

The Paper Column

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Plate Letter Placement Glitches on Parker-Burke Series of 1907 \$10 Gold Certificates



Figure 1. Series of 1907 \$10 Parker-Burke gold certificates that reached circulation with misplaced left plate letters and accompanying plate serial numbers. Right is plate 1 position D and left is plate 64 position C, both with anomalously high left plate letters. Heritage Auction archives photo.

Introduction and Purpose

The two of us have been studying the \$10 Series of 1907 gold certificates lately, which led Doug Murray to examine the scans of the Bureau of Engraving and Printing certified proofs lifted from the plates that were used to print the series. Upon launching into the Parker-Burke proofs (Fr. 1171), Doug was startled to find that the left plate letters and accompanying plate serial numbers on the number 1 proof were high in comparison to the standard position for the letters on the earlier proofs. He had never noticed this before and at first thought that they had changed the placement coincident with the startup of the Parker-Burke plates, which had not registered on him before.

He was quickly disabused of this notion when he got to the proof for plate 2, which had the expected placements. He brought the plate 1 oddity to Huntoon's attention and suddenly the search was on!

It is the purpose of this article to show you the interesting varieties that we found.

Anomalous Plate Letter Placements

The comments that follow are deduced solely from the scans of the certified proofs from the impacted plates in the National Numismatic Collection and the photos shown on Figure 1 that Doug found in the Heritage Auction Archives. The key reference point for judging the placement of the left plate letter is its spacing from the word ACT in the March 4, 1907, act authorization date that appears on the upper left-hand side of the faces of the notes. See Figure 2. The placement of the plate letter shown for plate 2 is normal.

Parker-Burke plate 1

There is only one proof for plate 1; specifically, Treasury plate number 42627 bearing plate serial number 1, which was certified by BEP Director Joseph E. Ralph on October 31, 1913. The plate letters on all four subjects are uniformly high and align nicely with the act authorization date. The right image on Figure 1 demonstrates that notes were printed from the plate with the high placement.

Telling on the proof is that someone penciled in an X under all four plate letters, a typical indicator that the problem was discovered. However, there is no second proof demonstrating that the letters were

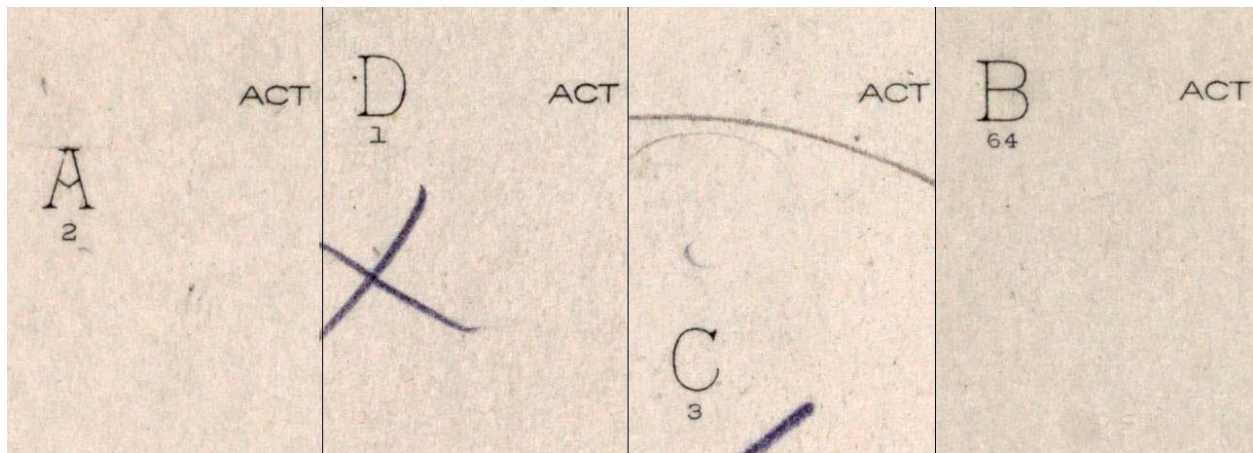


Figure 2. Comparison between the placement of plate letters and accompanying plate serial number from left to right: normal on plate 2, high on plate 1 for all positions, high on plate 64 for positions B C D, plate 3 very low on position C only. National Numismatic Collection photos.

moved to a normal position. We simply don't know if the plate was repaired. Only time will tell if a note turns up with the letters where they should be.

Parker-Burke plate 3

This is the jewel among the errors that we found. The affected plate was 42535/3 first certified October 22, 1913. Very strange is that the only misplace plate letter is the one on the C note, and as illustrated on Figure 2, it is dramatically low. Like the number 1 plate, someone put a bold penciled strike below it and also circled it. Parts of these flags show on the blowup on Figure 2.

The giveaway for us that there was a problem with this plate was that there is a second proof for it. That can be a sign that something was amiss. The proof was lifted to show that the plate had been repaired and someone inserted it among the proofs, something that didn't always happen when a correction was made. The second proof is undated, but the big deal with it is that there are a couple of sets of printer's initials stamped onto the upper plate margin of the plate revealing that it had seen service before the proof was lifted. We have not found an issued example with or without the error but we are assured that both were printed.

Parker-Burke plate 64

The proof for this plate, 43201/64 certified February 13, 1914, is as curious as that for plate 3 in that the plate letter on the A position note is normal, but those on positions B, C and D are high identical to plate 1.

There are no marks on the proof indicating anyone spotted the mistake, and there is no second proof from the plate to reveal that it had been fixed. Doug found the photo of an issued note from the C position shown on the left-hand side of Figure 1 so we know the plate was sent to press with the mistakes. It remains to be seen if a note appears to reveal that the mistakes were corrected.

Closing Comment

We certainly aren't promoting these plate letter placement varieties as major varieties deserving of separate catalog numbers or anything of that sort. Rather, they classify as unusual plate-making errors on par with say the small-size \$1 1981A and 1985 Federal Reserve notes that came out with back plate number 129 against the lower left corner of the border instead of the lower right.

The numismatic value of \$10 Series of 1907 gold certificates already is sufficiently high that the fact of a note having one of these varieties probably wouldn't nudge the price appreciably if at all. Instead, these are the delightful stuff that make for great cherry picking and owning one of the things simply has the potential to bring a bit of added joy to the owner. That is, provided the owner even recognizes what he has. The one that has the greatest appeal to us is the severely dropped C on the number 3 plate. Like all errors, the worst the mistake, the more appealing to the collector!