

The National Howard Bank of Baltimore, Md., Charter 4218

by J. Fred Maples

The National Howard Bank of Baltimore, Md., Charter 4218 was converted to the national system in 1890 with Dr. John R. Hooper, president, and Thomas P. Amoss, cashier. As reported by the *Baltimore Sun* on January 9, 1890: "The stockholders of the Howard Bank of Baltimore held a meeting yesterday at Benson's Hall, on North Howard street, and unanimously resolved to change from a state bank to a national bank. The name of the new institution will be the National Howard Bank of Baltimore." The bank was reportedly named for Baltimore patriot John Eager Howard, a Revolutionary War hero, governor, and U.S. senator. As expected the bank continued successfully at its Howard Street location, but by 1903 its growth warranted erection of a larger building in the same location, of "very handsome design" and including an adjoining lot. This bank operated for 25 years before consolidating with The National Exchange Bank of Baltimore, charter 1109, in 1915. This bank issued \$1,064,650 in 1882 Series and 1902 Series notes, while

averaging about \$70,000 in circulation, but increased its circulation nicely in 1907 and 1909. While just a few notes are available for collectors today, one resides in the Smithsonian Institution, and one in the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia.

As president Hooper was followed by the equally successful Henry Clark from 1894 to 1915, and Amoss was followed as cashier by William H. Roberts, Jr. from 1892 to 1915. Interestingly Hooper was an amateur astronomer, and Halley's Comet authority, who observed and lectured on the comet in 1910. Hooper was fortunate as the comet is only visible from Earth every 75-76 years. As cashier Amoss was a successful bookkeeper and businessman, who lived a long and productive life, but was unlucky in love, and widowed three times. Clark was a shoe manufacturer, and earlier from Massachusetts, who came to Baltimore in 1856. Roberts, son of a produce dealer, was a career bookkeeper and a bachelor.



Figure 1: \$100 1882 Brown Back. The National Howard Bank of Baltimore, Md. Ex-Grinnell Lot 1255. The bank was named for Baltimore patriot John Eager Howard, a hero of the War of 1812. This note was issued to the bank on December 19, 1904, where pen signatures of W.H. Roberts, cashier, and Henry Clark, president, were applied. This bank issued 2,640 sheets of \$50 and \$100 1882 Brown Backs between 1890 and 1908.

The best note known from this bank today is this \$100 1882 Brown Back, Friedberg # 524, certified by PMG as Extra Fine 40. This note is wonderful in all

respects, combining rarity and grade, with great color, pen signatures, broad margins, and eye appeal. This note is one of just eight known \$100 Brown Backs from

Maryland, and according to the National Bank Note Census, the highest grade \$100 from the state. This note has a distinguished pedigree -- most notably from the Albert Grinnell sale in the 1940s, Part III, lot 1255. Recently this note was a highlight of Marc Watts' Maryland collection before selling for \$31,200 in Heritage's 2018 FUN sale, lot 20878. Previously this note sold in Lyn Knight's February 2000 auction for \$30,800, and a Stacks auction in 1990 for \$6,325.

The 1882 Brown Back national currency series was created by the Act of July 11, 1882. The new legislation was required to allow extensions of the earliest national bank charters, and formation of new ones. The Act required new notes to look distinctly different, resulting in the new design, and the backs of notes were changed to create the Brown Back style of that color. Banks that extended their charter from mid-1882 until 1902, and any new bank chartered during that period, received notes of this Brown Back type for up to 20 years, even as new Series of 1902 notes were introduced to other banks. Indeed 1882 Brown Backs were printed until March 1908, when the Aldrich-Vreeland Act mandated new wording on notes, and production of 1882 and 1902 Date Backs took over.

The layouts of \$100 1882 Brown Backs are stunning in every way. Refer to Figure 1 -- top left this

note is highlighted by the distinctive Roman numeral C, followed by the decimal 100. Below the left decimal 100 is the beautiful vignette named "Commodore Perry's Victory on Lake Champlain", which depicts Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry leaving his flagship, the Lawrence, during the Battle of Lake Erie in 1813. In the center is the bank's official name "The National Howard Bank of Baltimore" in four interesting fonts. Immediately left and right of "The" in the bank's name are facsimile signatures of W.S. Rosecrans, Register of the Treasury, and J.N. Huston, Treasurer of the United States, although Huston's signature is obscured by the bank's charter number. Immediately right of the charter number is the regional letter "E" for East -- both are overprinted in reddish brown. Regional letters helped workers with sorting and redemption, and their use started in 1902. Nearby the Treasury seal is also overprinted in reddish brown. Top right the distinctive Roman numeral C is repeated, followed by the decimal 100. Just below the decimal 100 is this note's treasury serial number, B411125, which was unique across all banks. Separately this note can be identified by its bank serial 1869-A, but that serial is only unique to this bank. And finally, the right vignette is a depiction of Liberty, seated by a fasces representing the Union, along with the message "Maintain It!".



Figure 1: Reverse of \$100 1882 Brown Back, treasury serial B411125. The National Howard Bank of Baltimore, Md. At far left and below the decimal 100, is a vignette with Maryland's official state seal, including a farmer and his spade, a shield, coat of arms, and a fisherman. At center the bank's charter # 4218 is prominent in large blue-green numerals. Far right is a vignette of a majestic perched eagle.

Refer to Figure 2 for the reverse of this \$100 1882 Brown Back and its distinctive style. While the bank's charter is featured in the center, with a perched eagle on the right, a vignette with the Maryland state seal is included on the left. While this note was issued (and likely printed) in 1904, Brown Backs printed before 1896 used an older state seal. During its history Maryland has used multiple seals, with the newer and present Maryland seal being adopted by the Maryland General Assembly in 1876. The newer seal relates back to the days of Maryland's original settlements, with a farmer with his spade, a shield, coat of arms, and a fisherman.

William S. Rosecrans (1819–1898), served as the Register of the Treasury from 1885 to 1893, but was also an American inventor, coal-oil company executive, diplomat, politician, and U.S. Army officer. Rosecrans gained fame for his role as a Union general during the American Civil War, and was victorious in prominent Western Theater battles, but his military career was effectively over with his disastrous defeat at the Battle of Chickamauga in 1863. Rosecrans spent much of his postwar life in California, and was elected to Congress as a Democrat in 1880. The first Democratic president elected after the war was Grover Cleveland in 1884, and newspaper reports say Rosecrans was seriously considered to be Cleveland's Secretary of War, but instead Rosecrans was appointed as the Register of the Treasury. James N. Huston (1849–1927) was a banker, businessman, and politician who served as Treasurer of the United States from 1889 to 1891, as appointed by President Benjamin Harrison. Huston, like Harrison,

was a Republican. Huston was in a number of business ventures, including coffins, milling, silver plating, buggies, hosiery, and gas. After leaving office, Huston later became president of the National Trust Company, but was charged and convicted of mail fraud with two associates in 1910.

Baltimore is Maryland's largest city and birthplace of the Star-Spangled Banner. Baltimore acquired its name "The Monumental City" after an 1827 visit and toast by President John Quincy Adams. Originally Baltimore was part of Baltimore County but seceded in 1851 to become an independent city. Baltimore's history dates back long before the American Revolution, when its main industry was the refinement of sugar cane from the Caribbean. During the War of 1812, the British attacked Fort McHenry from land and sea after burning Washington, D.C., but were repulsed from both directions. This historic battle was the setting for Francis Scott Key's Star-Spangled Banner. During the Civil War Maryland was a border state, but didn't secede from the Union. However, when Union soldiers marched through the city at the start of the war, Confederate sympathizers attacked the troops, which led to the Baltimore Riot of 1861. Baltimore's history also includes the Great Baltimore Fire of February 7th and 8th, 1904, which destroyed several banks and hundreds of buildings – but not this bank. After much of the city was rebuilt over the next two years, the *Baltimore American* reported the city had risen from the ashes, and "one of the great disasters of modern time had been converted into a blessing." Indeed, it had.

Welcome Bill Litt – New SPMC Governor

William Litt started collecting U.S. paper money in 1980, at the age of thirteen, after having collected coins for several years. He saw his first National Bank Note, a 1902 example from the Bank of Italy in San Francisco, while working on Saturdays at a neighborhood coin shop. Soon after acquiring that note, he bought a beautiful EF 1902 \$5 from the Crocker First National Bank of San Francisco, from John Heleva, a note he still has in his collection. When he found out by looking in the back of the Friedberg book that two National Banks in his hometown of Palo Alto, California, issued Nationals, he set out to acquire them. He succeeded in finding a note from the more common bank while still in eighth grade, and added an example from the rare, large-size only institution before graduating from high school.

Since the early 1980s, Bill has been an active collector of, and part-time dealer in, U.S. currency, with a particular love of Nationals and National Bank memorabilia. He collects seven counties in Northern and Central California, and enjoys dealing in Nationals from across the country.

Bill is married, with one teenage stepson and two dogs. He graduated from Cornell University and the UCLA School of Law, and has practiced law since 1993. He currently is a Deputy County Counsel for Monterey County, California.