

## 3<sup>rd</sup> Issue Fractional Error Notes (25¢ to 50¢) – Part 2

By Rick Melamed

In previous issues of *Paper Money*, we explored 2<sup>nd</sup> issue fractional surcharge errors and fractional error notes from the 3<sup>rd</sup> issue between the 3¢ to 25¢ denominations. In this issue we complete the 3<sup>rd</sup> issue research with a presentation of the 25¢ (Fessenden) and the 50¢ (Justice and Spinner) error fractionals.<sup>1</sup> Unlike small sized U.S. currency, which has been robustly researched and catalogued, research on fractional error notes is a somewhat under-represented. Therefore, a broad overview dedicated to just fractional errors should be well received. Drawing from an array of high-quality images not available 15 years ago, we are able to deliver a more detailed overview on this subject.

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. However, while inverted printing errors were included, other types of errors (i.e. offsets, misalignments, gutter folds, etc.) were not. Also, the images in Milt’s reference were in black and white and were not of optimal quality.

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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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. 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.

3<sup>rd</sup> 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 bronzing errors. This array of bronzing errors, combined with the more recognizable traditional currency errors, results in an extensive variety of error notes.

**A. 3<sup>rd</sup> Issue 25¢ Fessenden Errors.** Fessenden fractionals are an underappreciated series. While Spinner and Justice fractionals get more attention from collectors, the Fessenden is a rich series with many varieties and sub-varieties. The mystique of the Fr. 1299 and Fr. 1300 with its thick coarse paper, solid front surcharges and elusive ‘M-2-6-5’ reverse corner surcharges are very desirable, and my personal favorite. It demonstrates how far the Treasury went to thwart the counterfeiters. Too far in actuality, since they were rather difficult to produce. This made them a short-lived series, but a nice well-preserved example is something to be treasured.

As it relates to errors; with all those varieties, there a quite a few possibilities.

**1. Inverted Reverse Engraving and Surcharge Errors.** The chart shown contains the general Friedberg numbers (in the far-left column); individual Milton alpha-numeric designations (i.e.: 3R25.2j) are included where applicable. There are three categories for this kind of error.

a. Inverted Back Engraving – Just the back design is inverted; the face engraving and all the surcharges are normal.

b. Inverted Back Surcharges – The design and front surcharge are normal; the back surcharge is inverted.

c. Total Back Inverted – The face surcharge and design are normal; the back surcharge and design are inverted.

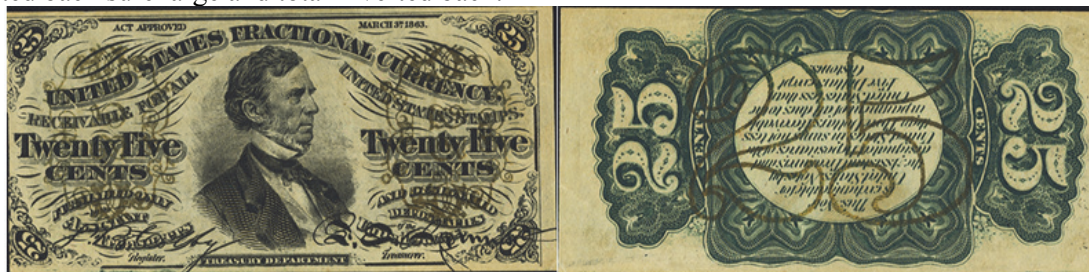
3rd issue - 25 Cents			
Friedberg No.	Inverted Back Engraving	Inverted Back Surcharges	Total Back Inverted
1291	Unknown	3R25.1h - Unique	Unknown
1292	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
1294	3R25.2j - Reported	3R25.2i - 12 Known	3R25.2h - Reported
1295	3R25.2k - unique	3R35.2v - unique	3R25.2o - Unique
1296	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
1297	Unknown	3R25.4f - unique	Unknown
1298	3R25.4b - 2-3 Known	3R25.4e - Unique	Unknown
1299	Unknown	3R25.3f - Unique - Ford	Unknown
1300	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown

Red back Fessenden surcharge errors are unique; only one example is known to exist. The rarity of this note cannot be understated. Considering the multitudes of green back inverts that exist, only one solitary red back inverted Fessenden is known. Aside from the Fr. 1357 with the inverted reverse (~10 known) there are no known red back inverts for the Spinner, 10¢ Washington and 5¢ Clark. This is also true for inverted plate number notes (see below). There are dozens of examples of inverted/mirrored plate numbers on green backs but only one red back example with an invert (an Fr. 1251 wide margin specimen reverse with an inverted #11). This begs the question: why was extra care used on the red backs?

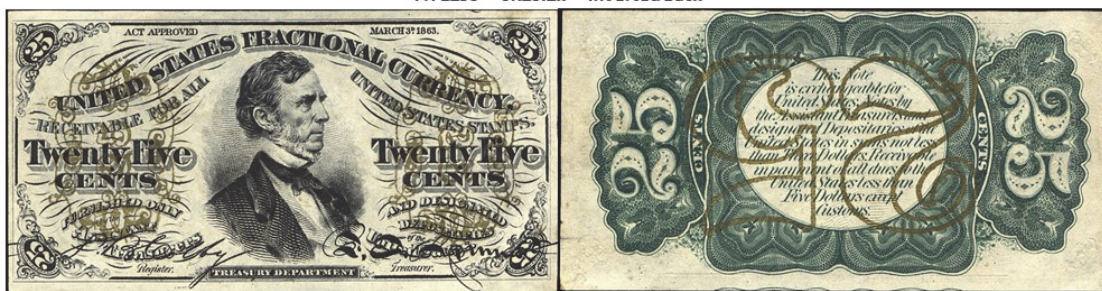


Fr. 1291 - 3R25.1h – Inverted Back Surcharge

The next string of Fessenden's show all three types of surcharge errors: inverted back engraving, inverted back surcharge and total inverted back.



Fr. 1295 – 3R25.2k – Inverted Back



Fr. 1294 - 3R25.2i – Inverted Back Surcharge





Fr. 1294 - 3R25.2h – Total Back Inverted

Fiber paper Fessenden errors are rare and quite desirable. About five invert errors are known for all 25¢ fiber varieties. Note the inverted '25' and inverted the 'M-2-6-5' reverse corner surcharge.



Fr. 1297 - 3R25.4f – Inverted Back Surcharge



Fr. 1298 - 3R25.4b – Inverted Back Engraving

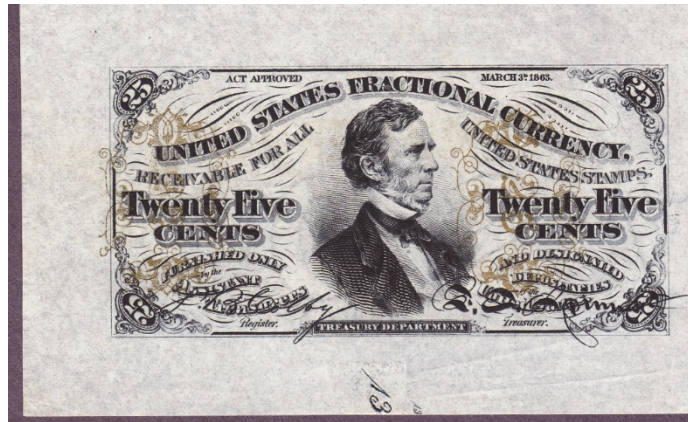
2. **Fr. 1296 Engraving Error.** A total of 146 plates were used to engrave the Fessenden note: 55 plates for the back design and 91 plates for the face. 90 of the 91 plates were engraved correctly; a single plate (Pate #144) was engraved incorrectly. On the left side of the 12-note sheet plate, a small 'a' was engraved as a sheet locator. The normal Fr. 1295 had the 'a' designator positioned to the left of Colby's signature. On the FR. 1296, the engraver placed the 'a' 7mm to the right creating a very desirable engraving error. How valuable? A gem Fr. 1296 can easily be worth 15-20 times more than an Fr. 1295.



Fr. 1295 (top); Fr. 1296 (bottom)



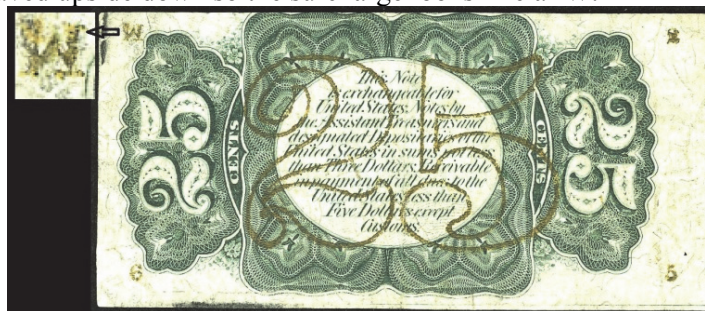
**Fr. 1294-SP-WM with 90° rotated plate #13.** A full sheet of Fessenden wide margin specimens consists of eight notes: five horizontal (normal) and three rotated 90°, such that the Fessenden's are laid out vertically with the portrait looking straight up. The sheet plate #13 was engraved normally, but when the sheet was cut into individual notes, the plate number would appear to be rotated. Not an error, but it sure looks like one.



**3. Shifted face surcharge.** The bronze surcharges on the Fessenden face are shifted quite significantly to the left.



**4. Inverted 'M' Surcharge.** On all fiber Fessenden's there is an 'M-2-6-5' surcharge stamped onto the back corners. In this rare example of an Fr. 1297 (possibly unique), the 'M' in the upper left corner was engraved upside down so the surcharge looks like a 'W.'



**5. Extra Bronzing.** Only 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> issue fractionals contain bronze surcharges. On this example, extra bronzing had been applied to the note. The Fr. 1298 Fessenden is a dramatic example with an extraneous rectangular bronze patch on the left side of the note.





**6. Butterfly Error.** A butterfly error is a fold along the corner of a note which, after the cutting process, results in an excess flag of paper. It roughly resembles a butterfly's wing.



The first Fessenden displays a butterfly error on the bottom left.



This Fessenden face has a butterfly on the bottom right.

**7. Fessenden Fold-Over Error.** The upper left corner on this Fr. 1299 solid surcharge Fessenden was folded during the printing of the back, resulting in part of the reverse design on the fold.



**8. Gutter Fold Error.** Gutter folds are the result of the uncut sheets being sent through the press with a wrinkle or wrinkles in the paper. When pulled, the gutter reveals a gap in the note design. While they are relatively common in small sized currency, in fractionals they are rare.

The Fr-1294-SP-WM shown below (front and back) has discernable gutter fold.





**9. Extra Reverse Surcharges.** This pair of fiber paper Fessenden's each have additional surcharges on the back. The first has the '25' shifted so low that there is an extra set of '6' & '5' on the note; the second note has an extra and partial '2' & '6' on the very left margin.



**11. Inverted Bronze 'SPECIMEN' Imprint on the Back of a Fessenden Specimen.** The back of every Fessenden Specimen has the bronze imprint inverted. So finding the imprint right-side up would be the rarity.



**A. 50¢ Denomination – Spinner and Justice Errors.** The undisputed kings of fractionals are the 50¢ Justice and Spinner notes. They contain the most varieties, fetch the highest average price per note at auctions, and offer a large amount of error varieties.

**1. Inverted Reverse Engraving and Surcharge Errors.** With all the varieties of Justice and Spinner notes, it would be impractical to show every type of inverted surcharge error per Friedberg number. So we endeavor to show one example of each inverted variety: Type 1 back with and without the corner surcharges and Type 2 reverses. Since the Type 1 reverses were the same for Justice and Spinner notes, the actual amount to showcase is less than one might think. We color coded the entries tying the charts to the images.

Citing former FCCB president Tom O'Mara:

*The third issue Spinner and Justice 50 cent notes were printed in both red and green. Additionally, they were printed with many different bronze back surcharge combinations and on different types of paper. The total number of Friedberg #'s assigned to these 50 cent notes is 19 Spinners and 32 Justices. Of the Spinners, 7 are red backs and 12 are green backs, and of the Justices, 15 are red backs and 17 are green backs. There are NO reported or known Spinner red back inverts and ONLY one Justice red back invert variety (Fr 1357, Milt #3R50.6a). Interestingly enough, there are estimated to be 10 known of this red back Justice variety, making it the most common of all 3rd issue 50 cent inverts. The 50 cent denomination came in 51 varieties of which 29 are green backs. The 29 varieties could create 87 potential third issue 50 cent green back inverts (see charts). 45 of the 87 potential green invert varieties are known (24) or reported to exist (21) of which 8 are unique. The total population of third issue 50 cent green back inverts is estimated to be 57+ (32 Spinner, 25 Justice)*



3rd issue - 50 CENTS - Spinner			
Friedberg No.	Inverted Back Engraving	Inverted Back Surcharges	Total Back Inverted
1324-1330	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
1331	3R50.19p - Reported	3R50.19l - Reported (4)	3R50.19h - Reported
1332 - '1' & 'a'	3R50.19q - Unique	3R50.19m - 3 Known	3R50.19i - Reported
1333 - '1'	3R50.19r - Reported	3R50.19n - Reported	3R50.19j - Reported
1334 - 'a'	3R50.19s - Reported	3R50.19o - Reported	3R50.19k - Reported
1335	3R50.20h - Reported	3R50.20d - 4 Known	Unknown
1336 - '1' & 'a'	3R50.20i - Reported	3R50.20e - Reported	Unknown
1337 - '1'	3R50.20j - Reported	3R50.20f - Unique	Unknown
1338 - 'a'	3R50.20k - Reported	3R50.20g - 2 Known	Unknown
1339 - Type 2 rev	Unknown	3R50.21h - 2 Known	3R50.21l - 2 Known
1340 - '1' & 'a'	Unknown	3R50.21i - 2 Known	Unknown
1341 - '1'	Unknown	3R50.21j	Unknown
1342 - 'a'	Unknown	3R50.21k - Unique	Unknown

3rd issue - 50 CENTS - Justice			
Friedberg No.	Inverted Back Engraving	Inverted Back Surcharges	Total Back Inverted
1343-1356 (red back)	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
1357 (red back)	3R50.6a - 10 Known	Unknown	Unknown
1358	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
1359—'1' & 'a'	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
1360—'1'	Unknown	3R50.13d - Reported	Unknown
1361—'a'	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
1362	3R50.10h - Reported	3R50.10d - 2 Known	Unknown
1363—'1' & 'a'	Unknown	3R50.10e - Reported	Unknown
1364—'1'	Unknown	3R50.10f - 4 Known	Unknown
1365—'a'	Unknown	3R50.10g - 3 Known	3R50.10i - Reported
1366	Unknown	3R50.11d - 6 Known	Unknown
1367—'1' & 'a'	Unknown	3R50.11e - Reported	Unknown
1368—'1'	Unknown	3R50.11f - Reported	Unknown
1369—'a'	Unknown	3R50.11g - Reported	Unknown
1370	3R50.12h - 2-3 Known	3R50.12d - Unique	3R50.12l - unique
1371—'1' & 'a'	3R50.12i - Reported	3R50.12e - Reported	Unknown
1372—'1'	3R50.12j - Reported	3R50.12f - Reported	Unknown
1373—'a'	3R50.12k - 2 Known	3R50.12g - 2 Known	3R50.12l - 4 Known
1373a—'S-2-6-4'	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown



**a. Type 1 Inverted Back Engraving with and without Corner Surcharges.** These types of error reverses are found on Justice and Spinner fractionals designated in the charts in **red fonts**.



**b. Type 1 Inverted Green Back Surcharges with and without Corner Surcharges.** These types of error backs are found on Justice and Spinner fractionals designated in the charts in **blue fonts**. Note how the 'A-2-6-5' corner surcharges are inverted along with the large '50.'



**c. Type 1 Total Inverted Back (Surcharges and Design) with and without Corner Surcharges.** These types of error backs are found on Justice and Spinner fractionals designated in **green fonts**.



**d. Type 2 Back with Inverted Surcharges.** These types of error reverses are found on Spinner fractionals only and designated in the charts in **pink fonts**.





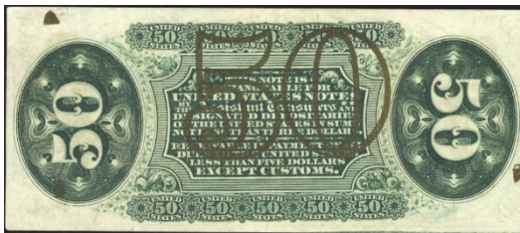
e. **Type 2 Total Inverted Green Back (Surcharges and Design).** These types of error reverses are found on Spinner fractionals only and designated in the **violet fonts**. There are no known examples of Spinner Type 2 backs with inverted back design.



f. **Type 1 Inverted Red Back Fiber Justice Fractional.** While this inverted back engraving error is fairly common (Milt # 3R50.6a), with approximately ten known, it is the only red back Justice or Spinner displaying an inverted surcharge or printing error. This error is designated in the chart in **brown fonts**.



2. **Misaligned Surcharges.** The '50' surcharges on these red and green backs were incorrectly aligned. On the first green back, the 'A-2-6-5' is also wildly misaligned.



The two large bronze 'FIFTY's framing the Justice portrait are shifted so low, they are touching the bottom margin.

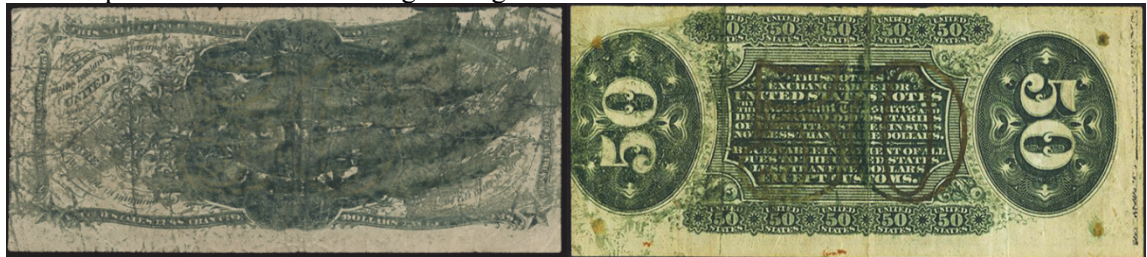




**3. Insufficient Inking.** The left side of this Fiber Justice note is under inked, creating a situation where designating this with the proper Friedberg number is impossible. This could be either an Fr. 1370, with no sheet position designator '1' nor 'a', or an Fr. 1372. The under inking on the left side of the 'FIFTY', where the '1' could have been, is unknown due to the lack of sufficient ink.



**4. Excessive Inking and bronzing.** This first error note on a Type 2 reverse is a spectacular example of too much ink. The second Type 1 Reverse has quite a lot of extra ink on the left side of the note and as a bonus there is a partial offset on the far-right margin.



This 3<sup>rd</sup> example of this hand signed Justice has a large bronze spot, the result of some wayward glue and bronzing powder. A minor error but it makes a strong visual impact.



**5. Offset Errors.** Offset errors are so rare in fractionals that even a minor offset is significant.



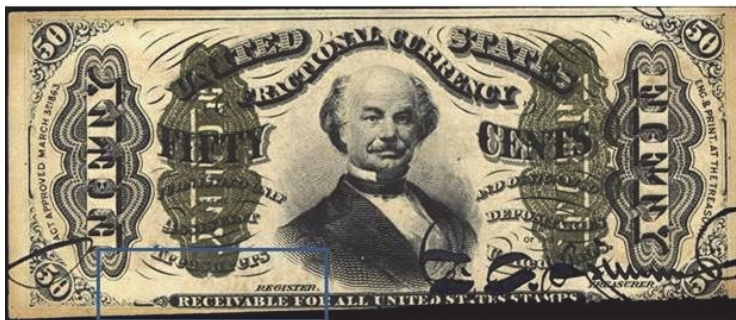
The left red '50' oval of the note on the left is an interesting offset. The 'CURR' of 'CURRENCY' on the face of a Justice fractional (below Justice's portrait on the bottom margin) is clearly visible, as well as the very bottom part of Justice's robe.





The next error in no way can be considered minor; it is one of the most spectacular offset errors in existence. Two red inverted '50' ovals on a green back type 1 is breathtaking. Apparently, a type 1 red back sheet was laid on top of the green back with the red offset adhering to the note. It also proves that both red and green type 1 reverses were printed simultaneously, giving us valuable insight on the printing process.

**6. Signature Errors.** National Bank Notes aside, certain varieties of Fractionals are the only U.S. issued currency that are hand signed. Small, MPC and Large sized notes all have preprinted signatures. Fractionals with hand signed autographs can give rise to a unique set of errors. Shown below is a series of notes that are missing the autographs and/or missing the respective titles (Register/Treasurer). These are not printing errors, but rather errors of omission.



FR1328/1329 Missing Colby or Allison's Autograph

The first example is an Fr. 1328/1329. Colby's or Allison's autograph is missing from the bottom left of this Spinner note. Fr. 1328 contains Colby's autograph and Fr. 1329 contains Allison's, so we cannot be certain of the exact Friedberg number. It throws the balance of the note off and certainly catches one's eye. These are relatively common, as about a dozen have shown up at auction over the years.



FR1355 Missing Colby's Autograph

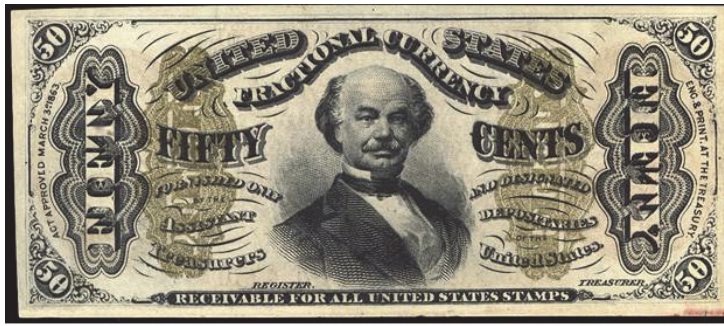
The fraternal twin of the Fr. 1328/29 is the following Fr. 1355 missing Colby's autograph on the bottom left. Certainly, a perfect bookend to the note above.



FR1355 – Missing "Register" & "Treasurer" Titles

The next error note is another Fr. 1355, but this time the 'Register' and 'Treasurer' titles that are supposed to be under Spinner's and Colby's name have been omitted.

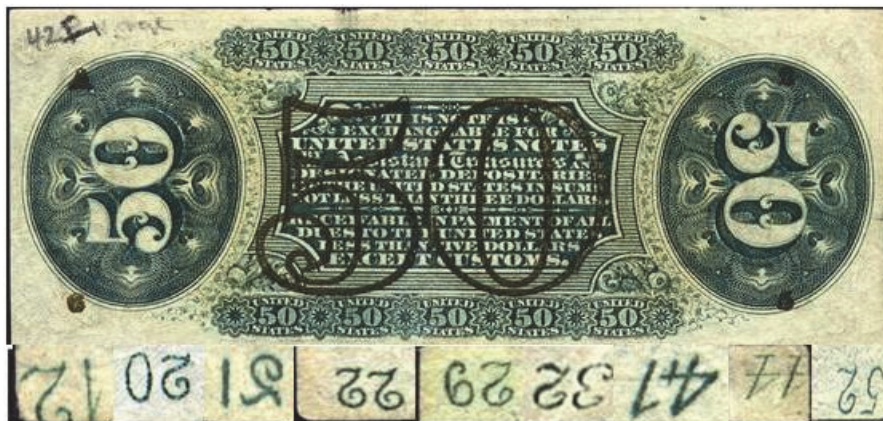




FR1328-1330 – Missing Autographs and Titles

The array of signature errors continues with this stunning Fr. 1328-1330 that is missing the autographs and the titles. Since it is missing the signatures, we cannot determine the Friedberg number. Fr. 1328 contains Colby and Spinner; Fr. 1329 has Allison and Spinner; Fr. 1330 contains Allison and New.

**7. Inverted/Mirrored Sheet Plate Numbers.** When plates of Type 1 reverses (used on Justice and Spinner notes) were engraved, it usually fell upon an apprentice to engrave a sheet plate number for accounting purposes. They were engraved inside the design portion of the plate in a place where the number would usually be trimmed when the sheet was cut into individual notes. But every so often, plate numbers survived the scissor, leading to what is colloquially called a ‘plate number note.’ They are always located in the corners. Things get a lot more interesting when the apprentice, either by purposeful intent or carelessness, engraved the sheet plate number inverted or in mirror image. On the Type 1 reverse, nine different numbers have been catalogued<sup>2</sup>. Rather than show nine different notes, a collage of examples was created with the different plate number errors combined onto a single note for maximum visual impact. Note how the design is different for each number, indicating there was more than one apprentice performing the work.



**Inverted Bronze/No Bronze ‘SPECIMEN’ Imprint on the Back of a Spinner Specimen.** This trio of Spinner obverse specimens have third different backs. The first has an inverted ‘SPECIMEN’ imprint, the second example has ‘SPECIMEN’ printed correctly and the final note has no imprint at all. Two of the three are errors.



**Missing Bronze ‘SPECIMEN’ Imprint.** A rare error – Specimen reverses almost always have the bronze ‘SPECIMEN’ imprint on the blank back. This example on the left does not; the red back specimen reverse on the right is the correct depiction.



**8. Gutterfold Errors.** Gutter folds on fractionals are very rare, especially on Spinner and Justice notes. They are much more common on small sized currency. The long, thin gutter fold nearly running the entire note is a very nice example of this elusive error.



The Justice note displays a large gutter fold across the entire top margin of the note.



I tried to be comprehensive, but one of the intriguing things about error notes is there is always a new discovery around the corner; something we’ve never seen before followed by... “Wow, that’s cool.” The fractional invert charts are waiting to be populated; changing the status category from ‘unknown’ to ‘1 known.’ In the end, it means Milt Friedberg’s exhaustive cataloguing in actuality is still a work in progress. If anyone in the community has an image of a fractional error not contained in this article, please email a scan to me ([riconio@yahoo.com](mailto:riconio@yahoo.com)) and our editor Benny Bolin ([smcbb@sbcglobal.net](mailto:smcbb@sbcglobal.net)). We’d love to publish a follow-up with new discoveries.

Thanks to Len Glazer at Heritage for his guidance and expertise. Thanks to Martin Gengerke and to Benny Bolin who shared images of a lot of rare errors, to Jerry Fochtman editor of the Fractional (FCCB) Newsletter, 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. Finally, thanks are to be my son David Melamed; his excellent editing skills have aided me tremendously.

<sup>1</sup> A comprehensive article of 1<sup>st</sup> issue error postage notes and fractional dual denomination errors was presented in a 2016 Fractional (FCCB) newsletter.

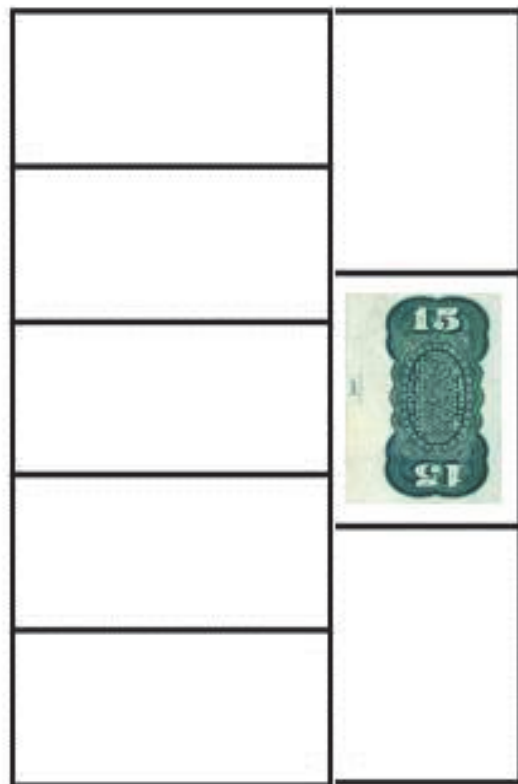
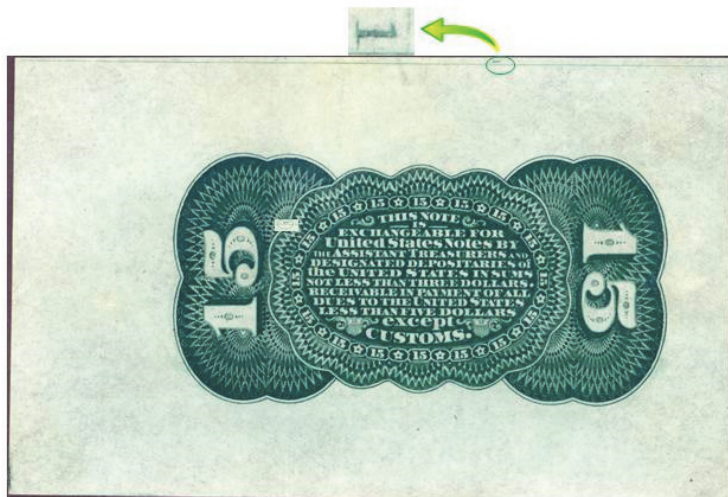
<sup>2</sup> For more information on inverted and mirrored plate number fractional notes, extensive research was presented in Paper Money Jan/Feb 2003 (Vol. XLII, No.1 – Whole 223) and Jan/Feb 2006 (Vol. XLV, No. 1 – Whole 241)



## GRANT SHERMAN REVERSE WITH 90° ROTATED PLATE #1

by Rick Melamed

The following note was discovered after Part 1 of the 3<sup>rd</sup> issue fractional errors (3¢ - 15¢) was published in *Paper Money*. The Wide Margin Grant Sherman Fractional Specimen Reverse (Fr. 1272SP-WM-REV) is a fascinating discovery with a logical explanation. On the top margin is a 90° rotated sheet plate #1. Any plate number on a specimen is rare, but one that is rotated in this manner is truly noteworthy.



This specimen plate number is not an engraving error, however. Grant Sherman fractionals were produced in sheets of 8 notes. They were laid out 5 horizontal and 3 vertical.

The note shown was in the vertical position; so when the note was cut, the sheet plate number “1” was captured in a 90° rotation (the “1” has been enlarged). See the grid to the left to visualize the layout. A stunning effect for sure.

Here is the same Grant Sherman Specimen that has the sheet plate number positioned correctly. How the sheet was cut determined the position of the sheet plate number.

