

## \$ M A L L N O T E \$

## \$5 Philadelphia Late-Finished Face 39

By Jamie Yakes

Five-dollar Philadelphia Series of 1934A face 39 is one of four late-finished Series of 1934A FRN faces reported to collectors in 2017.<sup>1</sup> The others were \$5 New York 58, \$5 San Francisco 52, and \$10 Philadelphia 169. Each plate originally was a 1934 master plate that in 1938 the BEP altered to a 1934A master plate to use as a template for making other 1934A plates. They finished each plate in 1944 as a production plate and used them for regular sheet printings.



**Figure 1.** The G position note from the proof sheet of \$5 1934A Philadelphia late-finished face plate 39. In the selvage is the plate number 38031, 'EI' denoting the plate as electrolytic iron, and a triangle denoting the plate a master. (National Numismatic Collection).

The process of making intaglio printing plates involved masters, bassos and altos. Masters served as templates for producing altos, which were intermediaries lifted from the masters and had designs in relief as opposed to the incuse designs on masters. Bassos were the resulting plates lifted from altos after depositing metal onto them, and were exact replicas of the master plates used to make the altos. Most bassos were cleaned up, polished and

etched with plate serials, then logged into the plate vault for eventual use as production plates. A few instead were reserved as master plates.

The BEP began face 39 as \$5 Philadelphia Series of 1934 plate 2 on November 6, 1934, and produced it from an alto lifted from steel intaglio master face plate 1. They designated plate 2 the electrolytic master basso and used it to prepare four altos from November 12-26. Over the next two years altos from plates 1 and 2 would serve to produce all 1934 \$5 Philadelphia production faces.

In January 1938 the BEP began etching macro serial numbers on finished plates<sup>2</sup> and designating those plates Series of 1934A. On May 26, 1938, they altered plate 2 to a 1934A by etching an "A" after each "SERIES OF 1934" located on all 12 subjects. They reassigned it plate serial 39, which was the first serial for \$5 1934A Philadelphia faces, and designated it the 1934A master basso. Aside from the different sizes of plate serials, bassos destined to become 1934s or 1934As had identical designs, and conveniently nothing else needed to be altered, deleted or added in the process.

In June and July 1938, the BEP lifted four altos from 39, which spawned a majority of 1934A Philadelphia production plates made through June 1945, inclusive of serials 40-92, except for four plates. In August 1944, the BEP prepared a new steel intaglio master, plate 81, and used it to produce production bassos 82, 83 and 84.

The BEP finished Philadelphia face 39 as a production plate on November 13, 1944, and added it to the routine press plate rotation. They sent it to press only once for a short run from January 7-23, which happened to be the last press run with Philadelphia 1934 and 1934A faces. Also sent to press were 1934A faces 49 and 52-61, and 1934 faces 33, 35 and 36. They dropped half the plates on the 22nd and the rest the following day. Plate 39 then sat unused for the rest of the year until canceled on December 31.

Face 39 notes likely will have serials in the 60 million-80 million range of the C-A block. This is based on this author's observations of 1934A notes with plate serials used concurrently with face 39.

Philadelphia face 39 was the only late-finished FRN face to overlap the use of 1934 faces. Interestingly, Philadelphia 1934B faces 96 and 99 were used in November and December 1945, before face 39 was in the press room. Changeover pairs between face 39 and either 1934 or 1934B faces possibly were created during the early months of 1946.

That C-A block contains reported Series of 1934A back plate 637 mules.<sup>3</sup> Back 637 was a \$5 master basso for 10 years until finished as a production plate on November 10, 1944 with micro serial numbers.<sup>4</sup> It had numerous press runs between June 23, 1945 and June 14, 1949, and sheets wound their way to face printings for \$5 legal tender notes, silver certificates and FRNs. The BEP had been using back 637 for six months by the time 39 went to press and ample sheet stock would have been available for mating with that face. No matter the back, notes from face 39 have yet to be reported.

## Sources Cited

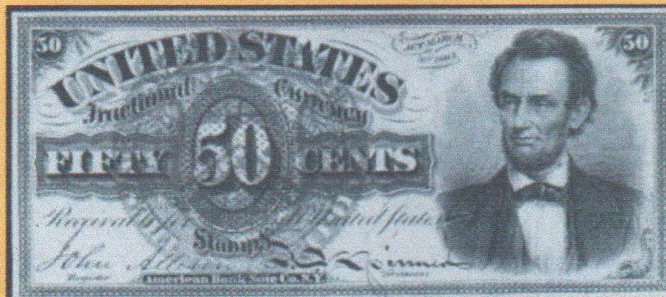
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