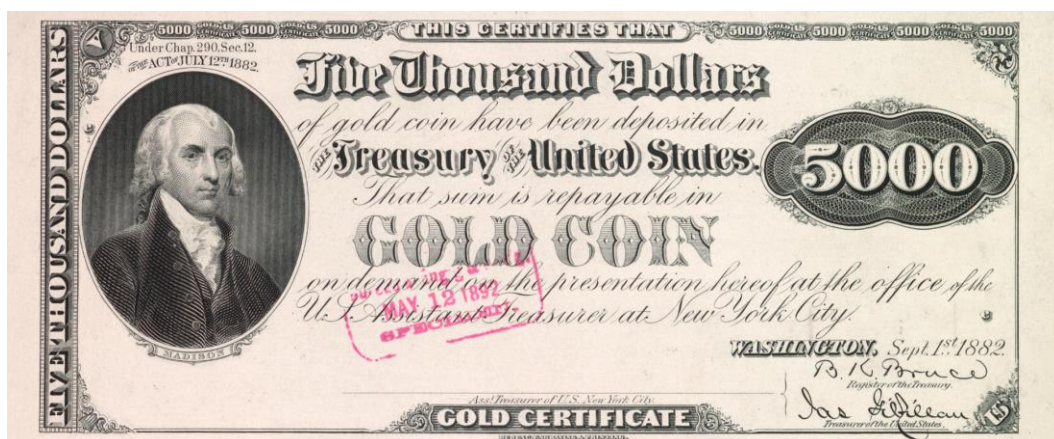


Figure 8. Face used on \$5000 Series of 1882 gold certificates payable in New York. Smithsonian photo.

Figure 9. Face used on \$10000 Series of 1882 gold certificates payable in New York. Smithsonian photo.



Figure 10. back used on \$10000 Series of 1882 gold certificates. Smithsonian photo.