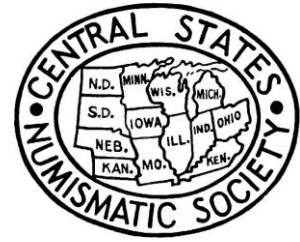


The Paper Column

Peter Huntoon

Napier-Burke Nationals are Sleepers



Two common signatures on large size notes are those of Register of the Treasury James C. Napier and Treasurer John Burke. Napier served from May 18, 1911 to October 1, 1913; Burke from April 1, 1913 to January 5, 1921. Both of those terms of office were sufficiently long that their signatures got on plenty of printing plates in both type and national bank note series.

The big deal, though, was that Napier was leaving as Burke was arriving so the two overlapped for only six months between April 1 and October 1, 1913. Only six other signature combinations were current for shorter periods during the large note era.

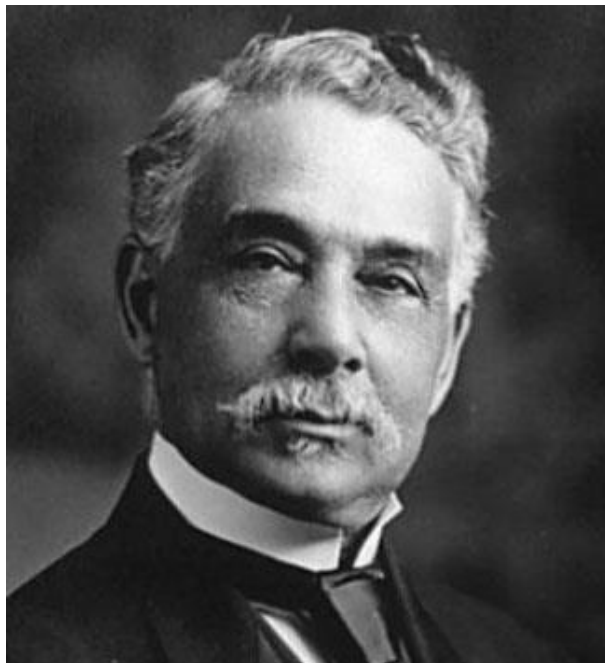


Figure 1. James C. Napier, born a slave, served as Register of the Treasury from 1911 to 1913 under President Taft. Blackpast.org

Although their signatures are common when mated with other officials, they are decidedly scarce when paired. Type note collectors have long recognized that the Napier-Burke combination is a rarity

The fact is that the combination didn't even make it to most type note plates. It appeared only on \$100 and \$10,000 Series of 1882 and \$1000 Series of 1907 gold certificates, and \$10,000 Series of 1900 certificates of deposit.



Figure 2. Honest John Burke, governor of North Dakota, was appointed U. S. Treasurer by Woodrow Wilson, a post that he held from 1913 to 1921. Library of Congress photo.

Of these four, you would expect one of the canceled 1900 \$10,000s to be the most readily available because plenty of the type are floating around. But none with Napier-Burke signatures have been reported yet despite the fact that 6,000 were printed. It turns out that the 1882 \$100s are the most readily available so you can purchase a used one for a couple of thousand bucks.



Figure 3. Type collectors desiring the Napier-Burke signature combination have to fight over big ticket gold certificates to have the opportunity unless they will accept a national bank note. Heritage Auction Archives photo.

The Napier-Burke combination is available on national bank notes, but only on Series of 1902 date and plain backs. A total of only 85 national banks received 1902 notes with the combination. This compares to 132 that got notes with Napier-Thompson signatures.

Astute national bank note collectors delight in finding a Napier-Thompson note, but few would notice if a scarcer Napier-Burke passed through their hands! The Napier-Burke is a sleeper.

The combination hasn't received its due from national bank note collectors because most could care less what treasury signatures are on their notes. The more recognizable Napier-Thompson combination was current for a little over four months. Far fewer banks got Napier-Burke notes despite the fact that the combination was current for six months.

The Series of 1882 still was current when the Napier-Burke combination came along in 1913, but the only way an 1882-issuing bank could receive notes with it would be if the bank received approval for a title change while the combination was current. New plates would have been prepared bearing the new title. The important thing is that the new plates would carry the title change date so Napier's and Burke's signatures would be mated with it. No 1882-issuing banks applied for a new title during their joint tenure so it didn't happen. That's too bad because it would have yielded 1882 Napier-Burke date and even value backs.

Table 1 is a list of all the banks that received Napier-Burke Series of 1902 notes. There are enough of them that type collectors who have to have the combination can obtain it with a bit of searching. The way that a bank made it to this list was that the plate date had to have fallen within the period when the Napier-Burke combination was current, regardless of how that plate date came about.

There were six exceptions. Often the previous signature combination was used on plates made for the first banks that were extended after a new signature combination became current between 1911 and 1922. The result was that the first six banks that were extended during the Napier-Burke era in April 1913 ended up with Napier-Thompson signatures. These were 2106

FNB of Missoula, MT (Apr 11, 1913), 2108 Union Market NB of Watertown, MA (Apr 11, 1913), 4910 Columbia NB of Pittsburgh, PA (Apr 3, 1913), 4897 FNB of Cresco, IA (Apr 7, 1913), 4900 Citizens NB of Hillsboro, TX (Apr 12, 1913), 4901 Second NB of Vincennes, IN (Apr 12, 1913) and 4902 FNB of Blanchard, IA (Apr 13, 1913).

Some of the banks that received Napier-Burke notes would flame anyone who came into possession of one. The stellar example is a note from one of the 200 sheets of 10-10-10-20 1902 dates banks sent to The First National Bank of Paia, Territory of Hawaii!. Obviously such a note would command attention, but forget it. The bankers never circulated any. Instead they held on to their entire stock of sheets and sent them back to the Treasury for redemption when they liquidated their bank in 1917.

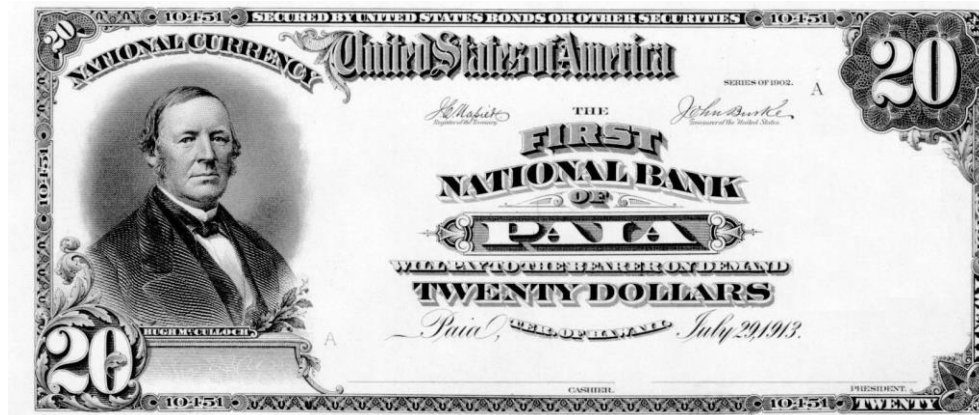


Figure 4. The Napier-Burke signature combination graces the to-die-for but impossible notes shipped to The First National Bank of Paia, Territory of Hawaii, charter 10451.

A truly great Napier-Burke note that is possible, but which hasn't turned up, is a note from The First National Bank of Seeley, a minimally capitalized California bank. A note from that bank ranks as one of the most eagerly sought of all the little California banks, being from a wide spot on old US 80 in Imperial County a little west of El Centro and some ten miles north of the Mexican border. The town is all but gone today with at most possibly a little of the foundation of the bank visible. The bank was the last to receive Napier-Burke notes.

Figure 5. One of the most sought notes from California is from wide-spot-in-the-road Seeley, charter 10462, which happens to sport Napier-Burke signatures.



A favorite Napier-Burke issue of mine is from The Farmers National Bank of Hydro, Oklahoma, because I was educated as a hydrologist. This is from a small bank in a small town just north of I40 half way between Oklahoma City and the Texas line. The bank was organized in 1913 and liquidated three years later after issuing a handful of notes. Two notes are reported from the bank.

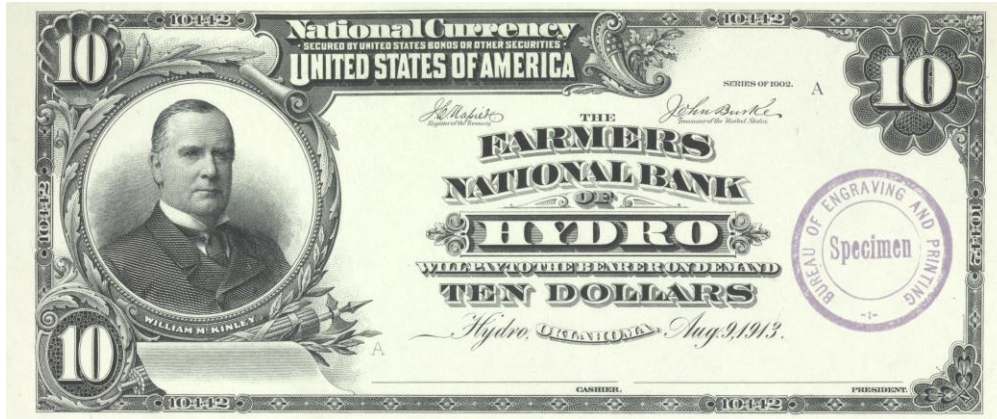


Figure 6. Ground water hydrologist Huntton's favorite Napier-Burke notes were issued from Hydro, Oklahoma, charter 10442.

Not all states had banks that received Napier-Burke notes. Notes from only 28 states and the Territory of Hawaii sported them.

James Carroll Napier was born a slave June 9, 1845 in Nashville, Tennessee. He and his family were freed when he was three years old. By 1864, Napier had become involved in politics and worked alongside Ohio Republican Congressman John Mercer Langston on behalf of newly freed Blacks. He studied law at Howard University in Washington, D.C., where he earned a law degree in 1872. He then married Lanston's daughter Nettie in 1873. He returned to Nashville in 1878 to become the first African-American to preside over the Nashville City Council, where he served until 1886. He was instrumental in the hiring of Black teachers in public schools for Blacks.

He organized the Nashville One-Cent Savings Bank in 1904, the first bank in Tennessee owned by an African-American. He was appointed Register of the Treasury by Republican President William H. Taft whereupon he served from 1911 to 1913. He died April 21, 1940, at age 94.

John Burke was born February 25, 1859 in Sigourney, Iowa, and earned a law degree from the University of Iowa in 1886. He moved to Dakota Territory in 1888 and, after North Dakota was admitted to the union, he served in the state House of Representatives in 1891 and Senate from 1893 to 1895. He married Mary E. Kane, a teacher, on August 22, 1891.

He then served three terms (1907–1913) as the tenth Governor of North Dakota esteemed as a man of unquestioned integrity. "Honest" John's greatest accomplishment was ridding North Dakota of corrupt political control. He initiated many reforms, including regulation of lobbying, establishment of a tax commission, and laws providing for the first primary election. He supported legislation regarding child labor, juvenile courts, and an employment compensation commission. His concern for public welfare was reflected in food and sanitation laws; a public health law; and regulation of medicine, surgery and public utilities.

Burke enthusiastically supported Woodrow Wilson at the 1912 Democratic National Convention in Baltimore where he swung all of North Dakota's votes to Wilson on the first ballot. William Jennings Bryan, himself a supporter of Wilson and also a good friend of Burke's, wanted Burke to run for Vice-President. Burke demurred owing to a promise he had given Indiana delegates for their votes. As a result, Thomas Marshall of Indiana was chosen Vice-President. Burke was appointed United States Treasurer by Wilson where he served from 1913 to 1921.

Later he was elected as a justice on the North Dakota Supreme Court from 1924 until his death on May 14, 1937. During that period, he served as Chief Justice from 1929 to 1931 and from 1935 to 1937. Burke County, North Dakota was named in his honor. The State of North Dakota donated a statue of Burke to the United States Capitol National Statuary Hall Collection in 1963.

Biographical Sources

Asanta, Molefi K., and Mark T. Mattson, 1998, *The African-American Atlas, Black History and Culture, an Illustrated Reference*: Macmillan USA, Simon & Schuster, New York, 251 p.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Burke_\(politician\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Burke_(politician))

<https://www.aoc.gov/capitol-hill/national-statuary-hall-collection/john-burke>

Table 1. National banks that issued Series of 1902 date or plain backs bearing Napier-Burke Treasury signatures.

The number of issuing banks was 85 compared to 132 for Napier-Thompson.

The Napier-Burke combination was current April 1, 1913 through October 1, 1913.

There were no Series of 1882 Napier-Burke issuers.

Code for why the bank received Napier-Burke plates: N = newly organized bank, E = extended, T = title change.

Ch. No.	Location		Bank Name	Plate Date	Code
252	PA	Pittsburgh	The First-Second National Bank of	Apr 21, 1913	T
906	KY	Lexington	The First and City National Bank of	Aug 8, 1913	T
2114	TN	Fayetteville	The First National Bank of	Jun 9, 1913	E
2116	IL	Griggsville	The Griggsville National Bank	May 13, 1913	E
2117	NY	Ellenville	The Home National Bank of	May 6, 1913	E
2119	IN	Plymouth	The First National Bank of Marshall County at	Jun 19, 1913	E
2125	WI	Chippewa Falls	The First National Bank of	May 1, 1913	E
2126	IL	Lincoln	The First National Bank of	Jul 29, 1913	E
2127	TN	Memphis	The Central-State National Bank of	Jul 26, 1913	E
2128	IL	Shelbyville	The First National Bank of	Aug 21, 1913	E
2129	CO	Central City	The First National Bank of	Sep 15, 1913	E
2130	IA	Red Oak	The First National Bank of	Sep 24, 1913	E
3417	WA	Tacoma	The National Bank of	Sep 2, 1913	T
4319	AL	Jacksonville	The First National Bank of	Apr 7, 1913	T
4857	PA	Patton	The First National Bank of	Sep 13, 1913	E
4868	ME	Portland	The Chapman National Bank of	Sep 16, 1913	E
4904	IL	Carbondale	The First National Bank of	Apr 15, 1913	E
4905	TX	Hempstead	The Farmers National Bank of	Apr 15, 1913	E
4907	MA	Springfield	The Springfield National Bank	Apr 22, 1913	E
4908	PA	Reynoldsville	The First National Bank of	Apr 20, 1913	E
4912	WI	Stevens Point	The Citizens National Bank of	Apr 27, 1913	E
4913	PA	New Kensington	The First National Bank of	May 6, 1913	E
4914	NY	Matteawan	The Matteawan National Bank	May 9, 1913	E
4915	PA	Athens	The Farmers National Bank of	May 1, 1913	E
4916	MN	Wadena	The Merchants National Bank of	May 15, 1913	E
4917	PA	Newport	The First National Bank of	May 8, 1913	E
4918	PA	Pittsburgh	Western National Bank of	May 18, 1913	T
4919	PA	Blairsville	The Blairsville National Bank	Jun 9, 1913	E
4920	IL	Decatur	The National Bank of	May 16, 1913	E
4921	IA	Waukon	The First National Bank of	Apr 22, 1913	E
4922	TX	Atlanta	The First National Bank of	May 13, 1913	E
4923	PA	Ephrata	The Farmer's National Bank of	May 27, 1913	E
4925	NY	Liberty	The Sullivan County National Bank of	May 29, 1913	E
4926	MD	Frostburg	The Citizens National Bank of	May 24, 1913	E
4927	PA	North East	The First National Bank of	Jun 3, 1913	E
4928	MN	Owatonna	The National Farmers Bank of	May 29, 1913	E
4929	VT	Chelsea	The National Bank of Orange County at	Sep 9, 1913	E
4930	IL	Normal	The First National Bank of	Jul 3, 1913	E
4937	WI	Appleton	The Citizens National Bank of	Jun 1, 1913	E

6535	IL	Chicago	The Drovers National Bank of	May 22, 1913	T
8230	ND	Lidgerwood	The Farmers National Bank of	Sep 6, 1913	T
8827	CA	Los Angeles	Security National Bank of	Sep 2, 1913	T
9966	CA	Alhambra	The Alhambra National Bank	May 27, 1913	T
10416	SD	Henry	The First National Bank of	Apr 30, 1913	N
10417	NJ	Lyndhurst	The First National Bank of	May 20, 1913	N
10418	TX	Krum	The First National Bank of	Jun 26, 1913	N
10419	IN	Fishers	The Fishers National Bank	Jul 5, 1913	N
10420	TX	Freeport	The Freeport National Bank	Apr 23, 1913	N
10421	AL	Enterprise	The Farmers and Merchants National Bank of	Jul 2, 1913	N
10422	AR	Green Forest	The First National Bank of	Jun 7, 1913	N
10423	AL	New Decatur	The Central National Bank of	Jul 10, 1913	N
10424	OK	Broken Bow	The First National Bank of	Jul 3, 1913	N
10425	ND	East Fairview	The First National Bank of	Jun 19, 1913	N
10426	TX	Omaha	The First National Bank of	Jul 7, 1913	N
10427	CA	Riverbank	First National Bank of	Jun 26, 1913	N
10428	IA	Mason City	The Security National Bank of	Jul 16, 1913	N
10429	ID	Rupert	The First National Bank of	Jul 29, 1913	N
10430	NJ	Westville	The First National Bank of	Jul 16, 1913	N
10431	OK	Tishomingo	The Farmers National Bank of	Jul 23, 1913	N
10432	OR	Paisley	Paisley National Bank of	Jul 14, 1913	N
10433	KY	Whitesburg	The First National Bank of	Jul 14, 1913	N
10434	AR	Morrilton	The First National Bank of	Jul 19, 1913	N
10435	CA	San Diego	The Union National Bank of	Jul 23, 1913	N
10436	OH	Haviland	The Farmers National Bank of	Aug 1, 1913	N
10437	OK	Braggs	The First National Bank of	Aug 1, 1913	N
10438	MT	Plentywood	The First National Bank of	May 12, 1913	N
10439	AR	Judsonia	The First National Bank of	Jul 3, 1913	N
10440	NJ	Minotola	The First National Bank of	Jul 25, 1913	N
10441	AL	Boaz	The First National Bank of	Sep 1, 1913	N
10442	OK	Hydro	The Farmers National Bank of	Aug 9, 1913	N
10443	MT	Baker	The First National Bank of	Aug 19, 1913	N
10444	NY	Forestville	The First National Bank of	Sep 3, 1913	N
10445	IL	Mounds	The First National Bank of	Aug 29, 1913	N
10446	NY	Heuvelton	The First National Bank of	Mar 28, 1913	N
10447	AR	Horatio	The First National Bank of	Aug 15, 1913	N
10448	KY	Bowling Green	The Warren National Bank of	Sep 8, 1913	N
10449	TN	Ripley	The First National Bank of	Sep 6, 1913	N
10450	WV	Worthington	The First National Bank of	Apr 14, 1913	N
10451	HI	Paia	The First National Bank of	Jul 29, 1913	N
10452	PA	Strausstown	The Strausstown National Bank	Jul 19, 1913	N
10453	CA	Gardena	The First National Bank of	Sep 10, 1913	N
10455	WV	Wheeling	The Citizens National Bank of	Jun 7, 1913	N
10456	NY	Jeffersonville	The First National Bank of	Sep 8, 1913	N
10459	AR	Stuttgart	The First National Bank of	Sep 25, 1913	N
10462	CA	Seeley	The First National Bank of	Sep 5, 1913	N