



The Paper Column

by
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Late-Numbered \$1 Series of 1917 Legal Tender KA-Block Fr 37a Error



Figure 1. This is the only reported Fr 37a \$1 Legal Tender note from the KA serial number block. The Fr 37a variety was printed from plate serial number 1519 on which the siderographer switched the positions of Treasury signers Elliott and Burke along with their titles. Doug Murray photo.

One of the most fun collectable 20th century low-denomination type note varieties that has been found is the \$1 Series of 1917 legal tender error where the position of the names and titles of Register of the Treasury William S. Elliott and Treasurer John Burke were switched. The mistake was made on all four positions by siderographer John C. Rout as he laid the signatures into the plate. The rolls he used contained both the signature and title for each signer so the mistake was in simply switching them. It was not noticed by plate finisher Thomas B. Jones Sr., who was the last person to work on the plate, or any of the plate inspectors so the plate was certified as perfect by BEP director James L. Wilmeth on August 24, 1920.

The plate bore Treasury plate number 71506 in the top margin and plate serial number 1519 on each subject. It was sent to press September 3-29, 1920 to create Fr. 37a and was canceled September 30th. Production from it progressed to the numbering division and was numbered in normal sequence in the low HA block. The reported range of serial numbers as of the 2014 Gengerke census was H5917673A-H17592992A.

However, a truly exotic specimen was discovered in 1987 by Tom Denly that bore way-out-of-range serial K29666226A, the only specimen ever discovered from the KA block. This serial is over 110 million higher than its siblings.

The exotic was not the result of some peculiar use of the plate at some late date. The plate had long before been canceled by the time the KA block was numbered.

The most logical explanation for its occurrence was that the sheet from which it was cut resided in a small stockpile that was finally retrieved and numbered many months after its siblings. Doug Murray justifiably calls it a late numbered note.

The fact that it is the only such specimen reported from the KA block of this highly visible error hints that the size of the stockpile was small.



Figure 2. Top and bottom subjects from the certified proof of plate 71506-1519 with BEP Director James L. Wilmeth's signature. The initials of siderographer John C. Rout are in the upper left corner and plate finisher Thomas B. Jones in the lower left corner.



Figure 3. The other reported Fr 37a specimens were numbered early in the HA serial number block. Heritage Auction Archives photo.