The Paper Column

Doug Walcutt

$5 Series of 1882 National Bank Note Title Block Layouts

INTRODUCTION

Perhaps the most beloved Federal paper money issues are the beautiful Series of 1882 $5 brown backs with their limitless, often spectacular, bank title block layouts. Distinctive styles of layouts emerged over the 40 years during which the series was current, some short-lived, some overlapping, some on again-off again, and others quite persistent. The purpose of this article is to illustrate the various groups that emerged, identify their defining characteristics, and pinpoint when they were used.

Bank officers did not select the layouts used on their notes. Rather, that decision was made by the personnel at the Bureau of Engraving and Printing.

ORGANIZATION BEHIND THIS CLASSIFICATION

Title blocks tend to self-organize into groups based on some dominant visual feature. Each of these groups usually represents notes from a specific era. The curious fact is that the dominant feature defining one group often is not the same as for another group. Consequently, the criteria used to define groups in this classification scheme change as we move through time (Walcutt, 1999a,b).

The plates made between 1882 and the 1890s generally group according to distinctive-looking payment clauses. The payment clause became standardized from the 1890s forward, so the visually distinguishing feature first became the font used to spell National Bank, and later the font used to spell Five Dollars. One of the incentives for splitting these latter groups out was the sizable number of plates made in each.

Certain title layouts are so distinctive they demand their own categories. Examples include the three types of circus posters, Princesses Leia and shingled layouts.

The seventeen groups that are defined here are numbered in the order in which they were first introduced.

Group 1—Patented Lettering

The earliest $5 layouts, used between 1882 and mid-1885, were made using a patented lettering process. In this process, engravers engraved numerous alphabets, each consisting of letters of the same style and same size. Those letters were taken up individually on transfer rolls and then were laid-in one at a time onto title block dies to spell out text on title blocks.

Some of these library alphabets consisted of letters with very elaborate designs made in some cases by superimposing the individual letters onto a common engraved background that was replicated from a hand engraving or a rosette made on a geometric lathe. The backgrounds with their superimposed letters were then taken up on the transfer roll. In other cases, plain letters were laid-in to the title blocks and shading or other embellishments were added. Individual letters also could be and were laid-in onto previously laid-in blank tombstones.

The primary distinguishing features on these notes are: (1) a will pay clause that is identical to the one found on Original Series and Series of 1875 $5s, and (2) quaint-looking lettering. There is no end to the styles of letters found within the title blocks on these notes, some of which are grandly elegant, others utilitarian. In fact, there even appears to be at least twenty different renderings of FIVE DOLLARS on these plates, because those letters also were laid-in using the same technology.

Figure 1. Patented Lettering. The distinguishing features are the payment clause that is a direct copy from the $5 Original/1875 notes and patented letter fonts used in the title blocks. There are innumerable styles for FIVE DOLLARS. National Numismatic Collection, Smithsonian Institution photos.

Figure 2. Recycled Original Series Layouts. Distinguishing features are title blocks from Original Series rolls complete with the same payment clause (New York), or heavily borrowed title block elements from Original Series rolls (Philadelphia). National Numismatic Collection, Smithsonian Institution photos.

At least 1,000 banks received group 1 notes. These designs were attacked as inartistic and mechanical by Bureau critics. Consequently, Bureau personnel made replacement plates utilizing more artistic layouts for many of the group 1 plates as workloads permitted.

However, in an interesting twist, layouts for some new and extending banks in the 1890-3 period used parts of group 1 layouts borrowed from the 1882-5 period. The latter are distinguishable because they have in-line Treasury signatures, and 1890s plate dates.

Patented lettered layouts are avidly sought because they have a Victorian look. One could form a spectacular collection using only notes from this group because the variations are endless. Only a few are shown owing to space limitations.

Group 2—Recycled Original Series Layouts

Most extending banks received $5 Series of 1882 layouts that were identical to those on their Original Series notes beginning in 1884 and through 1885, with the slight exception that the font used for the word "The" in the bank name often was changed. Reuse of the dies and rolls from the earlier series was driven primarily by criticism fomented by the bank note companies over the use of patented lettering processes and possibly the crush of extensions during that period. How could the bank note companies be critical if their own engravings were used for the 1882 title blocks?

The distinguishing feature of group 2 notes is that the title blocks are virtually identical to those found on the Original Series and Series of 1875 issues from the bank, complete down to the will pay line.

Recycling of Original Series rolls occurred again in 1887-8 and 1890-5. The affected plates also used the Original Series will pay line. Those of 1887-8 vintage represent delayed orders for the $5 combination from banks that were extended in 1885.

The 1890-5 vintage plates were made for both new and extending banks. Often on these, recyclable parts from Original Series layouts, rather than the whole, were used to build the title blocks. One of the most astonishing examples is the one shown for The National New Haven Bank, New Haven, Connecticut

Figure 3. In this unusual situation, "New Haven Bank" was borrowed in 1895 from the $10 and higher Original Series title blocks. The same item was used to make the 10-10-10-20 Series of 1882 plate for the bank in 1885. National Numismatic Collection, Smithsonian Institution photos.

(1243), prepared in 1895. In this instance, the lettering in New Haven Bank was borrowed from the Original Series 10-10-10-20 and 50-100 plates made for the bank in 1865, using rolls made by the American Bank Note Company.

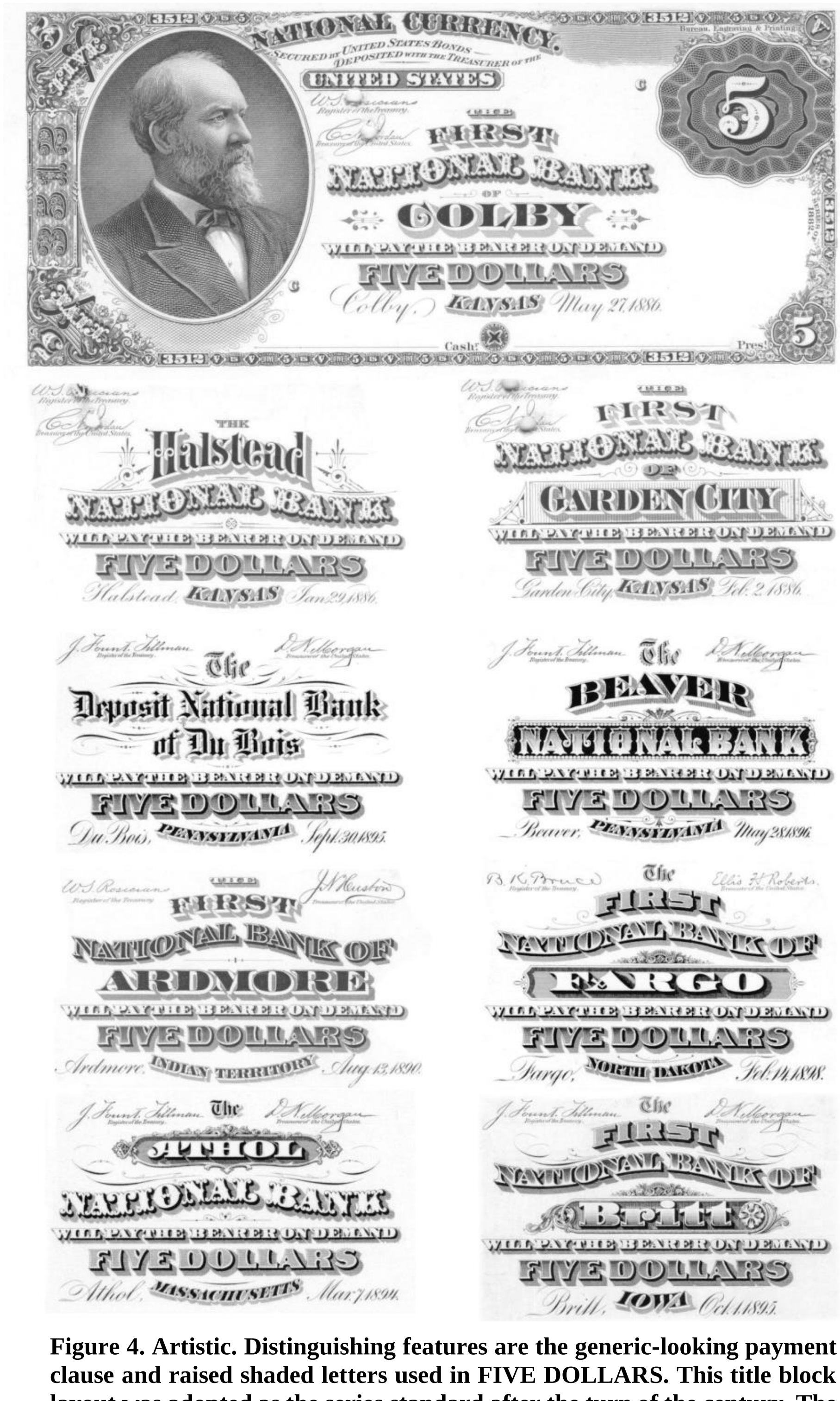

Figure 4. Artistic. Distinguishing features are the generic-looking payment clause and raised shaded letters used in FIVE DOLLARS. This title block layout was adopted as the series standard after the turn of the century. The style with the town in a tombstone, became widely used. National Numismatic Collection, Smithsonian Institution photos.

Group 3—Artistic-Ultimate Series Standard

A new and quite different style of title layout and payment clause began to appear at the end of 1885. Bureau personnel considered it to be one of their more artistic creations; however, its use was suspended in mid-1887 when even more elaborate layouts were developed. It was resurrected in the 1890s after a hiatus of about three years and adopted as the exclusive series standard on new plates after the turn of the century. Notes from this group began to take on a rather staid appearance.

The distinguishing feature on these notes is: (1) the will pay clause utilizes generic-looking hollow white raised capital letters arranged in a horizontal line, and (2) FIVE DOLLARS uses raised rather plain, wide and shaded letters. The embedding of the town in a tombstone became increasingly commonplace in the 1890s.

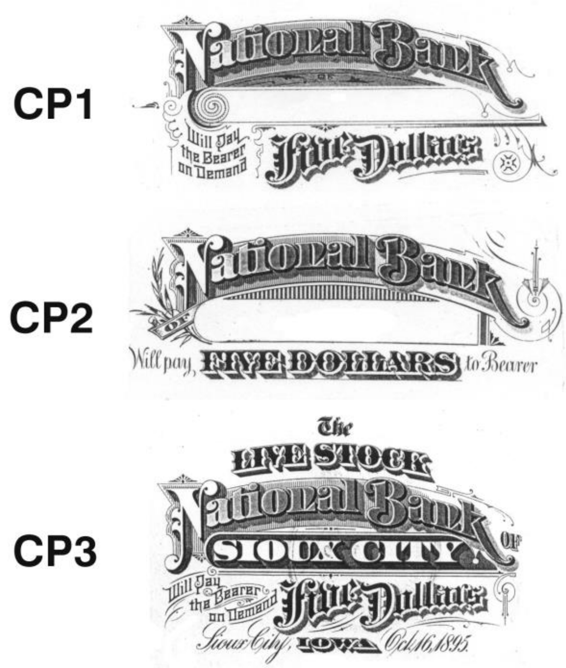

Figure 5. Comparison between the three types of circus poster layouts. The defining feature of a circus poster layout is the banner containing "National Bank." The distinguishing feature between the varieties is the "Will Pay".

Group 4—Circus Poster-1

The first circus posters appeared in December 1886, and were used sporadically through mid-1888. A number of the circus poster-1 plates made in and after 1887 replaced inartistic group 1 plates. CP1 was used on the plates for 46 banks.

The defining characteristic of all circus poster layouts is the sweeping banner containing the words National Bank above the tombstone. Features specific to Circus Poster-1 layouts are the elegant tombstone containing the town, the cap above containing "of" along with distinctive internal decorations, and, most importantly, the will pay line with "Will Pay/the Bearer/on Demand" in three evenly stacked, downward bowed lines to the left of the ornate rendering of "Five Dollars."

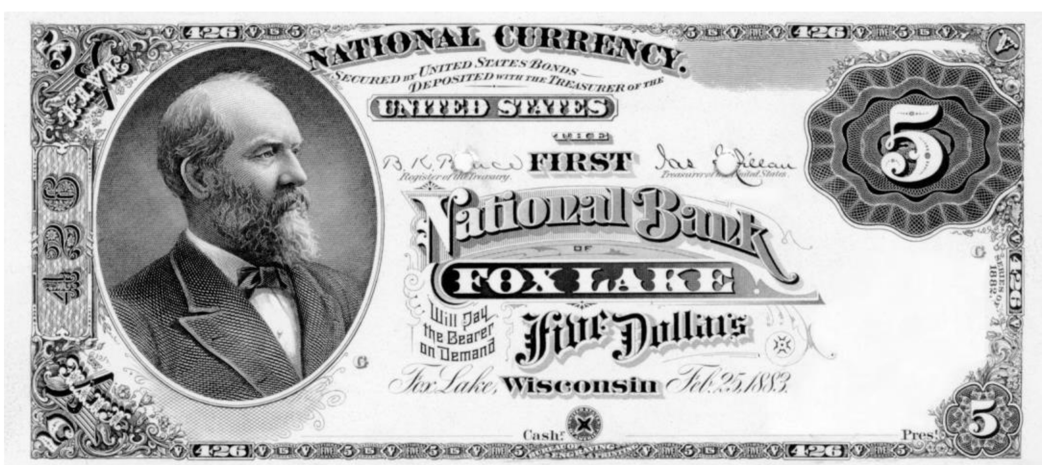

Figure 6. Circus Poster-1. Key distinguishing feature when compared to other circus posters is the evenly stacked Will Pay/the Bearer/on Demand below the tombstone. National Numismatic Collection, Smithsonian Institution photo.

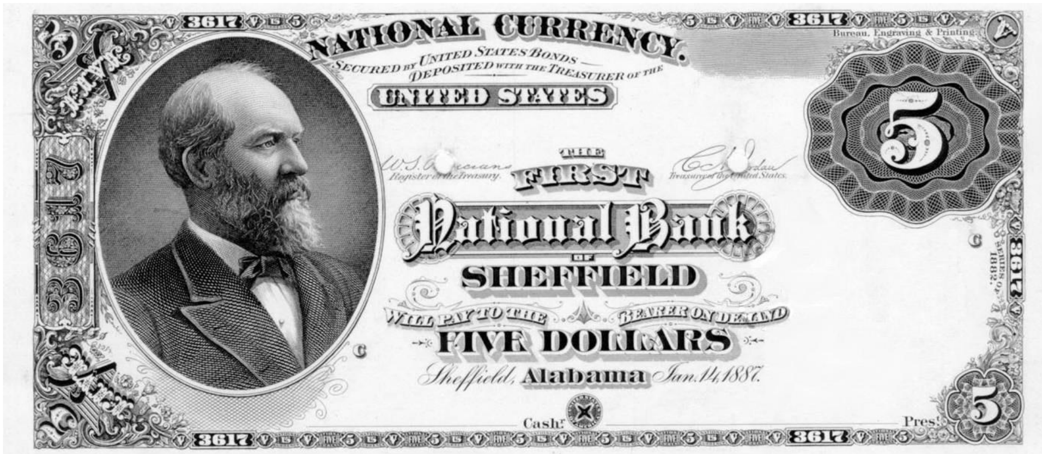

Figure 7. Princess Leia. Aside from the distinctive tombstone, this is the only $5 Series of 1882 layout with a payment clause reading: WILL PAY TO THE BEARER ON DEMAND. National Numismatic Collection, Smithsonian Institution photo.

Group 5—Princess Leia

This group derives its name from the spectacular embellishments on the ends of the tombstone that resemble Princess Leia's coiled hair in the Star Wars movies. The wording, WILL PAY TO THE BEARER ON DEMAND, is unique to this layout for the 1882 series $5s. The Princess Leia layout appeared on the plates for four banks between December 1886 and January 1887.

All have the Bureau imprint in the upper right corner, in-out plate letters, and white charter numbers. In-line signatures were adopted as the standard during the period when plates in this group were made, so all have them.

The Princess Leia layout was used on Dodge City, Kansas (3596), Phillipsburg, Kansas (3601), Cincinnati, Ohio (3606) and Sheffield, Alabama (3617).

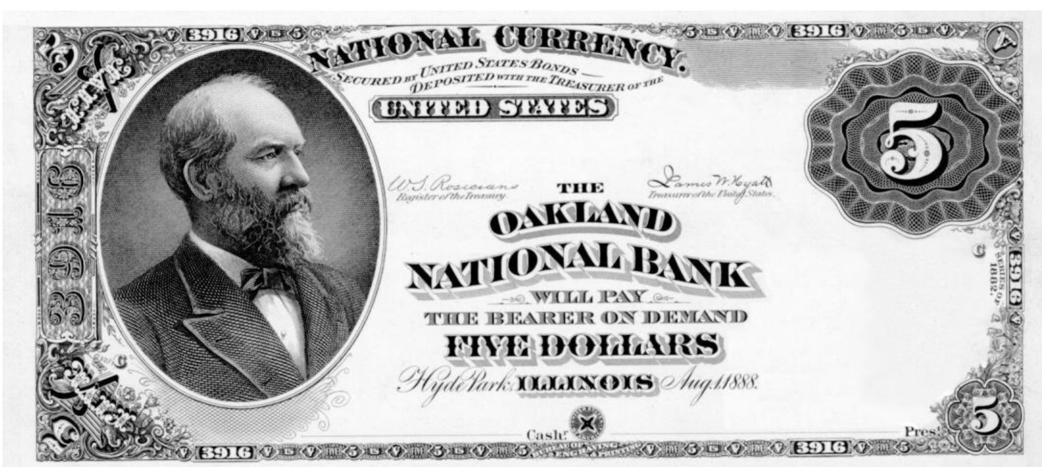

Figure 8. Two-line Payment Clause. Distinguishing feature is the two-line payment clause WILL PAY/THE BEARER ON DEMAND that is found only under bank names that end in NATIONAL BANK. National Numismatic Collection, Smithsonian Institution photo.

Group 6—Two-line Payment Clause

The distinguishing feature of group 6 notes is the two-line payment clause WILL PAY/THE BEARER ON DEMAND that is found only under bank names that end in NATIONAL BANK. The layout is found on only a few plates prepared during 1887 and 1888, including some replacement plates. The replacements supplanted inartistic group 1 plates.

There are two varieties for the lettering in the will pay clause. One exhibits generic-looking white letters similar to those on group 3 notes, the other has slightly larger letters that appear dark and contain closely spaced horizontal lines.

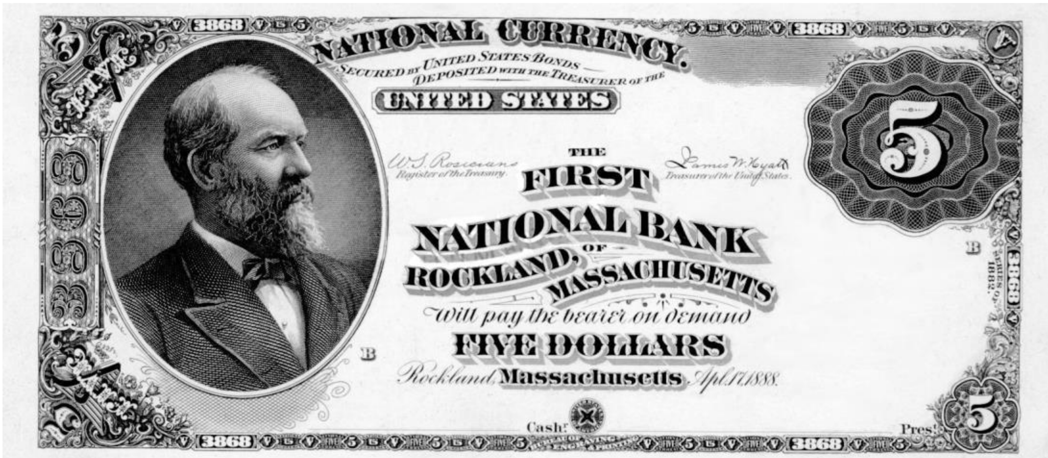

Figure 9. Script Payment Clause. Distinguishing feature is the script payment clause. National Numismatic Collection, Smithsonian Institution photo.

Group 7—Script Payment Clause

The distinguishing feature of group 7 notes is the horizontal payment clause written in script letters. Group 7 plates were used between early-1887 and mid-1888 to replace many inartistic group 1 plates.

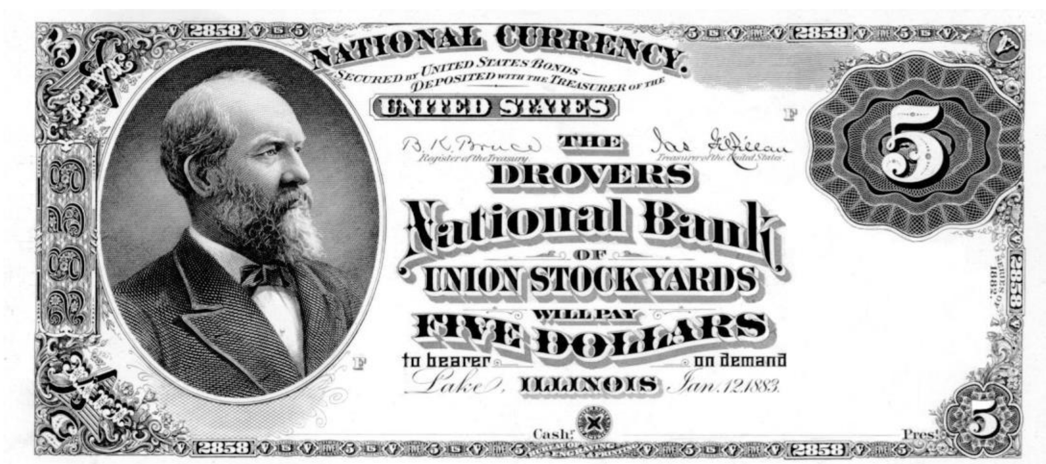

Figure 10. Cigar Box Label-1. Distinguishing features are the uniformly heavy black raised letters, and WILL PAY above a down-bowed FIVE DOLLARS followed by a split "to bearer/on demand." National Numismatic Collection, Smithsonian Institution photo.

Group 8—Cigar Box Label-1

Cigar box label-1 and 2 were used for almost all plates produced from mid-1888 to early-1890. The lettering throughout usually consists of bold, black, raised letters that have a dense and ponderous appearance. The Bureau engravers occasionally attempted to soften the appearance of these weighty layouts by using white letters for selected words, such as "The" and the town name on St. Marys, Ohio (4219), or even sparingly mixing in some white and shaded words, as on the plate for Huntsville, Texas (4208). These accommodations helped to blunt the general starkness of the designs.

Cigar box label-1 is distinguished from 2 by having WILL PAY above a down-bowed FIVE

DOLLARS, followed by a split "to bearer/on demand."

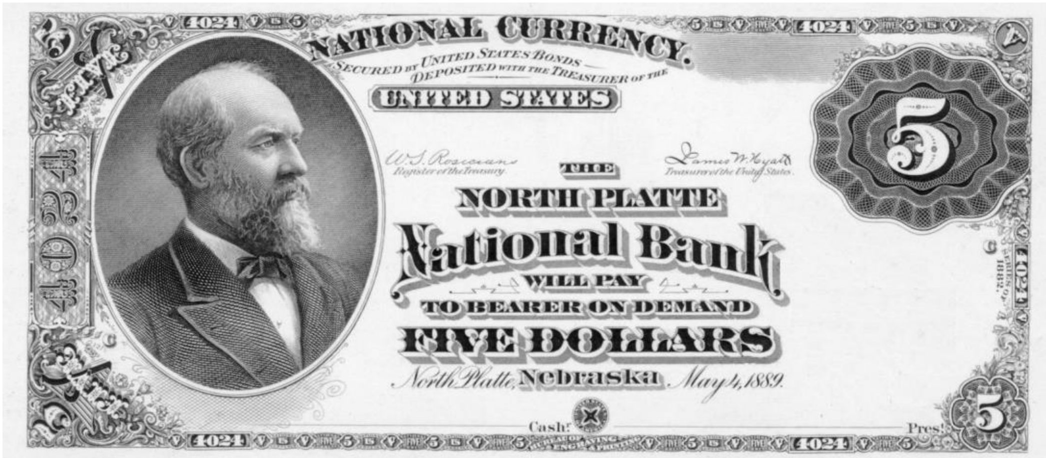

Figure 11. Cigar Box Label-2. Distinguishing features are the uniformly heavy black raised letters, and two-line will pay clause. Contrast this with Cigar Box Label-1 (Group 8). National Numismatic Collection, Smithsonian Institution photo.

Group 9—Cigar Box Label-2

Cigar box label-2 is a variant of the cigar box label design in which WILL PAY/TO BEARER ON DEMAND appears in two horizontal lines above a horizontal FIVE DOLLARS. It was used exclusively for bank names that end with the words National Bank, the same as group 6.

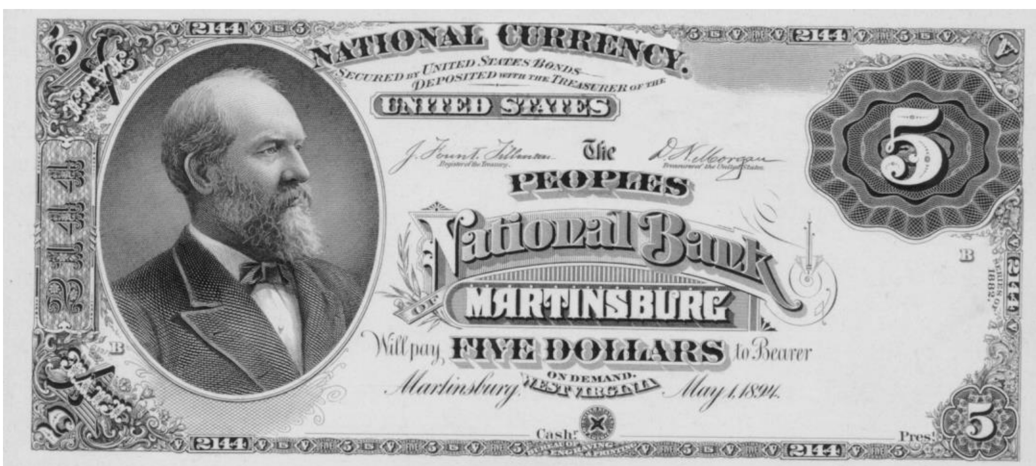

Figure 12. Circus Poster-2. Key distinguishing feature when compared to other circus posters is the simplified one line will pay clause. National Numismatic Collection, Smithsonian Institution photo.

Group 10—Circus Poster-2

Circus poster-2 layouts were used during the first third of 1894. This variant is distinguished from the other circus posters by having a simplified payment clause that has wording unique to this variety and group 15. "Will pay FIVE DOLLARS to Bearer" appears in a horizontal line, with a curved "on demand" centered below. The will pay clause has the same wording as on the $10s.

The National Bank banner was preserved, being the most distinctive feature on the circus poster layouts, but with an added candlestick-like embellishment to its right. The word "of" was removed from the cap above the tombstone, and the cap was filled with uniform vertical lines. The "of" appears within a sheaf of wheat to the left, and is easier to read than on CP1. The FIVE DOLLARS is the same as used on groups 6 and 7.

The simplicity of the will pay clause causes some to call CP2 the poor man's circus poster.

CP2 was used for Charlotte, North Carolina (2135), Martinsburg, West Virginia (2144), Fitchburg, Massachusetts (2153) and Belleville, Kansas (3779).

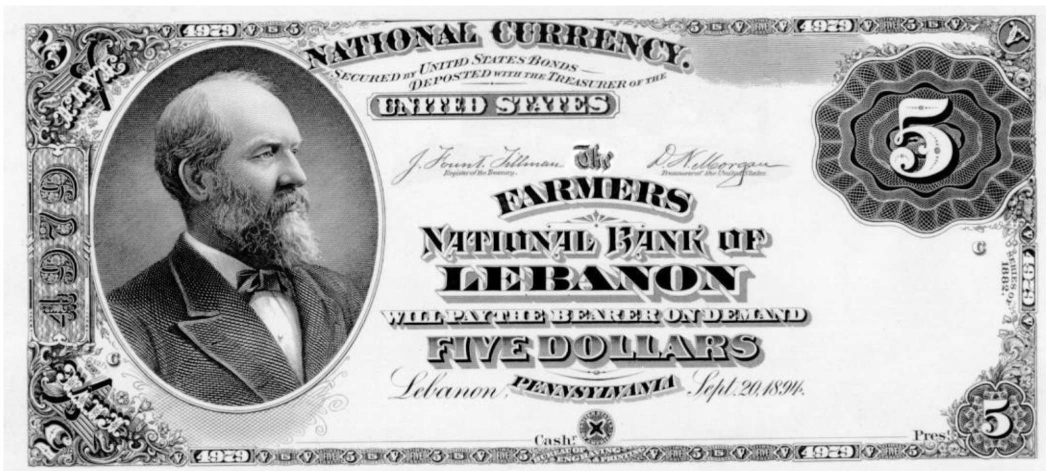

Figure 13. Baroque National Bank. Distinguishing feature is the baroque font with its pointed flairs used to spell National Bank. National Numismatic Collection, Smithsonian Institution photo.

Group 11—Baroque National Bank

Plates with a distinctive baroque font for spelling National Bank appeared in the mid-1890s, probably beginning in 1894. The distinguishing features of the font are the pointed flairs in the letters.

This variety is a subset of group 3 because it utilizes the generic payment clause and same FIVE DOLLARS. The notes come with or without the city in a tombstone, usually with shaded and/or fancy letters. This is also the earliest group where the layouts prepared for the $5s are nearly identical to those used on the higher denominations for the same bank.

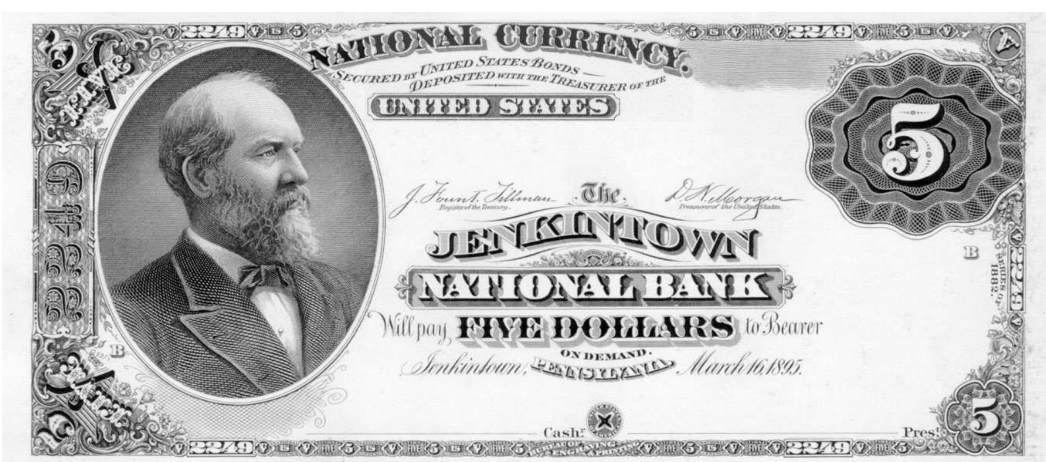

Figure 14. To Bearer. Distinguishing feature is the identical "Will Pay FIVE DOLLARS to Bearer" as found on Circus Poster-2 (Group 10). National Numismatic Collection, Smithsonian Institution photo.

Group 12—To Bearer

This odd layout uses a payment clause lifted directly from Circus Poster-2; specifically, "Will pay FIVE DOLLARS to Bearer" appears in a horizontal line, and a curved "on demand" is centered below. The rest of the layout is unremarkable. The only known example is from The Jenkintown National Bank, Pennsylvania (2249), made in 1895.

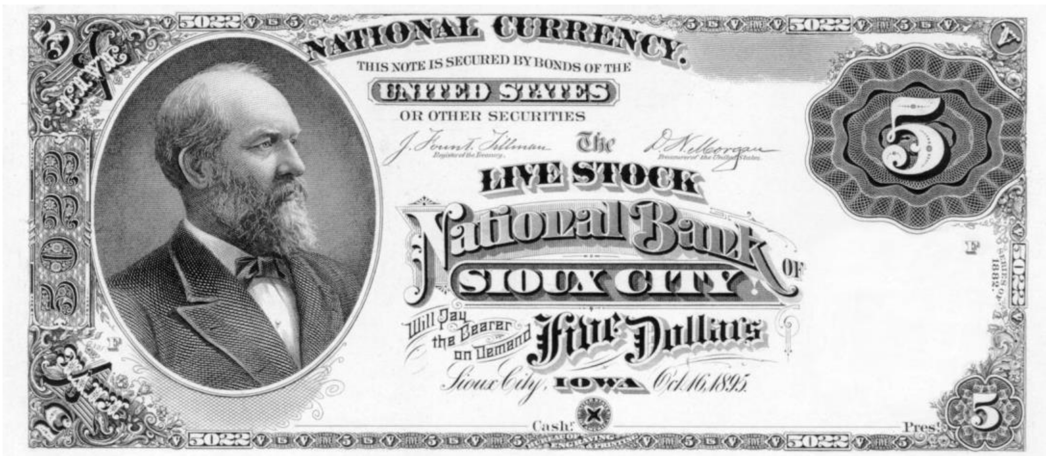

Figure 15. Circus Poster-3. Key distinguishing feature when compared to other circus posters is the shingled Will Pay/the Bearer/on Demand below the tombstone. National Numismatic Collection, Smithsonian Institution photo.

Group 13—Circus Poster-3

Circus Poster-3 is similar to CP1 but is distinguished by the elegant shingled three-line engraving of Will Pay/the Bearer/on Demand. "Of" was moved to a conspicuous position to the right of the National Bank banner, allowing the cap above the tombstone to be all but eliminated and the tombstone to rise. The only plate of this type was prepared for The Live Stock National Bank of Sioux City, Iowa (5022), certified November 18, 1895.

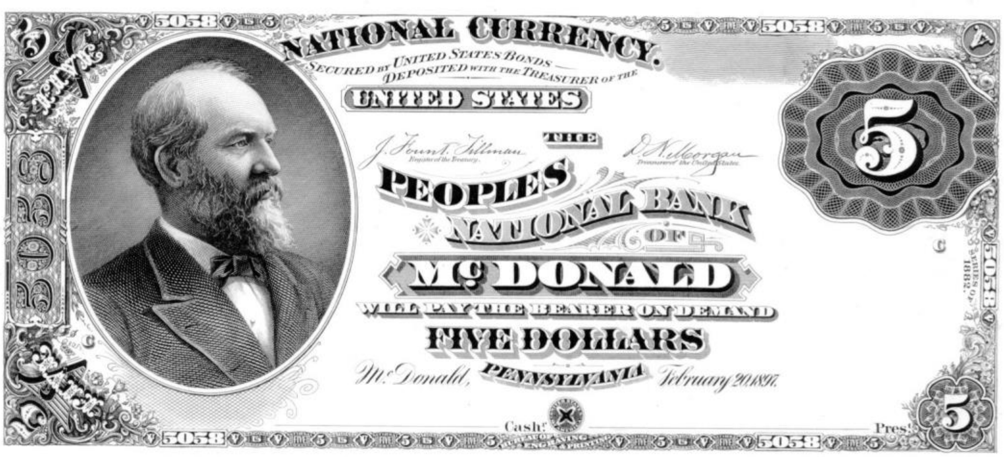

Figure 16. Shingled Layout. Distinguishing feature is the elegant shingling of the words in the bank name above the tombstone. National Numismatic Collection, Smithsonian Institution photo.

Group 14—Shingled Layout

A few plates with a spectacular shingled presentation of the bank title were made during a one-year period spanning March 1896 to March 1897. This group uses the same generic payment clause as group 3.

The variety occurs on Morristown, New Jersey (1113), New York, New York (4898) and McDonald, Pennsylvania (5058). The most readily obtainable of the three comes in the form of counterfeits on Morristown.

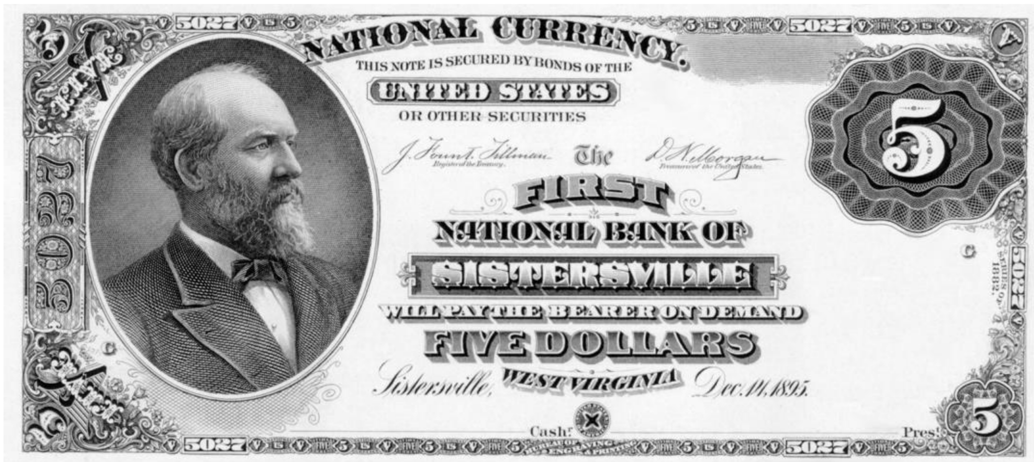

Figure 17. Elegant National Bank Of. Distinguishing feature is the font used for NATIONAL BANK OF where some letters have a distinctive rounding, and the A has a spiked cross member. National Numismatic Collection, Smithsonian Institution photo.

Group 15—Elegant National Bank of

The distinguishing feature of this group is the font used to engrave NATIONAL BANK OF. Some of the letters have a distinctive rounding, and the spiked cross member in the A is also definitive. Although the letters come in different widths, they are uniform in height. These plates appeared in the mid-1890s, probably beginning in 1895. These notes use the generic payment clause. FIVE DOLLARS is spelled using the same letters as on group 3 or the narrower letters with a diagonal crossbar in the A as on group 16.

Title layouts with this NATIONAL BANK OF were also used on some higher denomination Series of 1882 notes, and some Series of 1902 notes. The NATIONAL was lifted for use in other $5 title layouts as well.

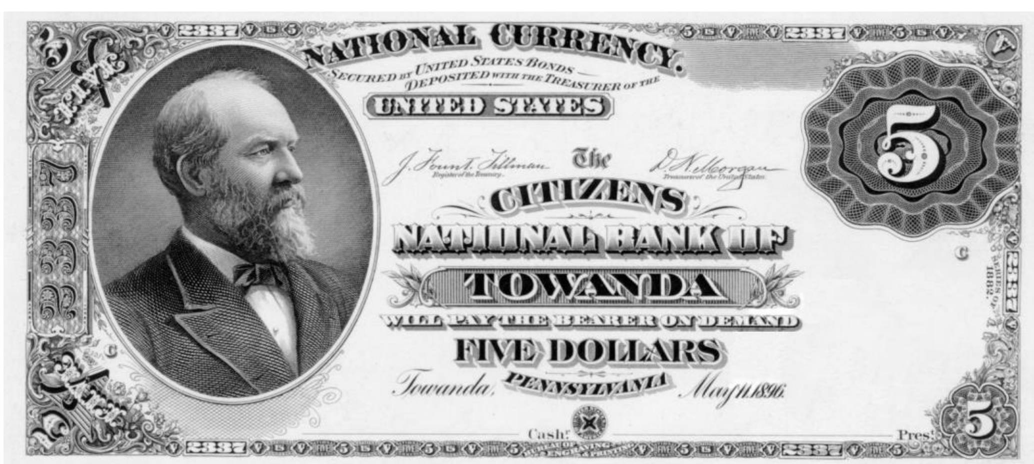

Figure 18. Narrow Five Dollars. Distinctive feature is the raised FIVE DOLLARS made from narrow letters with a diagonal crossbar in the A. National Numismatic Collection, Smithsonian Institution photo.

Group 16—Narrow Five Dollars

The definitive characteristic of notes from this group is the raised FIVE DOLLARS made from narrow letters with a diagonal crossbar in the A. Otherwise the notes are similar to group 3. The plates were made from the mid-1890s to the early-1900s. This style is also found on some replacement plates for banks whose preceding plates bore an earlier style layout.

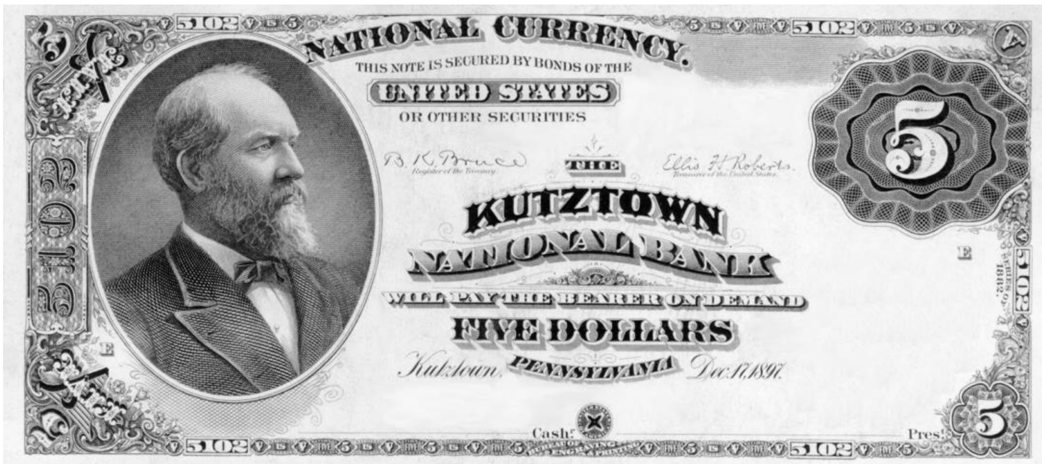

Figure 19. Borrowed Early Five Dollars. Distinctive feature is the fancy FIVE DOLLARS found on notes from groups 6, 7, 10 and 12. National Numismatic Collection, Smithsonian Institution photo.

Group 17—Borrowed early Five Dollars

Group 17 plates, prepared in the late-1890s and early-1900s, utilize the distinctive fancy FIVE DOLLARS found on notes from groups 6, 7, 10 and 12. Group 16 notes usually have rather plain title layouts that are similar to or the same as those found on the Series of 1902. Group 3 was adopted as the series standard once group 17 had run its course.

$5 PAYMENT CLAUSES

Four different will pay clauses were used on $5 Series of 1882 plates as follows.

Clause	Group
Will pay the bearer on demand	1-4, 6-7, 11, 13-17
Will pay five dollars to bearer on demand	8, 10, 12
Will pay to bearer on demand	9
Will pay to the bearer on demand	5

DOUG WALCUTT

Doug Walcutt died of heart failure January 3, 2001, while registering at the FUN Show in Orlando, Florida. He was 64.

Those of us who were accompanying him had never seen him so excited to attend a show. One reason was that his expertise in national bank notes was being recognized publicly in more ways than one at the show. He recently had been designated a Smithsonian volunteer and in that capacity was going to help man the Smithsonian exhibit of prized BEP certified proofs, including unreported Florida nationals, that was brought to the show. He also was to be the keynote speaker at a joint SPMC/Currency Club of Long Island meeting where he was going to present his newest and favorite slide presentation with Bob Kvederas entitled *Interesting Pairs*. It featured pairs of nationals that contrasted varieties, drew connections or showcased peculiarities.

Doug is best known for his long running series of articles on national bank note varieties in The Rag Picker. His series began in 1995, was loaded with photographs and treated varieties that were very popular with collectors. Part 27, the last of this series, appeared posthumously in the April, May, June 2001, issue. This work totaled just under 450 pages.

One of his primary contributions was his exhaustive study of the vignettes used on Original Series and Series of 1875 notes. He was equally fascinated with the almost infinite design variations on the Series of 1882 notes, especially the brown backs. His work on the Series of 1882 $5s revealed that there was an evolution in the designs as the series wore on such as the title blocks summarized here.

He particularly enjoyed finding esoteric firsts and lasts. A good example was bracketing the first and last banks to receive the unusual charter number over seal variety on $1 and $2 Original Series notes printed during May and June, 1874.

Doug's close friend Bob Kvederas Sr. worked with him on his research on the BEP proofs at the Smithsonian Institution, and helped with the preparation of his articles and presentations. Kvederas was the consummate editor, winning an award for his aid to Doug from the Paper Money Collectors of Michigan at Memphis in 2000.

Figure 20. Doug Walcutt.

Doug was particularly active in the Currency Club of Chester County, where he was a past vice president, and the Currency Club of Long Island where he was vice president at the time of his death. He was a long-time member of the Currency Club of New England, Fairfield County Numismatic Association, and Paper Money Collectors of Michigan. He was a life member of the Society of Paper Money Collectors as well. He presented informative slide shows on national bank notes at every opportunity.

What astonished anyone who knew him was his memory for detail and for numbers. A little-known fact was that he was a math/numbers savant. His sister related that when he was a child, his parents repeatedly asking him what he wanted in the way of toys. He kept responding that what he really wanted was a notebook. Finally, his mother caved and gave him a small one and a pencil that would fit in his shirt pocket. Days went by as he faithfully carried it as he wandered around his neighborhood in New York City. Curious, his mother finally looked at it, and found that its pages were covered with tables of numbers. When she asked what they were, Doug just shrugged and said "numbers." Their meaning was soon revealed. Doug would watch the trains go by as the family waited in subway stations, and he would make off handed comments such as "the 105 is ten minutes late" or "the 86 should be coming in three minutes." He had mapped out the timetables for all the trains in the stations that were within his reach. He wasn't in school yet.

When he was enrolled in the first grade, his mother advised the teachers that he probably should be put in an advanced math section. They didn't take this seriously until with a little experience they found that he excelled in math, but was bored by its pace. Finally. to pacify his mother and keep him engaged, they stuck him in the six-grade math class for the last part of the year, probably figuring that would overwhelm him but at least keep him out of their hair. He was, of course, in over his head, but he quietly soaked up what was coming his way and read the math text book at night. At the end of the term, he astonished everyone by earning the highest score on the final exam.

He went on to win a national merit award in high school, which led to a General Motors fellowship in engineering at the University of Wisconsin. Engineering didn't resonate with him so he dropped out of Wisconsin, did a stint in the army in a topographical engineering unit, and returned to Lake Carmel, New York, where he operated a land surveying business. That work involved numbers and mathematical relationships that he particularly enjoyed.

His numismatic compatriot, Bob Kvederas, became aware of Doug's abilities, and used to challenge him by handing him the bill at some numismatic communal feed and requesting that he divide the tab among the several present. When Doug would reach for his calculator, Bob would admonish him to do it in his head. Within seconds, he would spill out the numbers, which included each person's share of the tab including the tax and tip to the penny.

I (Huntoon) had the opportunity to travel from Washington, DC, to a meeting of the Currency Club of Chester County in Pennsylvania with Walcutt and Kvederas. They drove me nuts with ceaseless chatter about times and distances, making comparisons with tables of times and distances from previous trips over the same ground, and compiling new data as we went. Much of the conversation revolved around things like being two minutes early for this intersection, eight minutes late on the whole trip, etc. What was amazing is that the tables of numbers from every one of their past trips were filed somewhere in the disorganized mass of papers that were overwhelming the interior and trunk of Doug's old car. He never threw out a piece of paper—not in his car or at home—not even a McDonald wrapper because there probably was something written on it, or it marked the right layer where something of importance was secreted away. Doug drove an urban assault vehicle, a 17-year old Ford Crown Victoria, that he could barely afford to keep running because paper money consumed every cent he could lay his hands on.

Paper money, especially national bank notes, was an obsession with Doug. He started out in coins but as the paper bug bit, he liquidated his choice coin holdings and reinvested in paper. If something pertaining to a national bank note caught his fancy, he would dog it until he figured it out. There are no ends to the examples I could give you, but one of the last that still amazes me epitomizes his gifts.

He got interested in exactly when the last geographical letters were printed on Series of 1902 national bank notes. I had figured the cutoff shipments for the last use of the things by noticing when the Comptroller's clerks had stopped writing the letters next to entries in their receipts ledgers. This seemed definitive, so I packaged the changeover data in a table in my 1985 book and forgot about it.

But Doug memorized the Treasury serials I listed for all the sheet combinations, and started looking for notes that he could collect to bracket the changeovers. He soon found that my picks were not too hot. For a couple of years before he died, I would get periodic calls from him with data he collected from auctions or at shows that zeroed in on the right changeover serials. He and I were at the 2000 Memphis show where he looked at everyone's stock for notes printed during the changeover. I figured that was looking for a needle in a haystack. By the time I left the show to go on to DC, he had found no less than three notes that closed the gaps.

He wanted me to check his new serials against the receipts ledgers to see just how well he had done. A few days later I was able to call from the National Archives to tell him that a couple of the bracketing serials he had found at Memphis had converged on the exact day of the last shipments with the letters. He retained all the needed information such as N23445H was on a note he saw from The First National Bank of Batavia, Ohio (715), which turned out to be delivered in the last shipment of 10-10-10-20s with geographic letters on March 8, 1924.

Don't forget, he was working a dozen other interests at the same time, each with their own serial numbers or esoteric plate varieties. This was done all without much in the way of notes other than a key fact written here or there on some scrap of paper stuffed in his bursting wallet.

Doug was a valuable collaborator. We both were interested in the reasons behind national bank note varieties, so we developed a good comradery playing off on each other's enthusiasm and strengths to solve the mysteries. He wasn't one of those guys who figures something out and secrets the information away in order to have some perceived competitive advantage. We coauthored articles when we plowed the same ground because we got down the road further and faster by working together than we ever could alone.

Doug had an enormous drive to get his ideas out to other collectors. His series of articles in The Rag Picker are a monument to that determination. He just about finished publishing everything he found important in large size national bank notes before he died. We are richer for his enthusiasm and his efforts.

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