

AMERICA'S PAPER MONEY

A Canvas for an Emerging Nation



WILLIAM L. PRESSLY

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A Smithsonian Contribution to Knowledge



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For Nancy

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Foreword

In December 2016, Dr. Ellen Feingold, curator of the National Numismatic Collection, asked me if I might meet and assist a Smithsonian Senior Fellow, Dr. William Pressly, on his research regarding the images on nineteenth-century American paper money. Dr. Pressly is a retired professor of art history at the University of Maryland. At the time, I was about to set up a significant exhibition from my collection “Images of Value: The Artwork behind US Security Engraving, 1830s–1980s,” which was held at the Grolier Club in New York accompanied by a comprehensive catalog.

Bill Pressly and his wife Nancy came to New York City in early 2017 to meet me and see the exhibition, and I was pleased to explain my long-term research, collecting, and numerous publications on the subject. Documenting and writing about the engraving, the artwork behind the engraving, the engravers, designers, vignette artists, the process, and the companies is work I have been doing for decades. I have had the privilege of meeting and becoming friends with many of the bank-note picture engravers, designers, and vignette artists of my era, primarily in the United States but also England and elsewhere. Several years after meeting in New York, Bill’s research fortunately turned into a book manuscript. It has been my pleasure to read the manuscript and provide detailed comments.

I have long wondered why American art historians did not give more attention to the remarkable imagery on American paper money in the nineteenth century. The federal government issued primarily coins in the antebellum era, leaving paper money issuance to the local state-chartered banks, resulting in thousands of different bank notes in circulation by the early 1860s. The engraving firms that provided these notes made the United States the world leader in security engraving by the time of the Civil War.

One of the primary anti-counterfeiting devices of these notes was picture engraving the portraits and vignettes (small pictures generally of allegorical or genre figures). There are literally thousands of vignettes and portraits engraved for bank notes in the United States between 1800 and 1866, when the local bank notes issued by state-chartered banks were taxed out of existence.

This category of imagery has until recent years been solely the province of numismatists. Art historians were missing in action. While noted artists such as Asher B. Durand, John W. Casilear, and F. O. C. Darley did either artwork for or engraving of such vignettes (both, in Durand’s case), the academic world paid little attention. This in spite of the fact that it is an enormous record of the young country. The vignettes document the country’s growth, indicate the reigning artistic influences of the era and how they changed, and show the evolving styles of

clothing and beauty and the various approaches to depicting women, Native Americans, and African Americans, among others.

One might ask, in light of the fertile ground available, why academia has largely stayed away from research on this large category of imagery. There could be several reasons.

One is that bank notes and bank-note engraving were considered a commercial endeavor: engraving and art for commerce that was not worthy of closer study. The rise in academic interest in material culture and vernacular images and objects has partially countered the concern over this commercial aspect.

Another reason may be the difficulty of doing research in the area. There are few collections of the notes in research libraries or museums, and even fewer places have collections of the proof engravings, the vignettes and portraits, or the original artwork for such images. Individual collectors are the primary repositories of such material, and that makes research difficult for scholars.

In the last thirty years, the leading U.S. archive of antebellum proof bank notes, proof vignettes and portraits, and artwork—the American Bank Note Company’s archives—was broken up and sold off, part publicly and part privately, with almost all of it going to dealers and collectors. Much (but fortunately not all) of the original artwork, prints, and photographs from the nineteenth and early twentieth century that were used as engraving subjects were destroyed by American Bank Note in the early 1960s.

Dr. Pressly is the first art historian schooled in imagery of the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries to do this extensive study of the vignettes on U.S. bank notes of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, especially those issued by the state-chartered banks from 1800 to 1866. Bill Pressly brings an art historian’s background to both interpreting the images and discerning historical influences on the artists who created the vignette artwork. He has an art historian’s eye for the classical heritage of some of the images. Since one of my specialties has been researching and collecting the original artwork, whether it be a print, drawing, photograph, or painting that the engraver used to do his work, it is fascinating to see Dr. Pressly’s discoveries and discussion.

This volume is a magnificent look at a remarkable range of imagery on America’s paper money before 1900. Art historians, researchers, collectors, and the general public will be in Dr. Pressly’s debt for this wonderful contribution to scholarship on the subject.

Mark D. Tomasko

Preface

I have written this book to open a more fruitful dialogue between the disciplines of art history and numismatics as applied to American paper money. The numismatic literature has undertaken the Herculean task of documenting this extremely large body of material. Eric Newman's publications on Continental and Colonial currency are exemplary, and multiple catalogers have categorized the national currencies produced, beginning in 1861, by the federal government of the United States of America and by the Confederate States of America. Between these two eras, however, documenting the vast quantity of bank notes has proved to be a more daunting challenge. James A. Haxby made an impressive beginning, and Q. David Bowers is pursuing an even more thorough state-by-state catalog of bank notes and related currency. Other authors, such as Richard Doty, Bob McCabe, Mark D. Tomasko, and Heinz Tschachler, have provided helpful insights into issues involving the images used by bank-note engravers, including the technology of bank-note production. In addition, digitization is transforming access to this vast material. Databases, such as the Newman Numismatic Portal at Washington University in St. Louis, are putting illustrations of paper money, along with the critical literature, at one's fingertips. All this research provides an indispensable foundation for further exploration.

One of the deficiencies of numismatic writers that this book hopes to correct is the lack of knowledge of the artistic context in which these works were created. Ignorance of academic art, with its long tradition of complex iconographies and its mixture of allegorical figures with historical ones, has sometimes led to the misidentification of a vignette's subject. (The definition of the term *vignette* used in this book is a pictorial image as distinguished from the note's lettering and decorative designs.) The origins of whole genres of subject matter have at times escaped notice. Images of children performing adult tasks are not American drolleries, as some commentators would have it, but are taken from the conventions of rococo art. Some researchers of American paper money, such as John A. Muscalus, have been remarkably adept at locating old-master and contemporary sources for images appearing on currency, but they rarely go beyond the simple identification of a source to assess the significance of such borrowings or how the original design might have changed in its adaptation to this new context.

On the other side of the ledger, one might ask why so few art historians, with the notable exception of Jennifer Roberts, have held back from exploring in depth American paper money. One reason is the concern that notes, the product of commercial printing, are viewed as exemplars of skilled craftsmanship rather than as original works of art. In this regard, paper money is seen as falling more

within the purview of visual culture than art history. This book offers arguments to the contrary. It attempts to open to art historians and the public an area of American art that has been largely overlooked and to encourage numismatists to see this material in new ways.

America's Paper Money is not comprehensive or evenhanded in its treatment of the material. Areas that are left largely unexplored include the varying types of printing presses, the wide variety of inks and paper, the histories of so many of the individual engravers and the various firms, and the economic underpinnings of the differing types of notes, such as bills of credit, Legal Tender Notes, Treasury notes, and compound-interest notes. In addition, the book is not overly concerned with the differences among obsolete bank notes (notes that are no longer redeemable), broken bank notes (notes of failed banks), remainder notes (notes that never circulated), proof, altered, spurious, or counterfeit notes. In all things, the image is paramount. As for subject matter, the ubiquitous portraits appearing on notes are largely ignored, as are many of the most common scenic depictions. To take the example of transportation, one could write an illustrated history of the development of sailing ships and steamships, as well as the countless trains that adorn paper currency. Allegorical figures, most of them repetitions of the same type, could fill another volume. By focusing on a few notes rather than on the many, I have hoped to make clearer the rich and rewarding nature of this subject by avoiding the pitfall of losing sight of the forest for the trees.

Vignettes could also appear on stocks and bonds or on other formal documents, but my focus is on their primary purpose: their appearance on paper money. Rather than feature them in isolation, I have, for the most part, reproduced the entire note of which they form a part. They can appear on other notes in different positions, making them semiautonomous, but to isolate them on their own is to separate them from their intended context. One should add the caveat that engraving firms were later to do just this by printing vignettes for their own sake, thereby acknowledging their increasing acceptance as works of art.

As required by law, currency produced by the federal government cannot be reproduced in its actual size. It must be shown no less than one and one half its size. Traditionally, paper money is reproduced without measurements, the notes tending to be relatively the same size. However, because I consider them as works of art rather than as collectables, I have introduced their dimensions into the captions (height before width) whenever I have had the opportunity to take them. These measurements record a note's borders exclusive of the margins, which can vary dramatically from note to note. Although the creators of these notes worked in inches, measurements are rendered in the metric system in accordance with modern protocol. In discussing the notes, I have also chosen a simple vocabulary, writing about their front or face and their back rather than using such terms as obverse/reverse or recto/verso. As for other terminology, I have favored nineteenth-century usage. For example, "buffalo" is used instead of "bison."

I began collecting American paper money when I was in the fifth grade, and I often think this interest had an influence on my decision to become an art historian. Throughout my career, my area of study has been primarily eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European art, but I am glad now to be able to give something back to the field that first engaged my interest. While writing this book, my con-

stant mantra has been “*ars longa, vita brevis*” (art is long, life is short). This Latin phrase, first coined by Hippocrates in Greek, is often misinterpreted to mean that while one’s life is fleeting, one’s work will live on long after he or she has died. Instead, it means that one lifetime is too short a span in which to master an art. In my case, this is all too painfully true, but I am delighted to have been able to make a beginning.

Acknowledgments

I am extremely grateful to the many people and institutions that have helped make this undertaking possible. I thank the University of Maryland for awarding me a research leave from 2012 to 2013 as part of a retirement package. At that time, I moved to Atlanta, where I began to contemplate the outlines for a book on currency in addition to completing other research projects. Then, for the last three months of 2016, I returned to Washington, D.C., with a Smithsonian Institution Senior Fellowship to undertake in-depth research on American paper money. This support proved invaluable. I doubt I could have gone forward with my proposed book without this opportunity.

At the Smithsonian, my most important resource was the National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American Art. Ellen Feingold, the curator of the collection, was extremely generous with her encouragement and time both during my tenure and after my return to Atlanta. She was also of great help in introducing me to important contacts. Jennifer Gloede, museum specialist for the National Numismatic Collection, has also been unfailingly supportive. Others who were of great help are Eleanor Harvey, curator emerita of the Smithsonian American Art Museum; Helena E. Wright, curator emerita of the Graphic Arts Collection, the National Museum of American History; Nancy Bercaw, curator, the National Museum of African American History and Culture; Anne Evenhagen, head of the American Art and Portrait Gallery Library; and Hallie Brooker, museum curator, Bureau of Engraving and Printing, a division of the Treasury Department rather than the Smithsonian. During my fellowship, Amelia Goerlitz, chair of the academic programs at the Smithsonian's Research and Scholars Center, was always ready to help smooth the way, and Marie Ladino, editorial assistant, Smithsonian American Art Museum, provided much needed technological assistance. It was a pleasure as well to be able to discuss my project with the many other fellows at the Research and Scholars Center. In addition, I owe a particular debt of gratitude to Ellen Miles, curator emerita of painting and sculpture at the National Portrait Gallery, for her wise advice and counsel throughout.

Because of the precarious nature of my health, I had to forgo visits to many important institutions. Those I did manage to visit were unfailingly cooperative. I am grateful to Constance McPhee, curator, and Allison Rudnick, assistant curator, in the Department of Drawings and Prints at the Metropolitan Museum of Art; to Jill Reichenbach, reference librarian, New York Historical Society; and to the staff of the Print Room at the New York Public Library. Leonard Augsburg, project coordinator of the Newman Numismatic Portal at Washington University, St. Louis, has also been extremely helpful in securing images not only from his

portal's archives but from other institutions as well. In addition, he was always a helpful guide in negotiating the portal's many invaluable resources. Dustin Johnston, vice president and managing director of currency, Heritage Auctions, graciously gave permission to use images from their important Research Auction Archives. In only one instance was I able to secure rights of reproduction from Whitman Publishing, and I thank Q. David Bowers, the owner of that note, for intervening on my behalf. I want to thank collector Wendell Wolka for providing me with an image of a note that had been in his collection and granting me the rights to reproduce it. I owe a particular debt of gratitude to C. John Ferreri for his help in obtaining images of notes not only from his collection but from other sources. He has been indefatigable in supporting my project. In Atlanta, I am grateful to Emory University for having generously granted me access to its libraries' many resources, as well as to Georgia State University for access to its library.

I am thankful for the help and support of numerous other individuals, including the late William Gherdts, Peter Huntoon, Alex Kidson, Jessica Kindberg, David Meriwether, Pearl and Seymour Moscovitz, my son David Pressly, my brother Paul Pressly, and Art Warren. Robyn Asleson, curator at the Department of Prints and Drawings, National Portrait Gallery, kindly read an early draft of the first half of my manuscript. From start to finish, Mark Tomasko has been extremely generous with his time and expertise, and I have enjoyed our many conversations. He has been a perceptive reader, and I have profited greatly from his input. Any faults, however, in this book are mine alone. Mark has also been of great help in putting me in contact with other collectors and has been generous in opening to me his important collection dedicated to security printing, an item from which is illustrated in my text. Given his years of research and writing as a leading scholar in the field, I am also very appreciative of his agreeing to write the book's foreword.

From the beginning, I had hoped that the Smithsonian Institution Scholarly Press would publish my work. Unfortunately, one of the casualties of the pandemic was the restructuring of this division because of financial constraints. Ginger Strader Minkiewicz, the Press's editor, has been supportive from the start, and I am grateful to her for finding creative ways of shepherding my book into print, especially considering the large number of color illustrations involved.

I thank the many doctors at Emory University Hospital Midtown who have helped me negotiate life-threatening health crises over the last few years, especially my cardiologists Dan Sorescu, Angel Leon, Vasilis Babaliaros, and Mikhael El-Chami; surgeons Allan Pickens and Shervin Oskouei; infectious disease specialist Laila Woc-Colburn; and my oncologist Laura Weakland (Georgia Cancer Specialists). Thanks to them and the extraordinary support of my family, I have been able to complete my book.

Throughout, my wife Nancy has been my most critical and insightful reader, always encouraging me to dig deeper. As a result, the final product differs from what I had at first envisioned. The book is now a more ambitious study, having grown considerably in size and scope. I could not have written this book in its present form, nor could I have survived my medical traumas, without her unfailing help and support. She has been with me every step of the way. At the end, she took on the Herculean task of securing this book's many illustrations, a labor that deserves to join the celebrated twelve. With deepest gratitude and love, I dedicate this book to her.

Introduction

The Creation of an American Art Form

In 1690, the Massachusetts Bay Colony, hampered by policies imposed by the British government and lacking an abundant supply of precious metals for minting its own coinage, became the first government in the Western world to authorize the printing of paper money. From the start of this radical innovation, images were introduced onto the notes.¹ In this regard, the two types of currency, coins and paper, both had the ability to present subject matter that could deliver the issuing authority's message to its public. In the case of coinage, imagery could enhance a coin's "worth" beyond that of the metal's value alone, and seeing coins through the lens of art has a long and distinguished history.² Coins of unusual beauty conveying its issuers' values have been a staple of Western civilization for over two and a half millennia. Yet, unlike coins, which are minted from valuable metals, paper money does not have an intrinsic value. However, it has a distinct advantage over coinage in that it can provide a much larger space for artistic representations (on the other hand, coins, which are executed in bas-relief, are not limited to a two-dimensional surface). Following the example of Massachusetts, other colonies responded to this opportunity, and Colonial currency's development of imagery on notes led to the creation of an indigenous American art form of remarkable dynamism and originality.³

For the next nine decades after 1690, paper money was ornamented with decorative scrollwork and with such images as official seals, emblems, nature printing, and animals. Through its imagery, this money "spoke" to its constituencies, and no more so than during the American Revolution. Following the example of many colonial notes, Continental currency (the notes authorized during the American Revolution, including by the Continental Congress) adopted a conservative approach, employing emblems and mottoes from European sources that could be applied to the American experience. These notes exhorted their holders to stand up for liberty, by force of arms if necessary. When the young engraver Thomas Coram created his epic, mythic images of heroic struggle for the state of South Carolina in 1779, American paper money came into its own in terms of its aesthetic quality and the power of its imagery.

During the American Revolution, both the states and the national government produced a veritable flood of paper currency. Disillusioned, however, by how quickly the money depreciated, the United States (its Constitution was ratified on 21 June 1788) chose to rely on coinage produced by its own mint. When the supply of coins proved insufficient in meeting the country's needs, private institutions, such as state-chartered banks, stepped in to carry on the American tradition of paper money. Bank notes soon became the fledgling country's primary

currency, a dominance that lasted throughout the antebellum era. The number of types of notes overwhelmingly exceeded the number of types of coins in circulation. The late Smithsonian curator Richard Doty estimates that “between 1790 and 1863, no fewer than 8,000 fiscal entities issued currency in America. Most of them banks, but insurance companies, railroads, turnpikes, hotels, and other businesses were also represented.”⁴ The distinguished numismatist Eric Newman helped put this overwhelming abundance in perspective: “Never before had any country had more than 10,000 different combinations of denomination and design for circulating notes at one time. The situation was so confusing it required bank-note reporters of hundreds of pages in length and endless quantities of counterfeit-detecting and valuation publications (in newspapers, almanacs, pamphlets, etc.) to help the public handle the money.”⁵

In overseeing the issuance of such large quantities of paper money, some states behaved more responsibly than others, but because the system filled an outstanding need, its flaws were overlooked. States granted business leaders, primarily bankers, the right to print money, as a means of providing the credit and capital for the new nation. The United States’ impressive economic growth, its territorial expansion, which opened up new lands for cultivation, and its rapid population increases fueled by immigration carried it forward through cycles of boom and bust. Europeans, looking at the American democratic experiment, were struck by the society’s dedication to “commercial habits”⁶ and its enthusiastic embrace of the “almighty dollar.”⁷ Value was more likely to be measured in dollar signs than by any moral standard, and the ubiquitous bank note was the measure.

The bank note’s primary function was to facilitate commercial transactions through an easily transportable and transferable medium. The numbers proclaiming a note’s monetary value were transactional rather than absolute because this system of credit was based more on faith than on certainty. The value often declined in proportion to the institution’s perceived trustworthiness or its distance from its place of origin, and the shadow of counterfeiting hovered over all as an ever-present concern (this had also been the case with Colonial and Continental currency). Yet the marketplace stood out as an example of America’s innovative modernity, and its progress was indebted to the paper money that helped fuel its engine.

The faces of bank notes contain all the essential information in a pleasing, harmonious ordering of the component parts. Skilled scrollwork quickly gave way to complex, graceful geometric designs spun out by machines. Myriad vignettes, each with its own message, were the crowning achievement in enhancing both the artistic excellence of the bank note and its ability to communicate with the public. These vignettes evolved over the decades into increasingly sophisticated, complex images. What had begun as an odd job for a printer near a bank became a highly organized endeavor with professional firms, concentrated in only a few cities, dedicated to the finest in bank-note production. In 1855, an article in *The Crayon* praised American bank-note engraving as “entitled to rank as a branch of the fine, as well as useful arts.”⁸ Furthermore, the article proclaimed that American money exceeded all other nations in its artistic appeal, calling it “a currency which, if not always the soundest, is certainly the most beautiful in the world.”⁹ This assessment was not just jingoistic braggadocio. In the context of discussing

the influential career of the bank-note inventor Jacob Perkins, Jason Goodwin writes concerning one contemporary outsider's perceptive response to the aesthetic importance of America's achievement: "Banknote-engraving burgeoned in the space of a few years into what one visitor called the only true American contribution to the arts."¹⁰

One might envision a spectrum with notes as works of art at one end and as a utilitarian part of nineteenth-century visual culture at the other. It would in any case be a fool's errand to try to draw a sharp line between the two. Suffice it to say that the designers and engravers saw themselves as artists, and as in all such endeavors, some were more talented than others. It would also be true that some of the best saw this only as a phase of their careers, a stepping stone to the "higher" realm of easel painting.¹¹

By displaying subject matter befitting the young, vigorous nation, bank notes supplied a unifying national narrative and held up a pleasing, harmonious image of the world that the holders of the notes aspired to inhabit. What had slowly begun in the late eighteenth century with a few patriotic images soon went on to chart a heroic version of a mythic history, in which an expansionist rhetoric celebrated the extension and interconnectedness of American boundaries. Allegorical figures were a prominent mainstay in conveying abstract concepts, with America and Liberty becoming permanently fused in a dynamic, inseparable union. This vision of paper currency as a trusted and reliable representation of fixed moral and cultural values, as well as economic ones, was of course a fiction, but given its success for so long, it was a powerful and convincing one. A note could be simultaneously perceived as both fiscally sound and as fraudulent in a country eager to promote the rampant accumulation of wealth. In terms of a note's monetary value, there was always a tension between its appearance and the underlying reality. In such a world, appearance assumes greater importance in alleviating the holder's anxieties about inadequate specie reserves that might undermine the note's credibility. It is in no way ironic that pieces of paper representing base materialism should be invested with cultural, religious, and aesthetic values along with economic ones. It is, in fact, difficult to see how it could be otherwise.

Confidence in "filthy lucre" as embodied in circulating paper required elevated and high-minded subject matter presented in a polished and professional format. The moral values and optimistic perceptions promoted in bank-note imagery augmented a note's trustworthiness. The high quality of the image's execution, in turn, argued for the note's security against fraudulent counterfeiting. In a world that could not be sure of the actual monetary value of a note, such self-promotion was a necessity. The notes' messaging was an attempt to provide Americans with a reassuring and idealizing vision of who they were and what they might become, a nation blessed by God, devoted to liberty, country, prosperity, and innovation. Reflecting and promoting aggrandizing national sentiments, the currency provided a visual web that helped bind the country together in prideful self-regard as to its virtues and its progress.

The primacy of the vignette increasingly asserted itself as the bank note's appearance developed over the years. Vignettes continued to grow in size and importance until they culminated in W. L. Ormsby's concept of one indivisible picture across a note's entire face. In 1863, Spencer Clark's proposal to the secretary of the Treasury that federal currency should undertake something similar

within a single series was a missed opportunity. The depiction of the Progress of American Civilization from “primitive” times to the present across a series of nine denominations is an exciting proposition. Controversy over the choice of subjects and the way they were depicted would be never ending, but that is part of the appeal. Yet, despite the failure of such a proposal, America’s nineteenth-century vision of its past, present, and future was already thoroughly embodied in its paper-money imagery.

Bank notes were the nation’s primary currency until the federal government, beginning in 1861 in response to the financial pressures resulting from the Civil War, began to take charge of the paper-money supply by creating a national currency and soon thereafter a national banking system. The nine notes issued in the Legal Tender series (\$1, \$2, \$5, \$10, \$20, \$50, \$100, \$500, and \$1000) were sobering and imposing. Seven of them featured male portraits, and three of these were of Alexander Hamilton. All the rest were of other important financial figures except for Abraham Lincoln, the then-current president. The allegorical subjects were intensely patriotic, among which are an image of Thomas Crawford’s statue *Freedom*, which crowned the Capitol’s dome, as well as an imposing version derived from this same statue and a fiercely vigilant American eagle. Beginning in 1863, the nine notes of the National Bank Note series opened the floodgates to employing both sides of the notes to enshrine a national history and a national purpose. The authoritative money of a consequential and prominent nation-state now replaced the era of abundant bank notes created during America’s adolescence. At this same time, the newly formed Confederate States of America created its own national currency. In addition, the Confederacy also permitted state currencies, a logical extension of its devotion to states’ rights. The entire range of U.S. currency is too big a topic to be encompassed in this study, but the final chapter examines the three bills that make up the 1896 “Educational Series,” regarded as the federal government’s highest achievement in bank-note design. These notes, commissioned from distinguished artists, provide a fitting ending for the book’s argument that paper money can be appreciated as works of art rather than just as examples of superb craftsmanship, whose principal merit was to frustrate counterfeiting.

❧ PART I ❧

America's Early Paper Money

CHAPTER 1

A Brief Survey of Colonial and Continental Currency

Colonial Currency

Pressured by the necessity of funding a military campaign against the French in Quebec, the Massachusetts Bay Colony authorized the printing of paper currency, the first notes for which are dated 10 December 1690.¹ Although these notes, strictly speaking, were bills of credit, they circulated as money, as did the many notes that were to follow their example. For this purpose, the Boston silversmith John Cony may have been the one to execute a copper plate containing four denominations.² Along with decorative scrollwork and the handwritten authorizing signatures, the bills' explanatory texts covered most of the surface, including of course the denomination, but even this early paper money contained a meaningful image—a crude rendition of the colony's seal as an imprimatur (Figure 1). The seal was executed as early as 1629 by the London silversmith Richard Trott.³ A standing Native American holds a bow in his left hand and an arrow in his right, the arrow pointing downward signifying peace. The image in the note scores his body with rough cross-hatching in a crude attempt to suggest his darker skin tone. A ribbon banner, issuing from his mouth, declares “COME OVER & HELP US,” a sentiment that addresses the colonists' fellow countrymen still living in England.⁴ In 1703, South Carolina also began to issue paper money, and within a decade, six other colonies began issuing notes as well. Eventually, the original thirteen colonies were producing bills with Vermont later joining their company.

Counterfeiting and the altering of a note's denomination to increase its value were chronic problems. Efforts were made from the start to help guarantee a note's security. The note reproduced as Figure 1, although altered to raise the denomination,

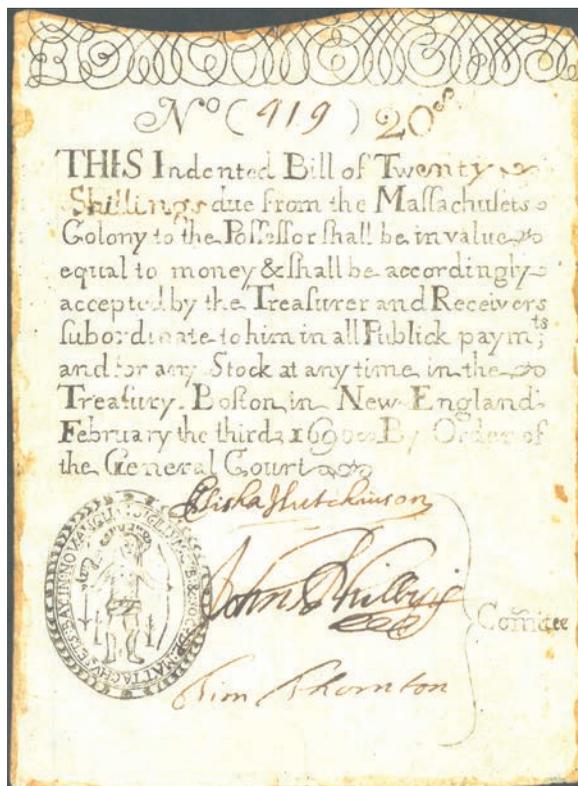


Figure 1. Altered 20-shilling note, Massachusetts Bay Colony, 1690–1691, 14.3 × 10.5 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.



Figure 2. Back of 10-shilling note, Delaware Colony, 1 June 1759. Image courtesy of Heritage Auctions.

still exhibits those security measures that were taken to protect the note's integrity. Known as indenture, the curve in its top border was deliberate, the note having been cut unevenly from a stub kept by the issuing authority. When the bill was redeemed, this line, along with the bifurcated scrollwork, would need to match the stub bearing the same number. Techniques other than etched copper plates were also involved in the production of Colonial currency. Cast lead type could be used for the numbers denoting the denominations, for the different scripts, and even for ornamental designs. Typeset printing was also an option, and such items as vignettes, insignia, borders, and frames could be printed from woodcuts or raised lead elements cast from designs cut into metal.⁵ Color could be introduced into a note by employing a second printing for that single element. There was no standardized operation, as silversmiths and printers in the various colonies responded with the capabilities at their disposal. Indeed, North Carolina's first notes were handwritten because no printing facilities were available. The types

and quality of paper could also vary from colony to colony. In 1737, Benjamin Franklin developed nature printing, in which a lead casting was made from a plaster mold of a leaf. When the image of the leaf was printed on the back of a note, its delicate veining offered yet another challenge to the ingenuity of counterfeiters. The upper portion of the back of the ten-shilling note for the Colony of Delaware, dated 1 June 1759 (Figure 2), a work printed by the Philadelphia firm of Benjamin Franklin and David Hall, shows one such example.⁶ This note also bears the inscription "To Counterfeit is DEATH," a dire deterrent that was seldom enforced.⁷ Government officials kept track of the number of notes produced; often, they were responsible as well for keeping some of the design elements when they were not in use. As we will see, the concept of security printing became far more sophisticated in the nineteenth century, although counterfeiting too, in its turn, kept pace.

Despite concerns over security, problems with depreciation, and the British government's opposition to the printing of paper money, Colonial currency effectively responded to a need. Although not required, imagery on the notes was far more common than not. Even a crudely rendered seal, as on the Massachusetts note, provided an elevated presence beyond the note's written number and signatures or its printed denomination, script or typeface, and decorative ornaments. As part of establishing their identity, the majority of the thirteen colonies placed their colony's seal on some issues of their paper money, most notably Connecticut, Delaware (although not until 1777), Maryland, Massachusetts, New

Hampshire, New Jersey (not until 1780), New York, Pennsylvania (arms of the Penn family), Rhode Island, and Virginia. Of course, the idea of a seal was itself a link back to the culture of which they were still very much a part. In accentuating these links, some colonies even chose to display the Royal Arms of Great Britain or of England (Delaware, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Rhode Island), and some displayed the elaborate mirrored monograms of Queen Anne and of George I (Connecticut, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire). Such designs helped the issuing authorities to identify closely with the larger world of the British Empire and their place within it.

Small designs on Colonial currency were commonplace. Overwhelmingly, these features were drawn from the European emblem tradition with each “decoration” having a moralizing meaning. Images, such as the scales of Justice or a sheaf of grain, signifying the fruits of one’s labor, are obvious in their intent, but other adornments more subtly helped to define colonial values. To give one example, the note reproduced in Figure 2 shows an unexpected menagerie aligned in a row without regard to their relative sizes. In the center is a majestic elephant, on the left a squirrel eating a nut, and on the right a heron or crane standing in its own body of water. The elephant, a creature that is not indigenous to America, is however a frequent inhabitant of the iconography of emblems. In the 1755 book *Emblems for the Improvement and Entertainment of Youth*, the elephant represents such aphorisms as “Strength and Self-dependence” and “Strength and Courage.”⁸

The squirrel, which also appears in the notes of three other colonies (Connecticut, New Hampshire, and North Carolina), represents patience, diligence, and perseverance.⁹ The positive meaning and the fact that a squirrel was a plausible household pet led artists, such as John Singleton Copley, Joseph Badger, William Williams, and John Durand, to include them in colonial portraiture at the same time they were appearing on money.¹⁰ The bird also has symbolic meaning. In the case of the crane, its ability to soar high into the heavens associates it with “an *inquisitive* Man, that would *investigate* Sublime Things at a Distance.”¹¹ Looking at the three animals lined up together in the ten-shilling note, one proceeds from perseverance to strength to sublimity.

Bees had long been celebrated for their industriousness and prudence in gathering nectar and storing honey. Beehives were popular as well as representative of a well-ordered community, where every member executed its assigned duty.¹² Although such imagery was to prove even more popular in bank-note imagery of the nineteenth century, there is no more striking bee than the close-up of this insect that appears in the 1762 Georgia five-shilling note (Figure 3).¹³

Such colonial achievements as buildings and fortifications appear on notes, but humans are few and far between. In 1755 and 1762, Georgia showed a woman operating a thread winder,¹⁴ the kind of feminine occupation that was to expand into factory settings in the next century. Notes, too, could help underwrite specific undertakings. From 1774 to 1776, New York City issued bills in support of its Water Works, which displayed on their backs an engraving by Elisha Galaudet of a sophisticated steam-operated water pump flanked by identical fountains.¹⁵ In 1773, Pennsylvania issued bills portraying a towering lighthouse, the construction of which the notes were helping to fund.¹⁶ Although these images address practical considerations, they also can be interpreted within the iconography of emblems. The fountains spurt elegant, spindly streams of life-giving



Figure 3. 5-Shilling note, Georgia Colony, 1 January 1762. Image courtesy of Heritage Auctions.

water, as much spiritual as physical, and lighthouses are associated with divine revelation because they “guide and direct us into the Harbour of everlasting Life.”¹⁷

Continental Currency

Although emblems played an important role throughout the era of Colonial currency, Continental currency produced during the American Revolution was to feature even bolder examples.

The American Revolution brought about a pronounced new departure in the designs appearing on paper money—the imagery became more assertive and challenging as the colonies began their attempts to break away from the mother country. Following the Battles of Lexington and Concord fought in Massachusetts on 19 April 1775, the Second Continental Congress convened in Philadelphia (the first had met on 5 September 1774) to authorize in an act dated 10 May 1775 the production of Continental currency. It seems inevitable that the images on this contested money should comment on the struggle between the colonies and Great Britain. The polymath Benjamin Franklin was involved in the selection of the emblems and mottoes that appeared on many of these notes.¹⁸ He and others chose images from European emblem books in his library that offered the public encouraging exhortations. All the denominations of this Continental currency were given in Spanish milled dollars, a traditional standard given this coin’s ubiquitousness and one that also helped to sever the relationship with British pounds, shillings, and pence.¹⁹

To look at one example, the emblem on the \$1 note of the United Colonies, an entity soon to be rechristened the United States (Figure 4), was taken from the 1702 Mainz edition of *Symbolorum ac Emblematum Ethico-Politicorum* by Joachim Camerarius.²⁰ Although it encapsulates a story drawn from classical antiquity and its appearance in the book predates the American Revolution by three-quarters of a century, the application of its meaning changes with this new context. As first told by the Roman writer Vitruvius, the emblem embodies the story of the creation of the Corinthian order in Greek architecture, an order whose capital is more elegant than that of Doric or Ionic:

Corinthian . . . is in imitation of the delicacy of virgins; for, in that tender age, the limbs are formed more slender, and are more graceful in attire. The capital is reported to have been thus invented: A Corinthian maid, just marriageable, being seized with a disorder, died: after her inter-

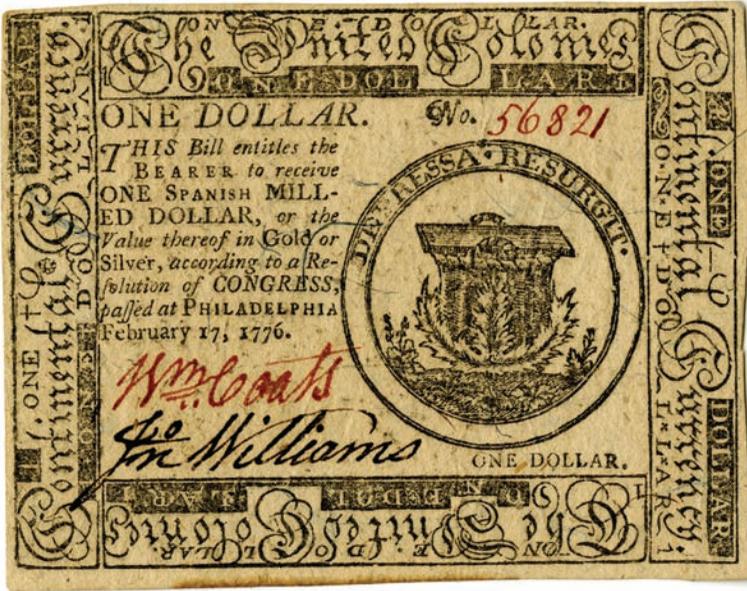


Figure 4. \$1 Note, The United Colonies, 17 February 1776, 7×9.2 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

ment, her nurse collected, and disposed in a basket, the toys which pleased her when alive, carried it to the tomb, placed it on the top, and, that it might endure the longer in the open air, covered it with a tyle. The basket chanced to be placed over the root of an acanthus, which, being thus depressed in the middle, the leaves and stalks, in the spring season, issued outward, and grew round the sides of the basket; and, being pressed by the weight at the angles of the tyle, were made to convolve at the extremities, like volutes. At that time Callimachus [an architect] . . . happening to pass by this tomb, took notice of the basket, and being pleased with the delicacy of the foliage growing around it, as well as the novelty of the form, made some columns near Corinth, according to his model, and from thence established the symmetry, and determined the proportions of the Corinthian order.²¹

The emblem's motto on the Continental note translates as "Though oppressed it rises," a reference to the untamable vigor of the acanthus plant, whose struggles fit well America's revolutionary narrative. This emblem's association with a grave memorial evokes ideas of resurrection, as new life struggles to emerge from the old. The oppressive weight placed on top of the acanthus cannot keep it from thriving.²² In the process, it creates an even more startling beauty, a new personification of liberty that at the same time can be seen to belong to a long tradition, stretching back to the Greek city-states of classical antiquity.²³

Inspired by emblem books,²⁴ Benjamin Franklin created his own design for four low-denomination notes dated 17 February 1776. All four (\$1/6, \$1/3, \$1/2, and \$2/3) display a sundial rebus, representing the word "FUGIO" (I fly) (Figure 5). To make his point clear, Franklin embraced the old cosmology with the

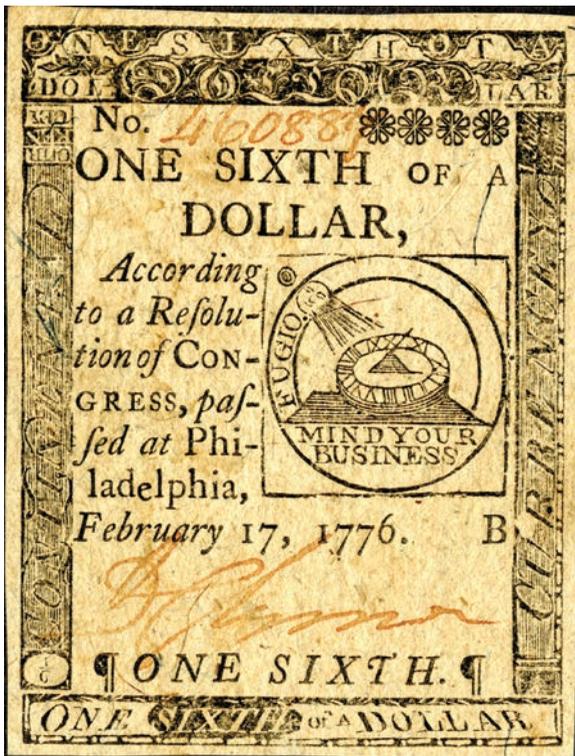


Figure 5. One-sixth of a dollar note, The United Colonies, 17 February 1776, 7.8×5.8 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.



Figure 6. \$40 Note, The United States, 26 September 1778, 6.9×9.1 cm. Collection of William L. Pressly.

earth at the center, around which a smiling sun revolves, directing its beams earthward. The sun is on a circular track, in which it rises in the east to sink in the west, where it can be supposed to embark on a subterranean journey to emerge again in the east. The sundial, tilted so its numbers can be read, rests on a tabletop or a projection of the earth as a flat plane, another concession to the more easily visualized old cosmology. The shadow cast by the sundial's gnomon or rod points to noon. Situated beneath is the admonition "MIND YOUR BUSINESS." Franklin's point that because time flies, one needs to focus on one's own concerns is easily understood, unlike the note featuring the acanthus.²⁵ He also introduced details that distinguished one denomination from another to make altering a note's value more difficult. The most interesting of these details is the small waxing crescent moon inside a circle seen in the upper left-hand corner of the box enclosing the sun's circle inscribed within it. With each increase in the denomination, another moon, proceeding in a clockwise direction,

is added to a corner, finally ending up with four moons in all four corners on the \$2/3 note. The devices and border designs cut by Elisha Gallaudet harmonize with Franklin's message. In the version of the note illustrated here, two fluted pilasters support an elaborate, decorative entablature in which the alternating light and dark patterns suggest the recurring cycle of day and night.²⁶

The United States \$40 note of 26 September 1778 (Figure 6) is an original design, even if elements are again drawn from traditional emblem-

atic sources. At the top of the circle, which suggests a cosmic globe, piercing through clouds is the all-seeing Eye of God. The eye radiates beams downward, the two central beams of which touch the flames of an altar. Thirteen stars representing the original thirteen colonies, now states, encircle the altar, the fire from which ascends heavenward in eternal devotion to God.²⁷ The scroll along the bottom edge with curling ends is borrowed as well from religious paintings, but here it proclaims the political message “CONFEDERATION.” The fact that this word is composed of thirteen letters, which correspond in number to the thirteen stars, was perhaps meant to suggest that the United States was from its beginning endowed with a mystical, cosmic harmony.

For the Massachusetts Bay Colony, the Boston silversmith and engraver Paul Revere produced notes dated 18 August 1775 that convey a bold, revolutionary message. The back of his 30-shilling note (Figure 7) depicts an American patriot brandishing a sword in his right hand while holding in his left a copy of the “MAGNA CHARTA,” the 1215 charter establishing basic English rights. The Latin phrase, which is positioned to suggest a sweeping arc made by the sword blade, translates, “By arms he seeks tranquility under freedom.” Above his head is the phrase “Issued in defense of American Liberty.” Its gentle arc suggests both a shelter and a rainbow that promises a brighter future. The patriot’s cast shadow and awkward full-frontal stance gives him a crude dynamism that signals his fierce determination to fight for those liberties set forth in the Magna Carta, which he claims as his birthright.²⁸

In arriving at his figure’s open pose with arms turned out and one leg splayed, Revere borrowed from the figure of a Native American he had engraved just the

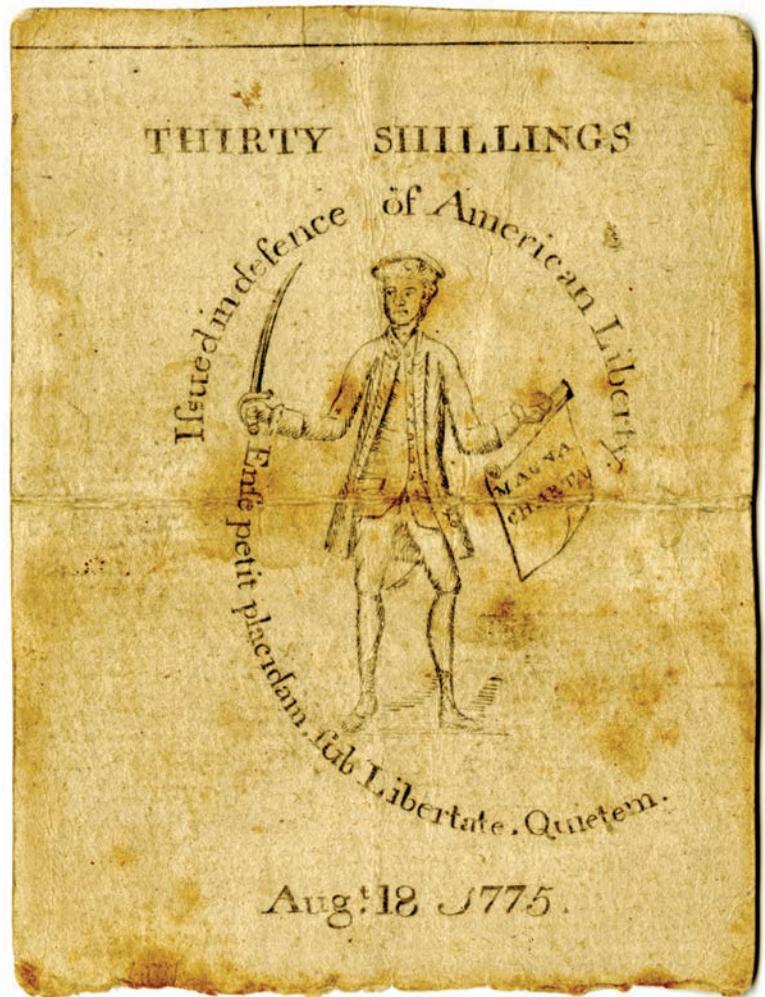


Figure 7. Sword-in-hand 30-shilling note, Massachusetts Bay Colony, 18 August 1775, 10×7.5 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

month before for an elaborate receipt issued by the Massachusetts Bay Colony. In the receipt, Revere's Native American faces and holds in his right hand the pole crowned by a liberty cap, and his left arm is cocked against his side in a masculine stance, a portrayal that ultimately harks back to English prototypes.²⁹ The reference to an Indigenous heritage harmonizes with the celebrated assault on British authority that had taken place less than two years earlier on 16 December 1773, when the Sons of Liberty had boarded ships in Boston harbor in order to throw overboard chests of tea in resistance to the imposition of a new British tax. As was well known, some of these protesters dressed as Natives, thereby identifying the fight for liberty as a distinctly American one. Thus, even if the Magna Carta in Revere's note looks back to an English precedent, there is also a strong native component undergirding his demand for liberty.

Within three days of the date on Revere's note, North Carolina issued an \$8 bill, dated 21 August 1775, that expressed its own defiant attitude toward Britain. The image shows a seated Britannia in the act of thrusting a sword through her right side.³⁰ This self-inflicted wound has caused her to upset the pole beside her, allowing its crowning liberty cap to fall to the ground. "INFELIX BRITANNIA" (Unhappy Britannia) is inscribed in the double circular frame, a warning that Britain will only be harming herself if she continues to tyrannize the colonies.

Also in 1775, Thomas Sparrow created for the colony of Maryland a woodcut design that spans almost the entire upper portion of the front of notes of eight denominations, ranging from two-thirds of a dollar to \$16 (Figure 8). With its dramatic play with scale, this ambitious image offers an imaginative political caricature (at the upper left of the back in large script appears "T Sparrow," a testimony to the artist's pride in his conception). The focus is on three principal figures. Britannia is in the middle, and she turns to accept the sheet marked "CONG[RESSIONAL] PETI[TION]" proffered by American Liberty holding a staff, atop of which is a liberty cap. Beneath her feet, Liberty tramples on a scroll marked "SLAVERY," while Continental troops are amassed behind her under the banner "LIB[ERTY]." To Britannia's right (the viewer's left) is King George III, who, holding a firebrand, is

ready to continue the torching of an American seaport. An attacking fleet of British ships can be seen along the distant shoreline, and flames already curl upward at the left. Underneath his feet, King George tramples a document labeled "M[AGNA] CHARTA." The inscriptions at either side add their testimony. The English translation on the left reads "For Altars & the Hearth," linking America to the

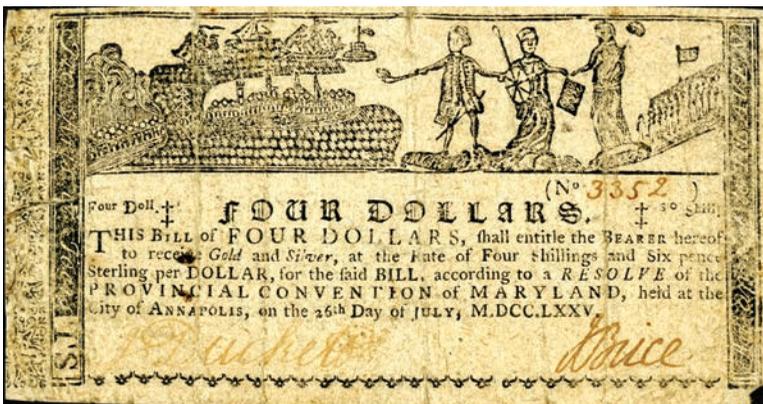


Figure 8. \$4 Note, Maryland Colony, 26 July 1775, 6×12.3 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

household piety and resolve demonstrated by the citizens of Republican Rome. On the right is a plea for divine support: "An Appeal to HEAVEN."

In his development of the three main figures, Sparrow has relied on a popular eighteenth-century trope: the Choice of Hercules. In this allegory, which originated with the Greek philosopher Prodicus as related by Xenophon, Hercules, finding himself between the figures of Virtue and Vice, ultimately chooses the former over the latter. Sparrow's design is not anti-British.³¹ In his conception, Britannia substitutes for Hercules, and she has already made the right choice in turning to American Liberty, who is identified with Virtue. George, representing Vice, is already isolated. He reaches out to Britannia, who gives him a cold shoulder. The British people are as much Sparrow's audience as are Americans, and his design on the back of the bill again underscores the two peoples working in harmony as equals.³²

From an aesthetic point of view, the most successful notes produced during the Revolutionary War are the backs of three South Carolina bills issued in 1779 and designed by the young Charleston artist Thomas Coram. Born in 1756, Coram would have been around twenty-two years old when he executed these commanding figures. Like Revere, he utilized the relatively blank backs as his field. Despite the limited size of the format, all three of his designs are monumental. Each features a heroic, semi-nude male struggling with adversity and whose situation parallels that of the American colonies' struggle with a menacing and oppressive Great Britain. Revere's spindly, crude figure and Sparrow's intriguing but overloaded designs do not compare to the nobility of Coram's images, which look to the academic tradition of "high" art.

The \$50 bill (Figure 9) depicts a bearded old man, laboriously stepping up onto higher ground while supporting a large boulder on his shoulders. Despite the bill's face having been oriented on a horizontal axis, Coram positioned the figure in a vertical format, forcing the bill's orientation on the reverse to conform to the dictates of the image. In the numismatic literature, the muscular old man is plausibly described as Atlas, the Titan who held up the universe on his shoulders, but he could as easily be Hercules, Sisyphus, or one of the Fallen Giants from Mount Olympus. The conception for this heroic,

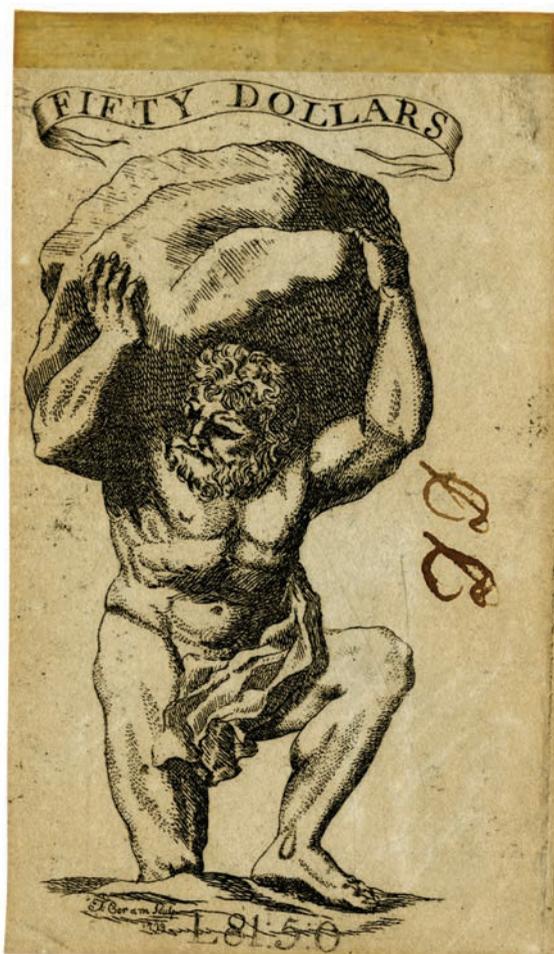


Figure 9. Back of \$50 note, South Carolina, 8 February 1779, 7.1 × 12 cm (front is on horizontal axis). National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.



Figure 10. Back of \$90 note, South Carolina, 8 February 1779, 7.2×12 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.



Figure 11. Back of \$70 note, South Carolina, 8 February 1779, 7.4×12.1 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

that of a large vulture attacking a prone, chained, nude male. In this instance, Coram took his conception from a print by Nicolas Beatrizet (Figure 12), which is based on Michelangelo's drawing showing the giant Tityus, whose liver is eternally being eaten by two vultures. (Michelangelo, as is often the case in art, depicted a single vulture.)³⁴ In Charleston, Coram had studied with the artist Henry Benbridge. Benbridge had earlier visited Rome, and he presumably was the one to introduce Coram to an impression or copy of Beatrizet's print.³⁵ Coram added a piece of drapery to his protagonist (in keeping with the loincloth covering Atlas) for modesty's sake. He also reduced the clutter of Beatrizet's scene, putting the focus solely on Michelangelo's monumental two figures. However, Tityus, who had earned his fate

barrel-chested nude looks back to Michelangelo's figures, which would have inspired Coram to achieve a sublime grandeur that effectively evokes the strength and endurance America will need in its own mighty struggle.³³

The back of the \$90 note (Figure 10) shows Hercules conquering the Nemean lion, a subject that was also to prove popular on nineteenth-century paper money. This scene, one of the twelve labors of Hercules, was commonplace in art, particularly in sculpture, and Coram adapts it, not entirely successfully given its cramped fit to a horizontal format with the addition of labeled ribbons. But on the level of propaganda, it works well as a revolutionary message—one symbol for Britain is the lion, which the American Hercules is in the process of defeating.

The \$70 note (Figure 11) contains an even more arresting image:

by trying to rape the mother of Apollo and Diana, was more villain than hero, and consequently the original subject matter had scant propagandistic value. Coram intended the subject to be read, as has been traditional, as depicting Prometheus, whose story is like that of Tityus. Prometheus's fate was to be chained to a rock with an eagle gnawing on his continually rejuvenating liver, a punishment inflicted by Jupiter for his having stolen fire for humankind. Thus, Prometheus is a rebellious hero who, for the good of humanity, suffers for having opposed a tyrant and his despotic decrees.³⁶



Figure 12. Engraving by Nicolas Beatrizet the Younger, after Michelangelo, *Tityus Gnawed by the Vulture*, 1542, 26.5×36.9 cm. Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum, gift of William Gray from the collection of Francis Calley Gray. Photo © President and Fellows of Harvard College (G251).

Eventually, he will be liberated by Hercules, the hero of the \$90 note, who can also be seen as being alluded to in the \$50 note, making the three bills part of a continuum. (Coram proudly signed all three designs: “T. Coram Sculp[sit]/1779” beneath Atlas’s right leg; “T. Coram Sc” on the left-hand rock to which Prometheus is chained; and “T. Coram sc” on the fringe of Hercules’s cloak, where it breaks above his left thigh.)

With Prometheus, Coram again effectively adopts a subject and design from high art to make a powerful statement in favor of the revolutionary cause, and his assumption that the obscure story of Tityus would be misread as the far more familiar narrative of Prometheus proved to be correct. No one recognized his obscure visual source, but his audience would have responded to the potent force of his adaptation of Michelangelo’s conception. On the bill’s face appears the personification of Hope leaning on her anchor accompanied by a Latin motto, which translates, “Hope is the consolation of the mind.” On the back, the new nation suffers egregiously from the repeated assaults of the eagle, which, when stripped to its essentials, is nothing more than a grotesque, carrion-eating vulture, but Hope remains, as future rescue is foreordained.³⁷

The early creators of paper currency, men such as Franklin, Revere, Sparrow, and Coram, firmly established the importance of paper money as a vehicle for political and social messages, ones that went far beyond the notes’ texts in inculcating uplifting, high-minded values and bolstering America’s resolve to resist British tyranny. Although designers of Continental currency often relied on wholesale borrowings of mottoes and emblems, Coram’s adaptations of European imagery were particularly imaginative and bold.

❧ PART II ❧

Bank Notes

The Business of Printing Bank Notes from 1782 to 1866

From the Birth of the Republic through the Antebellum and Civil War Years

The delegates who met in Philadelphia in 1787 to write the Constitution of the United States of America were wary of authorizing government participation in the creation of paper money, given the disastrous hyperinflation caused by the flood of paper currency issued by its predecessor, the Continental Congress, and by the states themselves. The Constitution even expressly forbade states from issuing currency; but, finding the question of paper as a national medium of exchange too controversial and complex, the delegates chose to remain silent on the rights of the federal government, leaving the matter unresolved. Congress instead supported the use of specie or hard money in the form of precious-metal coinage. Coinage alone, however, proved woefully inadequate in giving the new nation sufficient funds and the flexibility it required. The use of commodities, such as eggs, butter, and grain, continued as a medium of exchange between shopkeepers and their customers, but paper money proved crucial in responding to the nation's financial needs. Without the participation of the federal government, the states turned to the solution of permitting banks and other financial institutions, such as canals and railroads, to issue paper currency. In theory, each of the state-chartered private banks, the non-chartered private banks, and the nationally chartered banks would maintain enough specie reserves to redeem notes presented to them.

Bank notes had to contain certain essential information—the name of the bank and its location, the note's denomination, its date, serial number, and the signatures of the bank president and the cashier. The printed information could appear in a variety of scripts even on the same bill. The denomination was usually rendered multiple times in Arabic numerals, as well as often being repeated in Roman numerals. The amount could also appear spelled out in full—immediately grasping the bill's value was of critical importance. The signatures and serial numbers, and sometimes the date, were added by hand. As these notes were bills of credit rather than legal tender, the banks promised to pay the bearer on demand the amount shown. Thus, the notes' value was based on the banks' commitment to their being redeemable in specie.

The first bank notes were printed in Philadelphia, the site of the federal government. The Continental Congress chartered the Bank of North America, which opened in Philadelphia on 7 January 1782, not long after the British surrender at Yorktown. Secure in its reputation, this institution stuck to the basics, issuing notes with decorative features but no vignettes. Despite its origins and



Figure 13. \$30 Note, Bank of the United States, Philadelphia, 3 December 1791, 6.9×17.1 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

aspirations, it was still a private bank, and it was soon joined by other banks.¹ After their openings in 1784, both the Massachusetts Bank in Boston and the Bank of New York began to circulate notes, whose imagery was modest.² Then in 1791, the Bank of North America was supplanted by the [First] Bank of the United States, which Congress chartered for a period of twenty years and of which the national government was a major stockholder. With the Bank of England in mind as a model, Alexander Hamilton envisioned this bank playing a dynamic role in helping to secure a national economy. It, too, issued notes that were more serviceable than flashy. On a note dated 3 December 1791, a crude representation of the nation's seal appears at the upper left (Figure 13). The eagle's head turns to the left, the same side on which it clutches arrows. The head, however, soon always faced the side on which the eagle clutches an olive branch, symbolizing America's preference for peace over war.

Slowly but surely, other state-chartered banks with varying degrees of soundness opened their doors and began issuing their own currency. A sheet of four \$1 bills for the Washington Bank, Westerly, Rhode Island, executed in 1800 by the New Haven printer Amos Doolittle, offers an instructive example of the early state of bank-note engraving (Figure 14).³ At the upper left of each note, Doolittle etched on a copper plate a profile portrait of the bank's prominent namesake. The portrait is based on Joseph Wright's 1790 etching of George Washington, to which Doolittle added a laurel wreath in honor of Washington's preeminence.⁴ He also substituted a circular frame for Wright's oval, a contraction that allowed him to cut off the distracting detail of an elaborate figure-eight patterned epaulet on Washington's uniform. Because Doolittle engraved each note individually, they all differ in minor details. The portraits offer slight variations on a theme, and even the lettering differs: the "H" in "New Haven" in the imprint running across the left-hand margin ("Engraved & Printed by Amos Doolittle Newhaven 1800") is capitalized in the third note, whereas it is lower case in the others. The large, decorative letters (A, B, C, D), which occupy the center of each note, identify the note's position on the plate. Although all notes bearing the same plate letter will

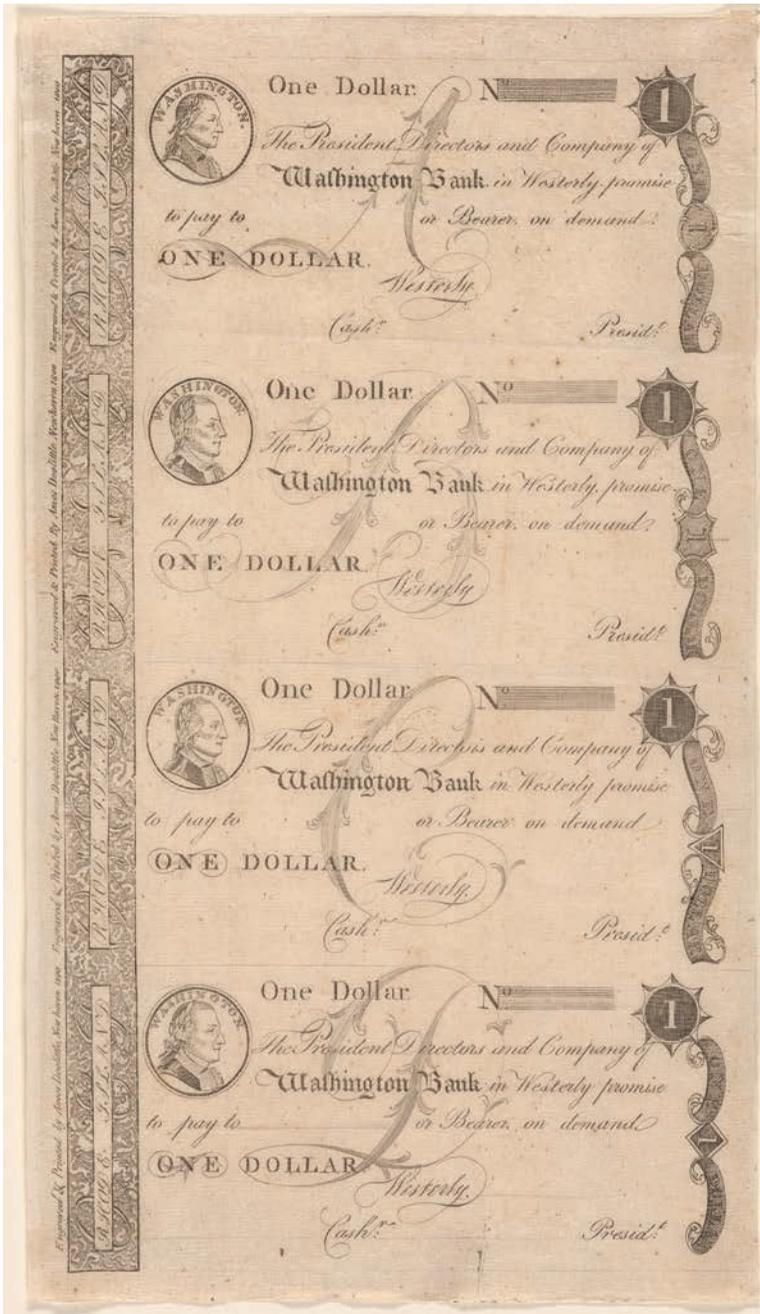


Figure 14. Sheet of \$1 notes, Washington Bank, Westerly, R.I., 1800, 32.2 × 18.7 cm. National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

be the same, the subtle differences among the four A, B, C, D notes aid counterfeiting in that variation is built into the process.

Copper-plate engraving offered a restricted future for bank-note production because the plate itself wore out quickly, and a new plate with its inevitable

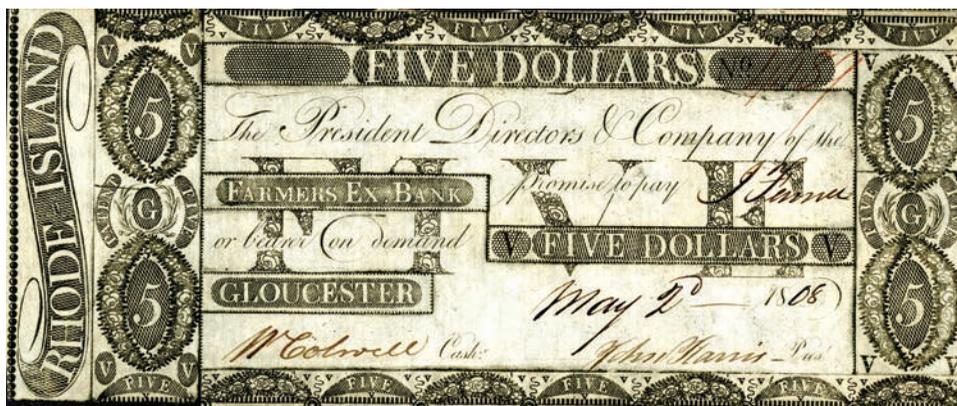


Figure 15. \$5 Note, Farmers Ex[change] Bank, Gloucester, R.I., 2 May 1808, 6.7×16.6 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

variations was needed to replace it. Jacob Perkins, born in 1766 in Newbury Port, Massachusetts, and among the giants of America’s innovative geniuses, changed all this. Bank-note engraving could not have reached its potential without his having made possible the exact reproduction of the same design in almost inexhaustible print runs.⁵ On 19 March 1799, he patented his “Stereotype Steel Plate.”⁶ This method employed multiple long-lasting and replaceable hardened steel dies that allowed for exact uniformity (for a note printed using this method, see Figure 15). The slugs were held tightly together in a frame, and individual dies could be easily substituted. In this way, the printer could change the denomination or even swap out one bank’s name and location for another. Under strong pressure, the dies fitted into the frame could be transferred to a copper or softened steel plate that, once hardened again, was ready for printing (one of Perkins’s most important innovations was soft steel that could be hardened). By using interchangeable parts that could be slotted in as the occasion required, bank notes would share a uniform overall design. The result of standardization would be that, at least in terms of appearance, there would be a national currency. Uniformity in design also meant the public could more easily spot irregularities in the note of an unfamiliar bank because every design was grounded in the same basic prototype, thereby increasing the public’s confidence in the currency’s soundness.

From Perkins’s perspective, the introduction of vignettes would only introduce an unwelcomed variety that would undermine his vision of a standardized design promoting reliability and fiscal responsibility. But Perkins’s overall design, in which one format fits all, did not prove popular. Responding to his clients’ preferences, Perkins perfected the production of vignettes that could sustain large printing runs without any change in their appearance, a process he christened “siderography.” First, the engraver cut a design into a softened piece of steel called a die, which would then be hardened. A transfer press, invented by Perkins, would then roll a small cylinder of soft steel over the die, pressing the cylinder into the engraved lines, thereby imprinting those lines as a raised surface. After the cylinder was hardened, it would be pressed into a soft steel plate, the result being indented lines just like those on the original die. After this bank-note plate was hardened, it was ready for printing. Should the plate become worn, the die and

transfer press could be used again to create an identical substitute. The individually executed copper-plate images with their short shelf life were a thing of the past.⁷

Perkins revolutionized the production of paper money's creative potential. Banks and their customers were drawn to vignettes because they acted as eye-catching signifiers that transmitted messages about the institution's supposedly high-minded values and often its identification with the community it served. In their ability to convey a wide range of subjects and types, vignettes could provide a message beyond the purely monetary one, giving each note its own distinctive voice. In addition, each vignette was the product of a personal style, thereby raising yet another hurdle for counterfeiters to overcome. Difficult to copy with exactitude, they provided one more measure of protection.

In the early 1800s, a bank might approach a local printer such as Amos Doolittle, who would undertake the execution and printing of the bank's notes as adjunct to his many other projects. But soon firms arose that were dedicated to security printing, with bank notes being their primary concern. Philadelphia, then the nation's financial capital, engendered the first of the many increasingly sophisticated security firms that were to flourish in the antebellum period. Initially, the most important was the firm Murray, Draper, Fairman & Co. (MDF), which was founded in 1811. All three partners—George Murray, John Draper, and Gideon Fairman—were capable engravers.⁸ They also hired an invaluable staff, among whom was Asa Spencer, a specialist in the geometric lathe. Fairman had earlier worked with Perkins, prompting the firm to reach a settlement that gave it access to his remarkable innovation. In 1815, like Benjamin Franklin decades before him, Perkins moved to Philadelphia, where his achievements in bank-note printing became the new standard.⁹

MDF creatively expanded on existing iconography by producing sophisticated allegories, agricultural scenes, topographical views, and images of commerce. The \$5 note of the Huntingdon Bank, Huntingdon, Penn. (Figure 16), hand-dated 22 March 1814, displays an intriguing scene of an allegory of Architecture or Building. Seated within a brick structure and a wooden frame, the allegorical figure raises a large hammer in her right hand with a hod carrier at her side. The rectangular format is unusual, as is the use of a female to symbolize such a masculine activity. But MDF presents an arresting image that addresses the bank's role in financing new construction for a growing community.

At the top of the central vignette on the \$50 note of the Schuylkill Bank, Philadelphia (Figure 17), the three figures hovering over the landscape correspond to the number of



Figure 16. \$5 Note, Huntingdon Bank, Huntingdon, N.Y., 22 March 1814. Eric P. Newman Numismatic Education Society.

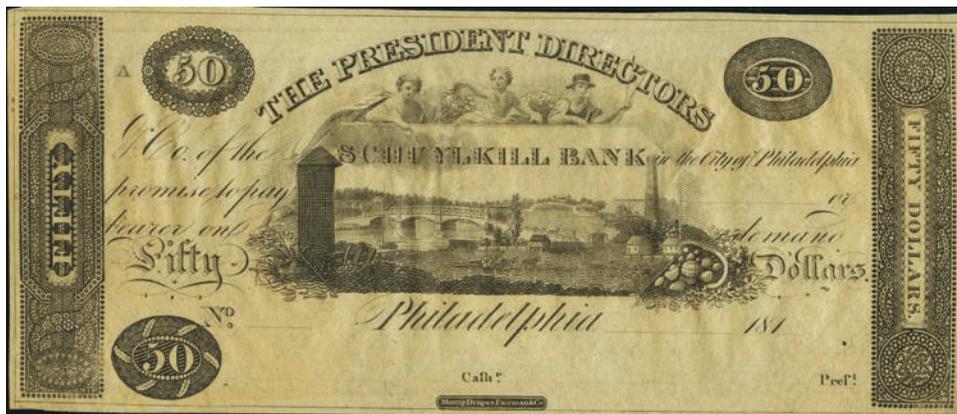


Figure 17. \$50 Note, Schuylkill Bank, Philadelphia, 1810s (proof). Eric P. Newman Numismatic Education Society.

the firm's directors. The figures at either end appear to be puppeteers who are managing the scene that unfolds below. Discrete diagonal borders cut off the corners of this fictional landscape. At the lower left, vegetation spills out from behind the landscape's straight lower border, and on the right appears an overflowing cornucopia. Thus, the creators of this design superimpose the main landscape over underlying imagery, orchestrating a picture of America that is purposefully introduced as an artificial construct of the firm's own making. (The firm also provided an elaborately printed back, an unusual feature for such an early date.) The vignette's main purpose is to celebrate the Schuylkill Permanent Bridge at High Street (now Market Street); completed in 1805, it was the first covered bridge in America. Closing the right-hand side is Sparks Shot Tower (erected in 1808, it still forms part of the Philadelphia skyline). Framing the opposite side is a large silo, another imposing presence bearing witness to this land's potency.

Another powerful, imaginative image is the central vignette on MDF's \$3 note of the Bank of Missouri, St. Louis (Figure 18), hand-dated 9 March 1818. Richard Doty disdains its illogical portrayal, placing it in a category he calls "glorious 'clunkers,'" which are lacking in "perspective, or artistry, or judgment."¹⁰ He points out this vignette's risible implausibility: there are no mountains anywhere near St. Louis; it is unclear if the sun is rising or setting; and the bust is out of scale and does not belong on an embankment surrounded by cotton bales and beehives.¹¹ In 1803, President Thomas Jefferson oversaw the Louisiana Purchase from France, thereby nearly doubling the size of the United States (no matter that much of the land belonged to Native American tribes and was not France's to sell). In the vignette, Jefferson's towering classical bust is given a laurel crown, and another laurel wreath decorates its base. Positioned on the eastern bank of the Mississippi River, it introduces the newly acquired land lying beyond. St. Louis, the gateway to this territory, is on the far bank, and the arc formed by the president's name over his bust fortuitously anticipates the Gateway Arch that today dominates the city's skyline. In this vignette, the sun rises in the west behind the Rocky Mountains, marking the promise of this new beginning in defiance of the laws of nature. This is a splendid fantasy, an intellectual, symbolic construct unmoored to a literal reading of an actual vista. It is a good reminder as well that

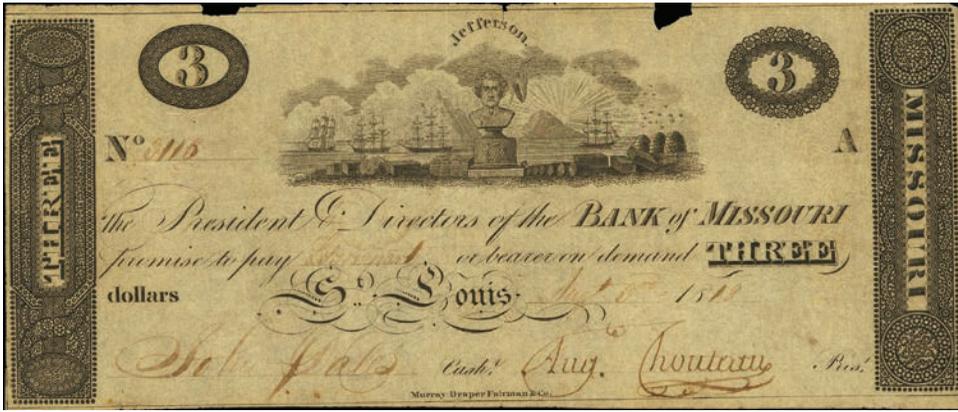


Figure 18. \$3 Note, Bank of Missouri, St. Louis, 3 August 1818. Eric P. Newman Numismatic Education Society.

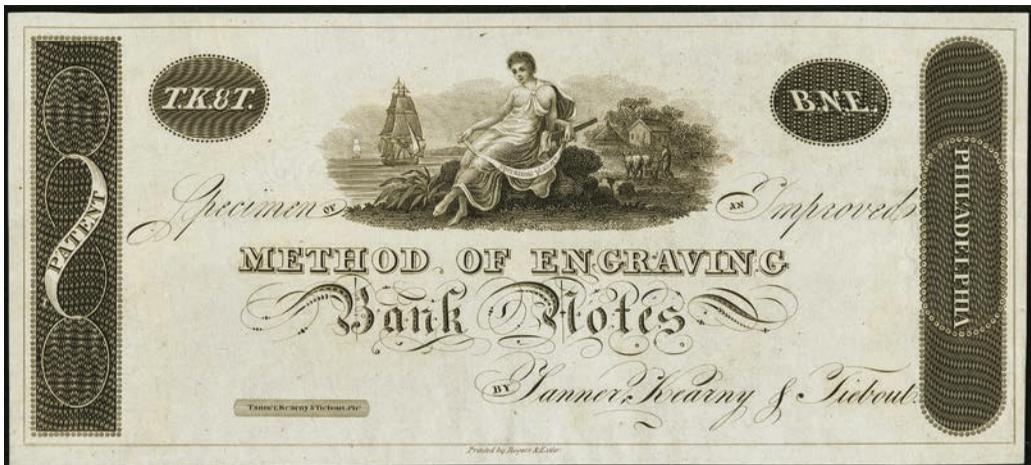


Figure 19. Specimen of an Improved Method of Engraving Bank Notes by Tanner, Kearny & Tiebout, Philadelphia, 1815, 7 × 17.2 cm. Eric P. Newman Numismatic Education Society.

none of these pictures from a distant country should ever be confused with reality.

Another Philadelphia firm, Tanner, Kearny & Tiebout, promoted its own method of engraving in an advertisement from the mid-1810s presented as a sample bank note (Figure 19). This firm, composed of Benjamin Tanner, his brother Henry S. Tanner, Francis Kearny, and Cornelius Tiebout, could not match the expertise that Murray, Draper, Fairman & Co. represented. The advertisement is introduced here, not for its technological innovation, but for its sentiment. The improved method the firm was promoting can be seen in the note's two side panels and in the ovals flanking the vignette, which display "the production of white lines on a black ground in an intricate form that could not be easily duplicated by hand."¹² The vignette itself is accomplished but relatively commonplace.¹³ The figure of Hope sits on a rock, leaning with her left arm on her symbolic anchor

(one of the traditional meanings of the anchor is to link Hope to maritime commerce, with Hope offering solace against the perils of shipping on the high seas). Her classicizing gown seductively, but still discreetly, exposes both breasts. She is beside a shore that in this context is the Delaware River. Uniting the themes of commerce and agriculture, two large sailing ships approach on one side, while a farmer busily plows a field on the other. The banner Hope delicately holds up reads “*Speramus placere*” (We hope to please). This statement proclaims the firm’s professionalism—its ability to produce a high-quality product that will satisfy its clientele—and its Latin phrasing speaks to both its and its clientele’s erudite sophistication. Yet it suggests as well that the note’s content is intended to uplift its audience. In this regard, the motto that “We hope to please” stands for the entire industry, in which imagery is meant to celebrate the nation’s promise and potential.

Abner Reed (1771–1866) is one of the more successful engravers working outside Philadelphia in the 1810s. Overseeing a shop in East Windsor, Connecticut, he trained several apprentices who went on to follow in his footsteps.¹⁴ The vignette on his \$2 note for the Catskill Bank, Catskill, New York (Figure 20), dated 4 April 1818, depicts an allegorical figure seated within an attractive Hudson River landscape. The female holds a “2” over which is draped a vine. The “2” doubles as a lyre, as this muse plucks its organic string. Reed’s approach is highly mannered and stylized. His spindly, elongated, oversized figure dominates her surroundings. Two contrasting cloud formations punctuate the sky: a string of white, powdery clouds, above which is a dark storm cloud that provides a contrasting backdrop for the word “TWO.” Given the vignette’s large size, it cries out for attention as it proclaims Reed’s imaginative, idiosyncratic approach.

In the beginning, Philadelphia was the premier financial center, but New York City had its own prominent printmaking firm. In the 1810s, Peter Maverick (1780–1831) printed bank notes in addition to his many other activities. Perhaps his greatest contribution was as the teacher of two prominent bank-note engravers (and future painters): Asher B. Durand (1796–1886), who apprenticed with him from 1812 to 1817, and John W. Casilear (1811–1893), who apprenticed in the mid-1820s before going on to work with Durand. Once Durand’s apprenticeship ended, he became Maverick’s partner (Maverick, Durand & Co.), a relationship

that soured after the younger man took for himself in 1820 the important commission of engraving John Trumbull’s painting *The Declaration of Independence*.

In 1824, Asher B. Durand and his brother Cyrus (1787–1768), a skilled and inventive machinist,¹⁵ joined C. C. Wright in forming the New York firm A. B. & C. Durand, Wright & Co.



Figure 20. \$2 Note, Catskill Bank, Catskill, N.Y., 4 April 1818. Image courtesy of Heritage Auctions.



Figure 21. Specimen sheet, A. B. & C. Durand, Wright & Co., New York, November 1825. Image courtesy of Heritage Auctions.

In *Specimens of Engraving for Bank Notes* (Figure 21), a small advertising sheet dated November 1825, the firm tastefully presents vignettes by A. B. Durand, with a mock note at top displaying its competence in a wide variety of scripts. Portraits of Washington and Franklin appear at the upper center of the mock note, with each featured in a narrative subject beneath (Franklin in the storm and the general in a commanding pose on horseback). At the sides of the mock note, the vignettes show two views of Antonio Canova's statue of America's first president attired in Roman dress. After being shipped from Italy, this celebrated sculpture,

which associates America's foremost leader with classical values, was installed in North Carolina's State House in 1821. Unfortunately, a fire destroyed it a decade later, but one of the ways in which it lives on is in bank-note illustrations. As with the statue, the entire specimen sheet intermingles the ancient and modern in one harmonious, integrated whole.

A design created by an artist who then engraves his own work, as did Durand, has a claim to originality. The compositional drawing is only the beginning: the engraving must code, replicate, and transmit the design's essence within the parameters of its own set of rules and prescriptions.¹⁶ There is also the case in which a firm commissions a work from an artist that a member of its staff then turns into an engraving. Early examples of this type are two notes produced by Peter Maverick, each of which is inscribed beneath its vignette, "Inman del.," thereby crediting Henry Inman (1801–1846) with the delineation of the original design, even though Maverick's firm was the engraver and printer (see Figure 22 and Figure 24). Inman had served an apprenticeship with the portrait painter John Wesley Jarvis, with whom he soon became more of a collaborator and partner. By turning to artists outside the engraving profession, firms could inject greater vitality into their compositions.¹⁷

The \$50 note for the Greene County Bank, Catskill, New York (Figure 22), is dated 4 July 1825, a patriotic evocation of Independence Day. In the center design, Inman depicts a young woman pointing out a view presumably along the Hudson River. Leaning casually on a rock, she holds a wreath of flowers in her left hand, and her hat is decorated with flowers as well, leading one account to have christened her as Flora.¹⁸ She is waiting for the holder of the note (a male is implied) to approach and join her; at which time she will crown him with the wreath. Draped in a revealing, form-fitting, classicizing dress, she is both a nymph-like maiden and an enthralling seductress. This design makes a telling comparison with a similar vignette on an earlier bill issued by this same bank on 4 March 1822

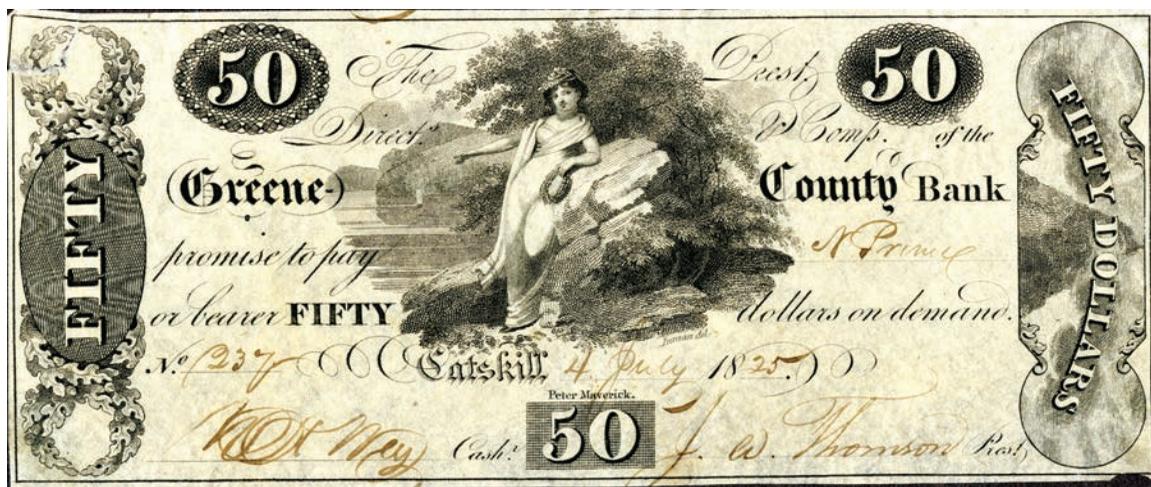


Figure 22. \$50 Note, Greene County Bank, Catskill, N.Y., 4 July 1825, 6.9×17 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

(Figure 23) that bears the imprint Graphic Company. Seated on a rock throne, the classicized figure reacts with astonishment at the view before her. Yet the background offers only a single, smudgy, cloud-obscured mountain, a far cry from Inman's skillful use of atmospheric perspective. It also does not measure up to Abner Reed's earlier 1818 vignette showing a muse on the banks of the Hudson (see Figure 20).

Inman's vignette for the \$100 note (Figure 24) shows a toga-clad enthroned king (the black "patch" to the right of the king's head is a hole in the paper), who



Figure 23. \$2 Note, Greene County Bank, Catskill, N.Y., 4 March 1822, 7 × 17 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.



Figure 24. \$100 Note, Greene County Bank, Catskill, N.Y., 13 December 1824, 6.9 × 17 cm (patched hole to right of head). National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

rests his left hand on a sizable hoard of coins piled high on his table. Bank notes at times depict coins, thereby associating themselves with this form of “hard” currency, and in 1824, when the note was issued, \$100 was a sizable sum of money. In his right hand, the king, presumably Croesus, king of Lydia, holds a key, suggesting his ability to keep his treasure secure.

The fact that Inman’s name accompanied his vignettes demonstrates that these designs were valued as independent works of art. Engravers, as in the case of Durand, often attached their names to vignettes in the early decades of the nineteenth century before bank-note firms became more complex and impersonal.¹⁹ Then, too, a bill’s back occasionally consists of one or two vignettes, which, because they are seen in isolation without any text, are featured as stand-alone artworks. For one example, the \$5 note for the Danvers Bank, Danvers, Massachusetts, displays two scenes about transportation, one by sea and one by land, delicately framed by foliated borders.²⁰ In addition, firms occasionally presented books of their vignettes to important clients independent of the money for which they were designed, another indication of their pride in these images (see Figure 106).²¹ Vignettes came to be deemed to have value apart from their original commercial purpose.²²

When New York’s largest and most successful security firm, Rawdon, Wright & Hatch, was founded in 1832, the city had begun to supplant Philadelphia as America’s premier financial center (Philadelphia firms were to open branch offices in New York and vice versa).²³ The firm consisted of Ralph Rawdon, who was soon joined by his brother Freeman Rawdon, Nezhiah Wright, and George W. Hatch, professionals who had practiced their trade independently before the 1832 merger. The firm expanded to other cities, as did its rivals. Tracy Edson, formerly the manager of the New Orleans branch, became a partner in 1847, and in that same year, the firm acquired a half-interest in the New England Bank Note Co. in Boston. In addition to New Orleans, Boston, and Philadelphia, Rawdon, Wright, Hatch & Edson (RWH&E) had offices in Montreal and Cincinnati. The latter branch, under the management of the engraver W. F. Harrison, gave the company an advantage in developing Western markets.²⁴ RWH&E became the most dominant of the security-engraving businesses (whose work also included the printing of the first postage stamps for the U.S. government), and its success grew out of its stability and the formidable management skills of Tracy Edson. An 1853 prospectus, adorned with vignettes and decorative patterns, offers insights into its marketing and terms. The firm boasted “a great variety of Vignettes and Ornamental Diecuts suitable for Bank Notes, Bills of Exchange, Bills of Lading, Deposit & Stock Certificates, Diplomas, Checks, etc.” and more specifically characterized its vignettes as “illustrating almost every subject connected with the business of the country.” After itemizing the various prices, the prospectus concludes, “A bank could therefore order 30,000 sheets of notes printed on both sides including the charges for engraving on steel for a total of \$3,425 and would have \$270,000 in face value of notes.”²⁵



By 1830, there were approximately 330 private banks issuing notes,²⁶ and engraving firms were constantly being created or re-created, as the principals recombined in new partnerships, to meet the ever-expanding demand. For example, the

1823 Philadelphia firm Fairman, Draper, Underwood & Co., which had grown out of Murray, Draper, Fairman & Co. (Murray had died in 1822), went on to spawn four of the seven firms that in 1858 amalgamated into the American Bank Note Company: Danforth, Perkins & Co.; Bald, Cousland & Co.; Toppa, Carpenter & Co.; and Jocelyn, Draper, Welsh & Co.²⁷ The production of bank notes as a sideline of an engraving establishment was a thing of the past, with the major firms now specializing in bank-note engraving and security printing. The growth in banks was not always a steady ascent. Bankruptcies occurred, leaving in their wake worthless notes, but the general trend was one of impressive expansion. James McPherson offers some statistics on the dynamic performance of state-chartered banks during this period: “Their numbers tripled while their assets increased fivefold from 1820 to 1840. After standing still during the depression of the 1840s [which followed the Panic of 1837], the number and assets of banks doubled again from 1849 to 1860.”²⁸ By 1861, there were 1,371 banks with 213 branches operating in America,²⁹ the majority of which were issuing paper currency. Bank notes were the dominant mode of monetary exchange, and the bank-note printing firms blanketed the country with their product.

Not all banks were created equal. As we have seen, the federally authorized First Bank of the United States, founded in Philadelphia in 1791, had a different mandate and status. One of its responsibilities was to exercise oversight on the amount of money state-chartered banks could circulate by occasionally calling on them to redeem batches of their notes. Those bankers who resented such supervision were instrumental in seeing that the Bank of the United States’ charter, which expired in 1811, was not renewed. The ensuing expansion of the number of state-chartered banks proved to have serious consequences; as a result, in 1816 the Second Bank of the United States was created with another twenty-year charter to help restore confidence in America’s paper money. Its own currency, which featured a vignette of its Philadelphia building’s reassuringly impressive and commanding classical facade, came close to providing a national currency. As Stephen Mihm points out, “By the late 1820s, the Second Bank of the United States had issued notes in excess of \$10 million, approximately a fifth to a quarter of all paper money in circulation (despite competition from more than three hundred state-chartered banks).”³⁰

Unfortunately for financial stability, Nicholas Biddle, the director of the bank, and President Andrew Jackson, who, having been elected to a second term in 1832, went to war over the bank’s role. Jackson disliked the idea of paper money, but he hated even more what he viewed as the elitist Eastern banking system that he wished to democratize further by disposing of the bank. Bray Hammond succinctly summarizes the effects of the ensuing shift in financial power:

The Jacksonians’ destruction of the Bank of the United States was in no sense a blow at capitalism or property or the “money power.” It was a blow at an older set of capitalists by a newer, more numerous set. It was incident to the democratization of business, the diffusion of enterprise among the mass of people, and the transfer of economic primacy from an old and conservative merchant class to a newer, more aggressive, and more numerous body of business men and speculators of all sorts.³¹

Even well before the bank's charter expired in 1836, Jackson had undermined its authority, enabling the explosion of state-chartered banks. One of his measures was to strip the bank of its government funds in order to distribute them among those state-chartered banks that became known as "pet banks."

Up until the first few years of the Civil War, when the federal government increasingly took control of the money supply, the partnership between security-engraving firms and the banks that patronized them was extremely close. From the outset, the choice of vignettes appearing on a note had been a two-way street. The firms could offer the bank officials a varied selection from their stock of images. Their sources for vignettes were multifaceted. When they turned to the European old masters, they often avoided servilely following the revered archetypes, instead brashly Americanizing such material. They looked as well to contemporary art, borrowing not only from mainstream American artists but also from lesser genres, such as illustrations to be found in books, magazines, and journals, published both at home and abroad. They also created their own content, imaginatively adding to the repertoire of American imagery. Artists could be commissioned as well to execute original wash drawings, which, to facilitate the engraving, would be the same size as the intended vignette (later photography made possible the reduction of larger drawings to the required size).³²

Unfortunately, little has remained documenting the dialogue between firms and bankers.³³ Each firm was primarily in control of its imagery, with bankers selecting from the firm's existing stock or giving a general idea of what they required. John Durand, the son of Asher B. Durand, made a revealing observation: "One of my father's correspondents had written to him that 'Bank officers want something serious on their notes.'"³⁴ This suggests that A. B. Durand, as the artist/engraver, was free to create his own subject, as long as it enhanced the bank's desire to project a dignified appearance.

A banker need not travel to a firm's office to make a selection, choosing instead from examples of vignettes provided by the company's traveling sales force. As a result, the same vignette could appear on a bank in Georgia as well as a bank in Massachusetts or one in Michigan. Within this general, national framework, however, vignettes too could easily address the requirements of specific locales. Some regional differences were readily apparent: for example, images of enslaved people appear almost exclusively in the South; obviously, a harbor scene was more likely to occur on the note of a port city than a landlocked one; riverboats occurred more frequently on banks situated along large waterways; and Native Americans on horseback shown hunting buffalo were more commonly associated with the states of the Great Plains.

The bankers could also commission specific subjects, such as a portrait of the bank president or of a scene of the bank itself. Vignettes might also depict a local topographical scene. Banks could even employ classical subjects as an identifying brand that was specific to their purposes. The Globe Bank in Rhode Island, not unreasonably, chose to associate itself with images of the globe, as in the case of Archimedes moving the earth with a lever or Atlas holding up the world on his shoulders (see Figure 113). These vignettes act in much the same way as had signboards in front of eighteenth-century establishments. The large corpus of images generated by the engraving firms and by the banks themselves addressed both the particular and the general, but together they displayed a cornucopia of riches

bestowed on a country that was busily engaged in creating a new and forward-looking nation.

In 1854, *The Illustrated Magazine of Art* published an article offering a laudatory account of just how systemized and sophisticated the process of bank-note engraving had become. Leaving no stone unturned, the article listed the impressive number and variety of professions involved in the creation of a bank note—evidence of how security firms were integral to the health of the economy as a whole: “miners and charcoal men, smelters and ironmongers, hemp-growers, weavers, and paper-makers, mechanics and machinists, designers and engravers, workers of lathes and presses, legislators and banking companies.”³⁵ Using the firm of Danforth, Wright & Co.³⁶ as its model, the article described some of the rooms one might have encountered in a successful business: a showroom with specimens in frames and books; a room where the engraving of vignettes and lettering took place; a room for the undertaking of geometrical-lathework; a room where the work of the lathe and engraver was transferred from dies to transfer rolls and transfer rolls to plates; a room where bed pieces, dies, and plates were hardened; and a room for the printing of notes. Such meticulous professionalism, particularly the mesmerizingly beautiful and elaborate patterns of intricate kaleidoscopic and cycloidal designs, were intended as guarantees against counterfeiting, thereby satisfying the requirements of “monied interests and public confidence in paper currency.”³⁷

When the banks prospered, so did the security-engraving firms, but the Panic of 1857 led to some banks failing and others cutting back on the amount of paper money they could put into circulation. This financial crisis provided the impetus for the merger of seven bank-note firms into the American Bank Note Company (ABNC) of New York. The three biggest shareholders were Rawdon, Wright, Hatch & Edson (5,951 shares); Toppan, Carpenter & Co. (5,577 shares); and Danforth, Perkins & Co. (5,428 shares). Bald, Cousland & Co. came next with a respectable 3,312 shares, followed by Jocelyn, Draper, Welsh & Co. (2,092 shares) and Wellstood, Hay & Whiting (2,042 shares). Bringing up the rear was the firm of John E. Gavit (498 shares), a smaller company based in Albany, New York.³⁸ In 1859, some of the firms that had not joined the ABNC formed the National Bank Note Company (NBNC), but these two firms, while rivals, also worked in concert when engaged in the designing and printing of the federal government’s paper money. Four years later, the outlier, W. L. Ormsby, helped establish a third competitor, the Continental Bank Note Company, which played a lesser role. All three firms were to merge in 1878 under the already well-established name, the American Bank Note Company.

The ABNC occupied part of the Merchants’ Exchange Building at 55 Wall Street in the heart of New York City’s financial district. The firm was a colossus, casting a long shadow. In an article published in February 1862, A. H. Guernsey proudly writes of the high quality and international dominance of both the ABNC and the NBNC: “The plates prepared by them [ABNC] are decidedly superior to any ever before executed. . . . The generous rivalry for artistic perfection between these two companies [ABNC and NBNC] affords a sure guarantee that bank notes executed in America will continue to be, as they now are, superior to any others in the world. No other country has yet any thing to compare with them. The notes of the Bank of England and of the Bank of France are rude in comparison.”³⁹

Guernsey takes the reader on a tour of the ABNC's facilities to demonstrate how its carefully laid out plan of organization allowed it to maintain high standards of quality along with high volume. After entering the firm's business office on the ground floor, the visitor would be escorted up to the modeling and designing rooms, where sketches for vignettes were available to potential clients and to the public (also available were die proofs of existing vignettes). After a sketch was chosen, its outlines could be reproduced on a steel plate or die using photography. The die was then taken to the pictorial engraving room, where often several hands were employed in engraving the vignettes, each with their own specialty, such as figures, landscapes, or animals. One of the article's accompanying illustrations shows the engravers, each in their own cubicle facing a large window (an adjustable screen cuts down on the glare) with the work that is being reproduced mounted on the cubicle's wall. The lathe room contained a variety of machinery, including the geometrical lathe, the cycloidal engine, the ruling machine, and the medallion machine. Here were produced the intricate counters that provided a bed for the numbers of the denomination as well as medallions of heads. In the letter-engraving room, the work was performed by hand. Here, too, there was a division of labor with individual engravers having their own specialty: "One man's forte is German text; that of another is ornamental letters; that of a third is script."⁴⁰ After work on the die was completed, it was taken to the hardening room, where, locked in a crucible placed in a furnace, the soft steel was hardened. In the transfer room, presses transferred the die onto a transfer roll, which, in its turn, was impressed onto a new plate. In the large printing room, the plates underwent multiple printings: "Each note, as now produced, requires at least three separate printings: First the black, secondly the green upon the face, and third the green check [the ornamental design] upon the back. A fourth printing, usually red, is frequently added upon some part."⁴¹

Other facilities in this complex included the plate room, which was a secure room where the plates were stored; a room where the black ink and colored inks were prepared; the paper wareroom, where stocks of paper were kept, every sheet of which was carefully documented; and finally, the counting and packing room. Guernsey gives a breakdown of the staff required to manage this ambitious artistic and technological enterprise: "In all the American Bank Note Company employs about 350 persons, of whom more than 100 are females. There are about 60 artists and engravers [some of whom enjoyed greater reputations than others]; 250 are employed in the Printing and Counting Rooms; the remainder [around 40] being superintendents and clerks in the various departments."⁴²

The ABNC's staff worked closely with a bank's representative in deciding on its paper money's content and overall appearance. Guernsey lists a number of factors that needed to be considered:

The various denominations must all be different in appearance, and none of them must resemble any note of any other bank. . . . Then a bank frequently wishes its notes to have some special adaptation to its title or location. A "Farmer's Bank" will naturally wish an agricultural scene to appear on its notes; a "Merchant's Bank" will wish a commercial; an "Artisan's Bank" a mechanical scene; and so on. Then there will be prepossessions in respect to portraits. If the directors are

Democrats, they probably wish Jefferson or Jackson, [Stephen A.] Douglas or [Silas] Wright; if Republicans, Lincoln or [William H.] Seward, [General Winfield] Scott or [Salmon P.] Chase. An Eastern bank will likely wish [Noah] Webster; a Western one [Henry] Clay, a Southern one [John C.] Calhoun. The agent [of the bank] examines the port-folios containing proofs of the dies in the possession of the Company. He has ample scope for choice, for there are some 20,000 of them. Of these probably 5000 are vignettes, 5000 portraits and emblematical figures, and 10,000 checks and counters. Aided by the officers of the Company, who take care that in combination and arrangement the notes of each bank shall be easily distinguishable from those of any other; this part of the plate is agreed upon. Then the general style and arrangement of the lettering is settled, and a sketch of the note is made.⁴³

This process was well organized and well supervised, but within a few years of its founding, the firm ceased to produce American bank notes after the federal government put a stop to this type of currency. The government's own Bureau of Engraving and Printing gradually took over the responsibility of printing the national currency that had replaced it. Yet, even after the torch was completely passed, the ABNC continued to flourish by designing and printing foreign currency and postage stamps and by printing stock certificates and bonds adorned with steel-engraved vignettes, a requirement of the New York Stock Exchange until 2001.

Worthless Paper: The National Economy's Wild-Goose Chase

The preceding brief outline of the proliferation of bank notes in antebellum America has glossed over an important caveat—a great deal of the money in circulation was worthless. Michael O'Malley writes, "Some estimate that at times roughly 40 percent of the money in circulation was counterfeit."⁴⁴ Almost from the beginning, even the currency of well-run banks would not be accepted at face value. Normally, the farther a note traveled from its home base, the more it was discounted. Colonial currency had already created a mindset for such transactions: its notes had not traded at par, with the money of some colonies retaining their value better than others. But such considerations were of little significance compared to more pressing concerns. Banks did not always remain solvent, with the first bank failures occurring as early as 1809.⁴⁵ Then, too, the criminal enterprise of counterfeiting operated on a grand scale with sophisticated networks of production and distribution.⁴⁶ Counterfeiters could raise the denomination of a genuine note; they could create a counterfeit of an original; or they could create a spurious note for a bank that did not exist. In addition, there were what came to be called wildcat banks whose reserves were far too low to begin to redeem their currency. (One explanation for the name wildcat was that some of these banks were situated in such distant wilderness locations that, if one wanted to redeem a note, only a wildcat would be able to find them.)⁴⁷ Some states in the late 1830s even approved free banking laws that allowed banks to open without an act of incorporation from the legislature, almost guaranteeing that notes would be

untethered to any meaningful reserves. Such practices raised the question for contemporaries as to whether there was any difference between a shady banker and a criminal counterfeiter. Both were equally guilty of printing easy money, with the only difference being that the counterfeiter, unlike the banker, could end up in jail.

Even security printing by professional firms could offer little relief for the prevention of the circulation of devalued money. These firms were, indeed, often part of the problem when they contracted to supply currency for banks that were little more than fronts for the distribution of unsecured notes. In addition, plates could occasionally be acquired at bankruptcy auctions, thereby allowing counterfeiters to obtain them.

One solution to this problem was the publication of “counterfeit detectors,” which alerted readers to which banks were sound, which were not, and what to look for in discerning between genuine and counterfeit notes. The first efforts of this type appeared in Boston as early as 1806,⁴⁸ but such publications often proved to be as much of a boon to counterfeiters, who learned what adjustments needed to be made, as to merchants. In addition, these publications also had a profit motive, and their judgments were not always impartial.

How could such a flawed system function? The art historian Jennifer Roberts recounts how this system of credit was often described at the time as “an *aerial* system” that had created its own “phantasmatic ‘financescape.’” She goes on to elaborate on this characterization:

Although paper was in reality confined to ground transportation like everything else, its itinerary was processed in metaphors of flight or flotation. Tract after tract, article after article described the movement of paper credit as an aerial displacement, difficult to track or control. As early as 1786, Thomas Paine had written of “the airy bubble of paper-currency,” and Adam Smith, of paper money’s “Daedelian Wings” and its capacity to forge “a sort of waggonway through the air.” Specie, in contrast, had a “ponderous gravity.” Here emerges the aerial metaphor of finance—the notion of “free-floating capital” that has become so common today as to be almost totally naturalized.⁴⁹

Paper money could break the bonds of gravity because it filled an urgent need. It supplied a new nation that was growing by leaps and bounds with much needed credit and capital. With the ability to issue currency, capitalists were literally authorized to make money, and in America’s boom-and-bust economy, the wheels were greased in times of prosperity with the creation of wealth from “airy nothing,” the bankers and counterfeiters only having to conjure up for their notes “a local habitation and a name” (*A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, 5, i, 16–17).

Through it all, one thing was paramount—the need for confidence in paper money’s value. Regardless of its origins, money was good only as long as it was believed to be good. The ever-present threat of counterfeiting provided a strong incentive for security-engraving firms to continually improve their product. Fraudulent banks needed to be even more concerned about appearances than sound ones. Their notes’ imagery could also proclaim a professional, dignified gravitas, an authoritative assuredness concerning the transfer of wealth from one individual to another.

Despite the notes' appealing beauty, the question of confidence remains. It is no coincidence that Herman Melville's last novel *The Confidence-Man: His Masquerade*, published in 1857, prominently features bank notes in its closing scene. The book is composed of forty-five dialogues among passengers descending the Mississippi on April Fools' Day in 1857 on the steamboat *Fidèle*. Issues of trust and deceit run through this satirical and fantastical portrayal of American aspirations and anxieties. At the end, before the light in the boat's cabin is entirely extinguished, an old man pores over a recent issue of a counterfeit detector vainly trying to determine if his two bank notes are counterfeit or genuine.⁵⁰ One is a \$3 note on the Vicksburgh Trust and Insurance Banking Company, a fictitious name created by Melville that has the ring of authenticity. The old man has been talking with a fellow passenger, referred to as the cosmopolitan, who urges him to accept it as genuine: "Trust and Insurance! What more would you have?" The old man, however, continues to consult his counterfeit detector, which further explains that in a corner vignette there is "the figure of a goose, very small, indeed, all but microscopic; and, for added precaution . . . not observable, even if magnified, unless the attention is directed to it." It is all bewildering gobbledygook, encouraging the cosmopolitan to continue to maintain the note is good: "Then throw that Detector away, I say again; it only makes you purblind; don't you see what a wild-goose chase it has led you?" The old man, more confused than ever, despairs of arriving at a conclusion. The reader is left as well to puzzle over whether the notes are genuine or not in a world where "genuine" has lost its meaning. Trust and distrust can no longer be disentangled. The images on the notes only serve to confuse. Do they inspire confidence, or are they party to a lie and a deceit?

Considering its many faults, one wonders how much longer such a haphazard system of paper money could survive. How much longer could one choose to believe? Regarding the antebellum period, John Kenneth Galbraith wryly remarks, "The American monetary system was, without rival, the most confusing in the long history of commerce and associated cupidity."⁵¹ The pressures imposed by the Civil War soon swept away this flawed system. The enormous expenditures required to finance the war forced the federal government to take control of the issuance of paper money.⁵² The primacy of the states over money management now gave way to federal authority. As we shall see, for a time the New York bank-note firms printed the federal government's currency, but in 1877, the Treasury Department's Bureau of Engraving and Printing took over this function entirely. With the government's creation of the Secret Service in 1865, centralized control went a long way in solving the problem of counterfeiting, which was soon reduced to a tiny fraction of the whole. Before counterfeiters could be lumped with nefarious bankers as just another form of shady dealing in pursuit of the American Dream of easy money, but now they represented an unacceptable attack on the value of the nation-state itself. With the introduction of a national currency came greater stability in the money supply, but it also led inevitably to a tremendous loss in the variety and abundance of images appearing on the nation's paper currency. Although the formidable restrictions on what was printed guaranteed the high quality of the remaining product, it also led to an overwhelming restriction of the imagination, severely limiting one of the nation's most important means of self-expression. Antebellum bank notes, however, did leave a remarkable record of a homegrown American art form.

High Art or Low Art

The Status of Bank-Note Printing

Grand-Manner Subject Matter: The Academic Hierarchy of Art

America had inherited Europe's academic principles, which made clear distinctions among art's various categories. The most exalted realm of art looked to the grand manner, a world of idealized images and epic stories rendered by the old masters, such as Michelangelo, Raphael, Titian, Rubens, and Poussin. Its subject matter was drawn from such "universal" sources as the Bible and classical history and mythology. This was a realm beyond common nature, and its intent was to instruct and inspire viewers. Lower on this academic ladder was portraiture, whose subject matter depicts human beings as they are, rather than as heroic participants within the epic stories of an idealized past. Genre scenes of everyday life were lower still, as they depict mundane activities, followed by landscapes and then still lifes. In contrast to the realm of high art, low art was considered a distinctly inferior mode tainted by its association with popular culture and commerce.

The artists/engravers of bank notes, like painters, enjoyed considerable freedom in their choice of subject matter. There were no federal or state agencies overseeing the message or controlling the design process in the development of bank-note vignettes.¹ The firms and the artists and engravers they employed could develop a new art form without interference. Although mindful of the desires of their clientele, these firms enjoyed the opportunity to create their own imaginative worldview. They, too, could turn to the subject matter of high art, to which the academic conventions they had been taught would have predisposed them. Thus, an engraver, like a fellow painter, could produce works drawn from art's highest categories, even if, in the case of vignettes, there was a decided difference in scale and the absence of color.

In the eighteenth century, the Founding Fathers had been profoundly influenced by their knowledge of the Roman Republic. Their naming of "Congress," the "Senate," and "senators" was, of course, a direct allusion to ancient Rome, not to mention the use of the word "republic" itself. Around 1815, interest in Greek civilization began to dominate, but taken together, this late-eighteenth-century and early-nineteenth-century dedication to the forms and subjects of the Greco-Roman past, known as neoclassicism, revered learning, democratic values, moral virtues, and a sophisticated appreciation of beauty as essential components in the development of a nation.

As discussed in chapter 1, in South Carolina during the American Revolution, Thomas Coram had already set a bold and daring precedent in the incorporation of mythological figures in the grand-manner tradition (see Figures 9–11). During

the 1810s, Murray, Draper, Fairman & Co. (MDF) and other firms began to introduce delicately rendered classicizing figures into their vignettes, but it was not until the 1820s in the work of Asher B. Durand that we see mythological narratives conceived in a more noble and refined classical style. Durand created a large compendium of vignettes based on grand-manner imagery, thereby introducing elegant neoclassical designs to all levels of American society and not just to the cultural elite. Tasteful vignettes, executed on a small scale that is more decorative than forceful, dominate his sheet titled *Specimen of Bank Note Engraving*, published ca. 1828 for Durand, Perkins & Co. (Figure 25), demonstrating just how central mythological and allegorical subjects were to his identity as a bank-note engraver. The smaller portraits and the elaborate denominations and counters serve only as a frame for this more important subject matter. Here, one finds Neptune riding his chariot across the sea accompanied by Plenty; Cybele, the earth mother, wearing a turreted crown, holding both a scepter and a key and riding a chariot drawn by lions; Aurora or Dawn in her chariot preceded by the Morning Star; and Venus drawn through the ocean by dolphins.

Durand was in step with the American Enlightenment's passion for the classical tradition. His images demonstrate an erudite use of classical models, relating the fledgling republic to the values and aspirations of the Greco-Roman past. In one instance, however, he conflated the two classical civilizations: the seated figure at lower right, pausing for inspiration in the act of writing, is Solon (his name is sometimes engraved on the block beside him), but one of the two temples behind the Greek philosopher and lawgiver is crowned by a shallow dome, a distinctly Roman architectural type.²

The main point of academic art is to promote public virtue, and the early-nineteenth-century audience understood this context in which bank-note vignettes were created. An article in *The Illustrated Magazine of Art*, published in 1854, judged Durand's vignettes as embodying a higher artistic purpose: "In 1824 bank-note engraving began a new era. A. B. Durand became partner [with C. C. Wright and Cyrus Durand, his brother], and, as designer and engraver, carried so much taste into the work, as to place the note among the works of the fine arts—a work in which beauty now blends with utility, and that to a degree that makes paper currency an instrument for refining the public taste."³ Although one might disagree with this author's assessment that the vignettes that came before Durand's creations were merely utilitarian, one should not lose sight of the larger point that Durand's contemporaries saw his works as belonging to art's most exalted category. From this perspective, bank-note imagery belongs to an ennobling enterprise, one that rebounds to the credit of the banks that hope to earn the public's trust by promoting universal values within the marketplace.

The firm Rawdon, Wright & Hatch (RW&H) carried on the tradition of elaborate classical subject matter, albeit in a coarser style than Durand's. In the \$1 note of the Bank of Washtenaw, Ann Arbor, Michigan (Figure 26), dated 9 May 1835, two classical vignettes flank the central allegory of America as Liberty. On the left, Jupiter, whose majestic pose is based on that of the sculpture *Laocoön*, commandingly raises his thunderbolts. On the right, Vulcan, backed by an airborne Mercury, looks over to Jupiter's protective presence. As can be seen in the right-hand vignette on the \$10 note of the Bank of West Union, West Union, Ohio (Figure 27), hand-dated 2 November 1840, the vignette was originally circular depicting Ceres on the left



Figure 25. Specimen sheet, Durand, Perkins & Co., New York, ca. 1828, 43.2×32.4 cm (border line). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1917.

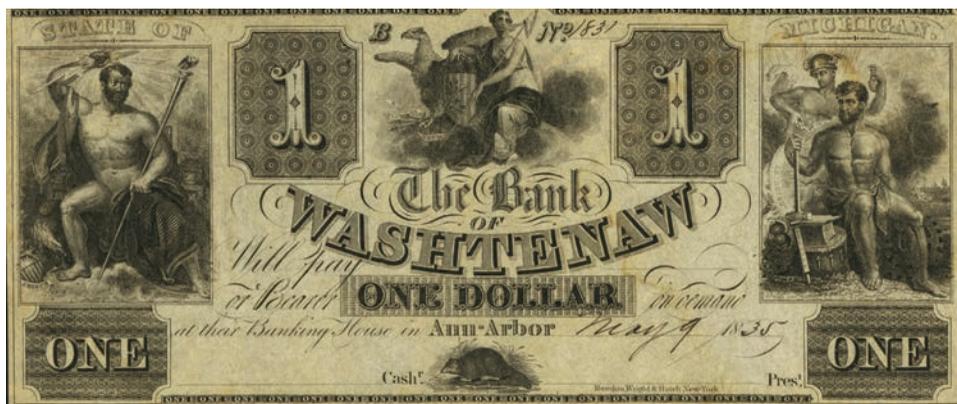


Figure 26. \$1 Note, Bank of Washtenaw, Ann Arbor, Mich., 9 May 1835. Eric P. Newman Numismatic Education Society.



Figure 27. \$10 Note, Bank of West Union, West Union, Ohio, 2 November 1840. Eric P. Newman Numismatic Education Society.

with Commerce in the center, making profitable Agriculture's and Manufacture's products. In its design, the Washtenaw note emphasizes masculine virtues as the bedrock for American progress. The Bank of Union note, on the other hand, pairs the vignette of the three classical figures with a contemporary subject. The vignette on its left is based on William Sidney

Mount's 1833 painting *Long Island Farmer Husking Corn*, demonstrating an increased commitment to capturing contemporary America. (The direct source is more likely Robert Hinshelwood's engraving after the painting, an impression of which he exhibited at the National Academy in 1838.)⁴

Allegorical figures continued to be popular throughout the antebellum period. The two modes of representation—the allegorical and the “realistic”—coexisted comfortably. The top-center vignette on the \$10 note of the Bridgeport Bank, Bridgeport, Connecticut, dating to the 1830s and bearing the imprints of N. & S. S. Jocelyn and Draper, Underwood, Bald & Spencer, shows a female version of Mercury, the god of Commerce.⁵ Seated on a bale backed by a barrel and holding Mercury's caduceus in her left hand, she turns to look at the harbor in her role as Maritime Commerce. Such a generalized depiction would be an appropriate choice for any institution located in a harbor setting. On the other hand, the panorama beneath depicts a view of Bridgeport harbor, in which the tall ship in the composition's center makes the same point by different means—the ship's dominating presence again speaks to Bridgeport's important role in the pursuit of maritime trade.



Figure 28. \$100 Note, J. T. Johnston, Ship Broker & Commission Merchant, New York, late 1830s–1840s. Image courtesy of Heritage Auctions.

Allegorical figures could easily intermingle with contemporary ones in the same vignette. Durand's third vignette down on the left-hand side of his *Specimen Sheet* (see Figure 25) shows an American mechanic greeting Neptune, who is being drawn to the shore to facilitate maritime trade.⁶ In order to harmonize the two figures, Durand attires his early-nineteenth-century laborer in classical drapery and gives him a scepter-like rod similar in spirit to that held by the god. In this instance, the mechanic symbolizing American industry and the god symbolizing maritime commerce form a happy partnership. On the \$100 note of J. T. Johnston, Ship Broker & Commission Merchant, printed by Doty & Bergen, New York,⁷ the central vignette places a sailor in contemporary attire standing beside the figure of Mercury cozily reclining in the foreground (Figure 28). The usual expectation is that the classical gods oversee or exhort contemporary protagonists in their pursuits, but here the sailor proudly points to the ships engaged in maritime trade while Mercury passively looks on.

The \$5 note of the Farmers and Merchants Bank of Greensborough, Maryland (Figure 29), the work of Rawdon, Wright, Hatch & Edson (RWH&E), offers another example of how allegorical and contemporary figures can comfortably coexist in the same design (although this note is hand-dated 4 March 1863, it was printed in the 1850s). On the left of the central vignette, Ceres or Agriculture sits holding her sickle with a sheaf of grain behind her. Her bare breast and bare foot, as well as her elegant attire, put her in a symbolic realm rather than in that of the everyday world. Her supportive companion is equally removed from mundane reality. The milkmaid with her pail at the right, while belonging to the contemporary world, is also heavily idealized. With her pristine attire untouched by any hint of manual labor and her impossibly dainty, diminutive foot with its shoe peeking from beneath her dress (a stylized convention inherited from Rococo art), she would have made a fitting companion for Marie Antoinette, when the queen played at being a milkmaid at Versailles. Interestingly, the bank note's milkmaid is derived from Thomas Sully's painting of Elizabeth H. Cook, the twenty-year-old friend of the painter's daughter. Sully (1783–1872) cast Cook in the role of a charming country girl holding a basket. The bank-note artist expanded on this



Figure 29. \$5 Note, Farmers and Merchants Bank, Greensborough, Md., 4 March 1863. Image courtesy of Heritage Auctions.



Figure 30. \$5 Note, Mechanics Savings Bank, Savannah, Ga., ca. 1855 (punch-canceled proof). Image courtesy of Heritage Auctions.

half-length figure, painted in Philadelphia, to create a milkmaid.⁸ Given that the milkmaid is more fantasy than fact, there is no discordant clash between her and the allegorical females on the left, particularly when George Washington's portrait intervenes to create an interlude between them.

A vignette on the \$5 note of the Mechanics Savings Bank of Savannah, Georgia, from the mid-1850s by Bald, Adams & Co., New York/Bald, Cousland & Co., Philadelphia (BA/BC), celebrates the American mechanic without introducing a direct classical allusion, thereby permitting the figure itself to take on the persona of a modern-day Vulcan (Figure 30). In the background, a passenger train belching smoke passes by an active factory. Because the mechanic sits on a train axle, he is shown as the real engine driving these modern innovations. Another popular vignette appearing on bank notes is a cropped reproduction of John Neagle's painting *Pat Lyon at the Forge* (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 1826–27; second version, Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Philadelphia, 1829), an example of which can be seen on the Washtenaw note (see Figure 48).⁹ Patrick

Lyon's commission to have himself portrayed in his role as a Philadelphia blacksmith rather than as the wealthy man he had become was unusual. He had good reason not to identify with Philadelphia's elites, having been falsely accused and imprisoned for robbing the Bank of Philadelphia in 1798 (the Walnut Street Jail, where he had been incarcerated, is shown at the upper left in both paintings).¹⁰ Following Lyon's instructions, Neagle created the first American portrait of a worker engaged in a trade. Yet the artist still presents Lyon's occupation as an exalted one by associating him with his august classical predecessor Vulcan. On one level, his appearance on bank notes provides a companion for the mechanic seen in the Savannah design: the two modes, one a realistic allegory and the other an idealized portrait, being closer than one might at first imagine.

The line between the "real" and the allegorical was fluid, and some nineteenth-century engravers had difficulty in negotiating the two modes. An early vignette produced by MDF in the 1810s or 1820s demonstrates how the pragmatic streak in the American character could be uncomfortable with allegory's fanciful conventions. The woman with drapery trailing above her head on the \$5 note of the Bridgeport Bank is surely borrowed from an allegorical figure soaring through the air.¹¹ Instead of letting this figure fly unsupported, the engraver felt the need to ground her by awkwardly slipping a boat underneath. Even if, in this instance, American pragmatism mangles academic conventions, airborne allegorical figures, rightly understood, were to become commonplace. Another instance of an unfortunate attempt to modernize a traditional allegory can be found in Casilear, Durand, Burton & Edmonds's ca. 1835 vignette of Night in a chariot drawn by griffons, which appears as the central design on the \$8 note of the Peoples' Bank of Paterson, New Jersey (Figure 31). The depiction places this elegant classical chariot on a train track, making for a jarring anachronism.

Generic types, such as milkmaids, farmers, sailors, and mechanics, could easily intermingle with classical allegorical figures. Even a single contemporary figure could combine both worlds: a nineteenth-century woman with a sickle could represent Ceres, and, as we have seen, a blacksmith at his forge Vulcan. Where problems arise is in the mixing of identifiable historical personages with allegorical

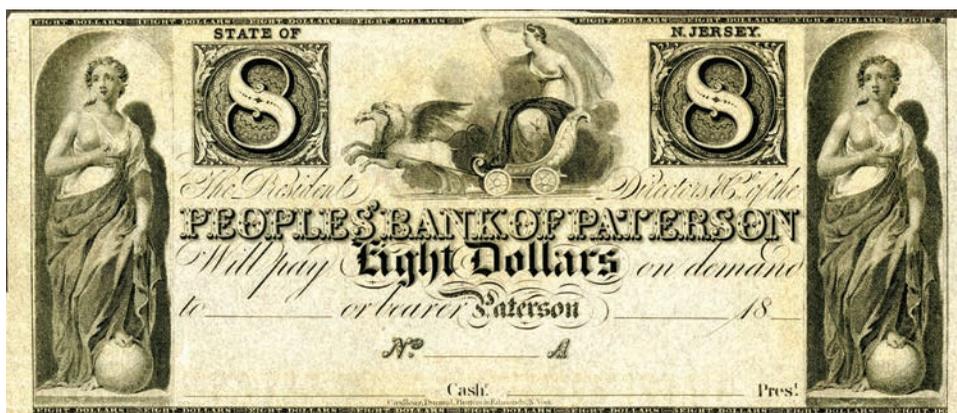


Figure 31. \$8 Note, Peoples' Bank of Paterson, Paterson, N.J., ca. 1835, 7.6×17.3 cm (remainder). National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

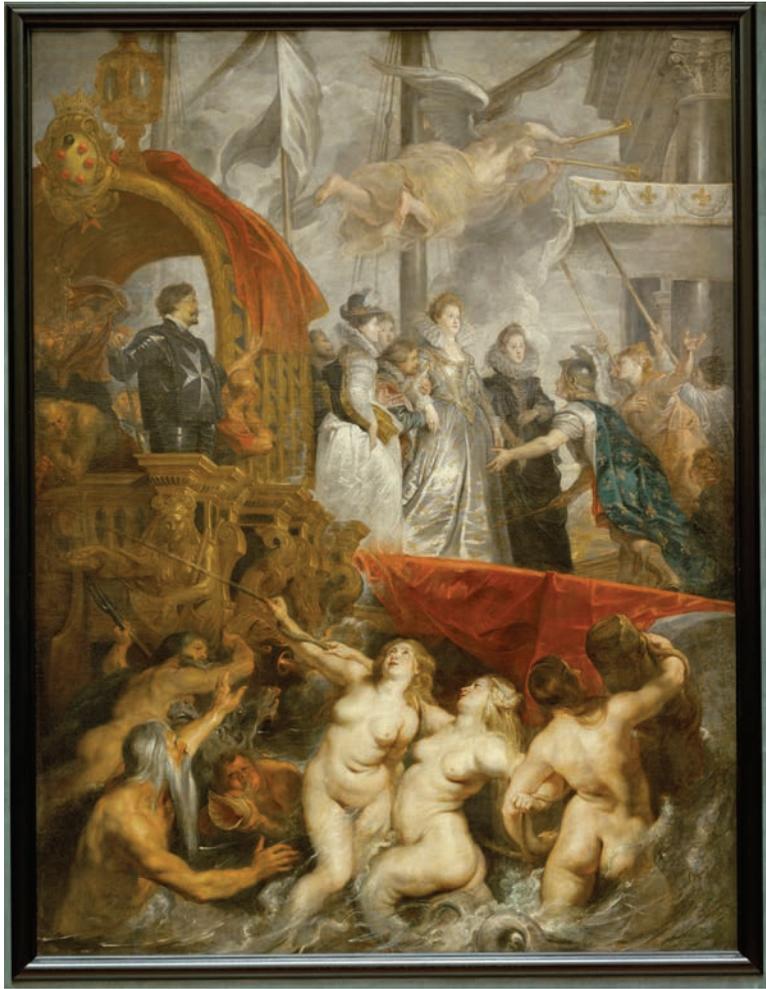


Figure 32. Sir Peter Paul Rubens, *The Landing of Marie de Médici at Marseilles*, 1625, oil on canvas, 394 × 295 cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris. Erich Lessing/Art Resource, New York.

figures, even if academic practice sanctioned such combinations. One of the more famous examples is Sir Peter Paul Rubens's *The Landing of Marie de Médici at Marseilles* (Figure 32), executed in 1623–1625 as part of a series of paintings dedicated to the queen's life. This painting shows Marie's arrival on French soil to marry the king, who was not there to greet her. This subject of the future queen descending a gangplank, even though surrounded by her well-dressed retinue, was particularly unprepossessing, but Rubens interjected energy and flair by adding dramatic allegorical figures: a bowing personification of France waits to greet her; overhead flies Fame with her trumpets; and in the water below are Tritons and Nereids, who are all present to lend honor and splendor to this occasion.¹²

Despite such distinguished old-master precedents, American bank-note engravers, for the most part, shied away from these types of combinations.¹³ Somehow angels hovering overhead, while Tritons and Nereids frolic in the waves

beneath, never became part of the bank-note repertoire in vignettes of the landing of the Pilgrims at Plymouth. Fame blowing her trumpet or Victory flying above a battlefield involving Washington was likewise left unrepresented. The preferred model can be seen in the Greensborough note (see Figure 29), where Washington appears in the central allegory but carefully framed within a portrait, thereby keeping the two realms apart. In a rare exception, a bank-note vignette shows George Washington interacting with an allegorical female representing the Bank of North America, a work created by Charles Toppan & Co. in the early 1830s (see Figure 70). In this instance, the alternative of showing the general approaching a teller's window to receive funding in support of the Continental Army would have seemed unthinkable mundane and unworthy.¹⁴ (Painting was more open to mixing historical figures with allegorical ones. For example, Constantino Brumidi made ample use of this convention in his 1865 fresco *The Apotheosis of Washington* in the dome of the Rotunda of the U.S. Capitol.)

The use of allegorical cherubs, putti, or cupids is another of the many European conventions bank-note engravers adopted. Such figures often adorn the margins of notes, but in the sheet of four notes from the West River Bank, Jamaica, Vermont (Figure 33), executed ca. 1854 (the date on a coin) by RWH&E and the New England Bank Note Co., they are the main protagonists. Winged young boys engage with silver dollars, the number of the cherubs and that of the coins corresponding to the note's denomination. The \$1 note exhibits a cherub pushing a coin like a hoop, symbolizing money on the move thanks to advancements in communication and travel. The \$2 note shows cherubs in combat, a reference to martial strength and preparedness. The \$3 note represents the arts: writing and knowledge and painting, sculpture, and architecture. The \$5 note represents, from left to right, agriculture, the Native as America (who is also closely related to the image of Liberty on the coin), commerce, mechanics, and cartography, or the claiming and parceling out of the new land. These fanciful figures, which are associated with adult tasks, look back to eighteenth-century Rococo iconography in their depiction of a charming world where work is disguised as play.

Whether an allegorical figure is male or female is largely determined by the god or goddess traditionally identified with its character. For example, the male god Mercury most often represents the abstract notion of Commerce, even if occasionally a female figure takes up his caduceus. Agriculture, with its close ties to Mother Earth, is readily symbolized by the goddess Ceres. But here, too, there could be exceptions. In a contemporary context, a male farmer might represent Agriculture. Some occupations, such as that of the mechanic, were too closely associated with heavy labor to be assigned a female representative. Only Vulcan was suitable for representing blacksmiths.¹⁵ Since males dominated so many professions, a female allegorical figure could best represent a group without running the risk of being confused with a specific member. The Nine Muses, representing various categories of the arts, are all female. The concepts of Liberty, America, Justice, and many other virtues tend to be female as well.

An allegorical figure's gender could influence how he or she was positioned within the design. Classical gods could easily fly, but often when male and female figures are presented together, the males are more earthbound than their female companions. The \$10 note of the Forest City Bank of Cleveland, printed by BA/BC



Figure 33. Sheet of four notes (\$1, \$2, \$3, \$5), West River Bank, Jamaica, Vt., 1 July 18__ (ca. 1854 [1854 is the year that appears on the coin on the \$1 note]), 30 × 17.7 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

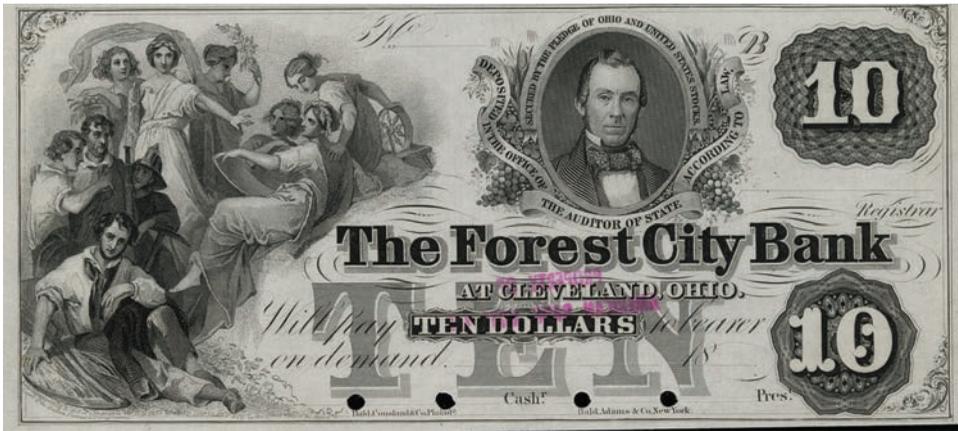


Figure 34. \$10 Note, Forest City Bank, Cleveland, Ohio, 1850s (punch-canceled proof with bleed-through of ABNC stamp on the back). Image courtesy of Heritage Auctions.

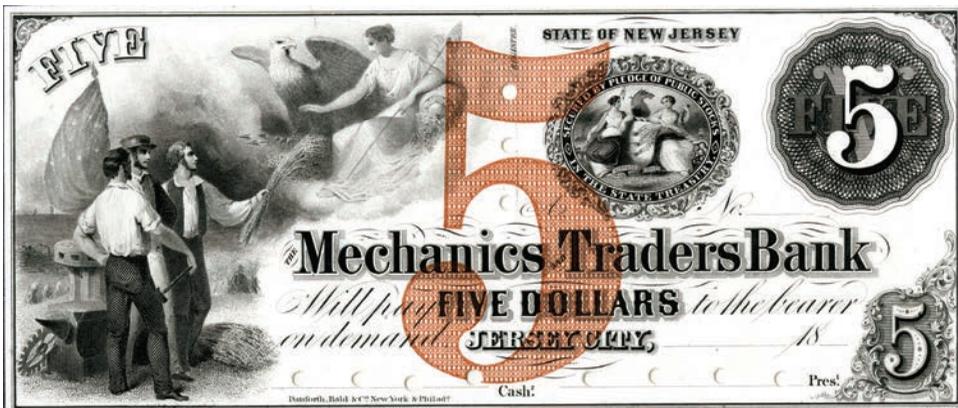


Figure 35. \$5 Note, Mechanics and Traders Bank, Jersey City, N.J., ca. 1853 (punch-canceled proof), 7.6 × 18.1 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

and dated 1858 (Figure 34), offers an interesting cluster of ten figures, a number that corresponds to the denomination. The four male figures, among whom are a farmer, a blacksmith, and a fireman, occupy the lower register. The allegorical females, in their turn, inhabit a more rarefied realm. The most imposing is the commanding female, who, wearing a white dress, locks eyes with the viewer as her sash dramatically swirls up and over her head. Holding fasces borrowed from the Roman Republic, she represents the Republic of the United States. Whereas the men tend to represent specific occupations, the more ethereal women are for the most part identified with abstract concepts, such as the figures of Abundance and Peace on either side of the American Republic.

This same distinction between the earthbound and the ethereal can be seen in the \$5 note of the Mechanics and Traders Bank, Jersey City, New Jersey (Figure 35), printed in the 1850s by Danforth, Wright & Co. At the left stand a mechanic, a sailor, and a farmer, this last figure offering a sheaf of grain to the

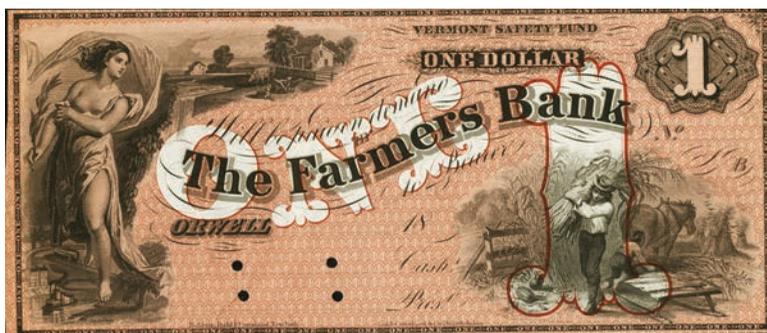


Figure 36. \$1 Note, Farmers Bank, Orwell, Vt., late 1850s (punch-canceled proof). Image courtesy of Heritage Auctions.

Vermont (Figure 36), printed by Bald, Cousland & Co. in the late 1850s, expresses through both allegory and realism the sense of America’s promise. The left-hand vignette, which bears an 1857 copyright date, is designed to occupy only the left-hand side of any note. The landscape begins with a rural homestead nestled amid the trees at the vignette’s upper right. The stream that runs by it takes a dramatic plunge, disappearing behind vegetation backing the allegorical figure, only to re-emerge at the bottom in a more substantial form. Along the river’s broad banks can be seen larger buildings more suited to an urban locale. But the vignette’s dominating subject is the graceful, airborne, allegorical female, the work of William G. Armstrong. Attired in revealing classical dress and with drapery swirling behind her, she is effortlessly suspended high above this Edenic world. Holding in her right hand an olive branch, she represents Peace and Plenty. By looking to the viewer’s right, she integrates this design with the rest of the note.¹⁷ The breeze on which she glides wafts through the note’s typography, as if the lettering formed part of an undulating banner. In the lower right-hand corner is another impressive vignette that is often entitled *The Corn Gatherers*.¹⁸ These two vignettes, each in a different mode, combine to celebrate the idyllic harmony presiding over America’s green and pleasant land with its promise of almost unlimited potential.

Translating High-Art Sources into an American Idiom

This section explores three examples in which bank-note engravers adapted high-minded subject matter to their perception of the American experience. All three sources are the product of European artists who were born either in Ireland, the Kingdom of Savoy, or Urbino (the last two are now part of Italy), and their works reached America in the form of prints. The firm of Rawdon, Wright, & Hatch executed the first two vignettes in 1834 and ca. 1838, and Draper, Toppan & Co. produced the last example in the early 1840s.

Freeman Rawdon’s Venus of 1834: A Goddess or a Strumpet?

In 1834, just two years after the creation of the firm Rawdon, Wright, Hatch & Co., Freeman Rawdon (1801–1859) and George W. Hatch (1804–1866) each produced an elaborate vignette of a nude classical goddess in order to help their business stand out from their rivals in terms not only of the quality of their work but

idealized allegory of American Liberty seated in clouds.¹⁶ To the left of Liberty is a fierce bald eagle holding arrows in its talons, while she rests her left arm on a cornucopia spilling out coins, a symbol of the riches being produced by America’s working class.

The \$1 note of the Farmers Bank, Orwell,



Figure 37. \$20 Note, Ocmulgee Bank, Macon, Ga., 6 February 1840, 7.9×18.5 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.



Figure 38. \$3 Note, Tecumseh Bank, Tecumseh, Mich., ca. 1838, 7.7×18.4 cm (remainder). National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

also in terms of their familiarity with the erudite subjects of high art. Rawdon produced an image of the classical goddess Venus (Figure 37), and Hatch executed a design featuring Hebe (Figure 38). As a mark of the importance of these images, each engraver signed his work: “ENGD. BY FREEMAN RAWDON” and “Engd by GEO. W. HATCH. 1834.” Rawdon would have also completed his undated design by 1834, as the earliest known dated note with this vignette is inscribed in ink “Oct 1st 1834” (the “18” is printed).¹⁹ Hatch’s image of Hebe on the \$3 note of Tecumseh, Michigan, is so imposing that the counter containing the “3” beneath it had to be rotated to face downward in order better to accommodate the large size of the vignette (the counter in the opposite corner was rotated to face upward in order to allow more room for the equally imposing vignette of Tecumseh, a chief of the Shawnee tribe).²⁰ Rawdon’s Venus steps from the ocean onto the shore, whereas Hatch’s design strikes an overtly patriotic cord. The two vignettes are paired on at least two bank notes—the \$50 bill for the



Figure 39. Stipple engraving by Edward Savage, *Liberty as the Goddess of Youth*, 1796, 62.9×38.1 cm. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C.

Miners Bank of Dubuque, Wisconsin, of 1837–1838, and the \$100 bill of the Chattahoochee Railroad & Banking Company of Georgia, ca. 1838–1840.²¹

In Hatch's vignette, Hebe, the goddess of youth and beauty and cupbearer to the gods, offers nectar to the American eagle, one sip of which confers immortality, thereby bestowing eternal life on the new nation. The eagle grasps its protective national shield in one talon and in the other an olive branch, combined with arrows symbolizing peace and war. Behind the two protagonists, stars, representing the individual states, dot the firmament.²² The casting of Hebe and the eagle in patriotic terms had begun much earlier in 1796 with Edward Savage's print *Liberty, in the Form of the Goddess of Youth, Giving Support to the Bald Eagle* (Figure 39). Savage's conception is based on English full-length allegorical portraits by artists such as Sir Joshua Reynolds, George Romney, William Hamilton, and John Hoppner, paintings that flatter their aristocratic sitters by associating them with the goddess of youth. Savage, however, converts society portraiture into a political statement, where the eagle represents America and where Hebe, shown trampling on emblems of British royalty, represents American Liberty. Hatch's politicized interpretation follows Savage's lead, but

his compacted composition with its close familiarity between Hebe and the large eagle provides a more satisfying arrangement.²³

An earlier vignette attributed to Asher B. Durand, who was Hatch's teacher,²⁴ is the first to introduce the subject of Hebe and the eagle into bank-note engraving. In this rendering (Figure 40),²⁵ Hebe is seated on a rough stone atop the globe itself, the curve of which can be seen at the left. As in Savage's depiction, this bare-breasted goddess in classical profile also represents American Liberty, as she holds a staff supporting a liberty cap. Durand's choice of subject was to become a popular conceit. Indeed, at least nine other designs in addition to Hatch's depict this same subject.²⁶ Of all these depictions of Hebe, however, Hatch's is the only one to dispense entirely with drapery. By depicting Hebe nude, he creates a timeless image of America fit for the ages.

Rawdon's and Hatch's use of cultured narratives conveyed by the classical nude of academic art was intended to demonstrate the firm's sophistication, and their use of complex and elaborate details demonstrated as well the high quality of the firm's technical expertise. It is only in the last few years, however, that the world

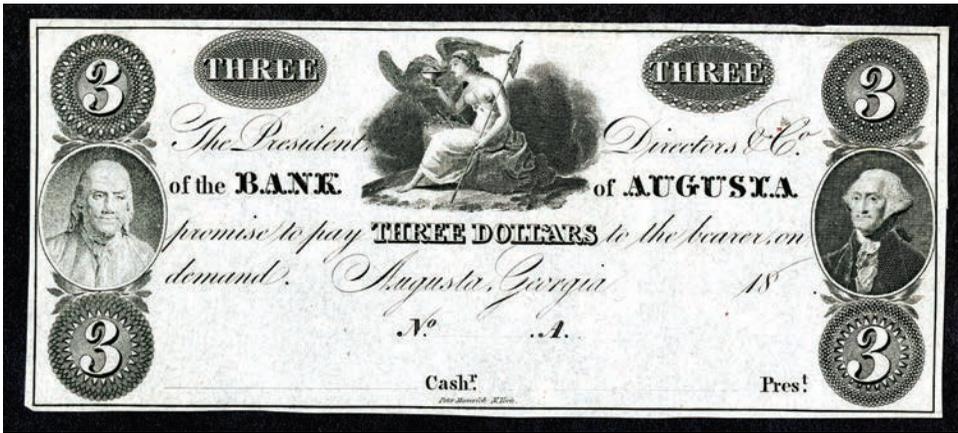


Figure 40. \$3 Note, Bank of Augusta, Augusta, Ga., mid-1820s, 6.9 × 16.6 cm (remainder). National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

of numismatics has recognized that the basis of Rawdon's image is not original to the artist. Like many nineteenth-century bank-note engravers, he borrowed it from elsewhere—in this case, from the eighteenth-century Irish artist James Barry (1741–1806).²⁷ In the process, however, Rawdon creatively transformed a European model into a uniquely American iconography.

In 1772, Barry exhibited at the Royal Academy in London his canvas *Venus Rising from the Sea* (National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin, on loan from the Municipal Gallery of Modern Art, Dublin), which is illustrated here by Valentine Green's mezzotint after it (Figure 41). Barry was attempting to re-create his version of a famous painting from antiquity by the celebrated Greek artist Apelles, a work that was known only from the accounts written by classical authors. Apelles's composition, referred to as the *Venus Anadyomene*, showed the goddess wringing out her luxuriant, wet hair as she emerged from the ocean, having just been born from the seed of a castrated Uranus which had fallen into the sea's foam. Large aquatic creatures accompany the goddess, and plants spring up where her foot first touches the shore. To the left in the V-shaped clouds, a pair of doves bill and coo in celebration of love and fertility, while on the opposite side sits a mischievous Cupid, who



Figure 41. Valentine Green after James Barry, *Venus Rising from the Sea*, 1772, mezzotint, 61.1 × 39 cm. Ackland Art Museum, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The William A. Whitaker Foundation Art Fund (80.62.1).

has just released an arrow that has found its mark in the heart of whomever views the captivating goddess.

The artist intended his work as an idealized rendering of beauty that, lifting the viewer into the heroic realm of platonic forms, would offer a high-minded depiction of the exalted female form. Yet there was always an uneasy relationship between what, on one hand, is the depiction of an idealized nude and, on the other hand, can be experienced more simply as the depiction of a naked woman. It did not help that the genesis of Apelles's original painting was said to have been the immodest actions of a celebrated courtesan: "Phryne went to bathe at the Eleusinian games [held near Athens], exposed to the eyes of all Greece, and rising from the water became the model of Venus Anadyomene."²⁸ The name Venus itself was often applied to prostitutes, the line separating sacred love from profane love being all too thin.²⁹ In a letter dated 28 May 1772, the painter Thomas Gainsborough wittily compared a prostitute he had encountered on the streets of London to Barry's picture, which was then on display at the Royal Academy. Gainsborough cheekily lamented that on his visit to London from Bath he had almost no time for pleasure "except only a little Venus rising from the Sea in my way to my Lodgings, the same that is puff'd off at our Exhibition I believe for her hair was d—md red."³⁰ For him, comparing Barry's academic nude to a red-haired prostitute was fair game. Although the Irish artist had intended only an image of heroic beauty befitting a goddess, some viewers, then and now, were inclined to experience a more carnal reaction, demonstrating that, even within the walls of high art, female nudity could be problematic.

If nudity in paintings could provoke comment in London, a sophisticated European capital, then it was an even more fraught problem in America, where Barry's image arrived primarily through the agency of two prints. The first was the impressive mezzotint by Valentine Green, dated 16 November 1772 (see Figure 41); the second was a smaller, less-ambitious stipple engraving by G. S. and I. G. Facius, dated 1 July 1778, which adapted the rectangular image to an oval format. Presumably, it was Green's image that helped inspire an important early American painting, Raphaele Peale's *Venus Rising from the Sea—A Deception*, ca. 1822 (Figure 42). This Philadelphia artist painted a linen cloth as if it was draped over a canvas on which was painted Barry's *Venus*, with only a foot and flowers glimpsed below and the raised arm with the flowing locks of hair above. Peale's conception is exceedingly complex with a range of both private and public meanings—speculation ranges from "a dream image, a joke, a scathing social critique, a psychological puzzle, and even a painted suicide note."³¹ The level that most concerns us is his biting humor alluding to America's uneasiness with the display of the nude, even in terms of high art.³² Peale, who pointedly placed his signature on the cloth, is forced to cover his recreation of Barry's *Venus*. But the "modest" covering makes the goddess even more salacious, as the viewer's imagination is called on to fill in the blanks. After Peale's early death in 1825, the painting remained in his family's hands in Philadelphia. Rawdon may well have seen or known of Peale's work. Like Peale, he saw Barry's design as a point of departure for his own ideas and purposes, with both men displaying a daring originality in their interpretations.

Despite Peale's witty reluctance to show Venus whole, Rawdon boldly and literally placed Barry's nude in circulation.³³ In contrast to Peale, his primary audience

was neither his family nor the art-loving public but those White males who were engaged in the new nation's commercial activities. Uninterested in creating a precise copy, he took ample liberties in transferring the design. In the lower right in the distance behind the tail of the seahorse, Rawdon sketched Neptune being pulled along while standing in his shell chariot. Behind and to the right of Neptune is the mast of a ship. Thus, the meaning of this Venus becomes clear—she is a captivating example of navigation and commerce on the high seas. To drive home his point, Rawdon transformed the figure of Cupid, giving him attributes belonging to Mercury. Instead of a bow in his left hand, Mercury holds his caduceus, while in his right hand, he daringly holds a bag of money; in addition, Cupid's wings have been converted into swirling drapery.

In majesty and splendor, Venus rules the waves on which seafaring commerce plies its trade. An alternative title for *Venus Rising from the Sea* and *Venus Anadyomene* is the *Birth of Venus*, since, as we have seen, she sprang up from the waves fully formed. Thus, Rawdon's image is not about all seafaring countries but only its newest member, the fledgling republic, which is taking its place among the maritime nations. The firm's New Orleans branch, under the enterprising supervision of Tracy R. Edson, employed the design for yet another, even younger nation, placing it on the \$50 bill for the Republic of Texas (Figure 43). Here, the vignette complements another image of commerce on the high seas, the first a mythological allegory and the other a depiction of ships, each mode of representation reinforcing the subject matter of the other.³⁴

In another change, Rawdon replaced the doves at the upper left with a woman driving a chariot with a star above her head. This allegorical figure represents the



Figure 42. Raphaele Peale, *Venus Rising from the Sea—A Deception*, ca. 1822, oil on canvas, 74×61.3 cm. The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri. Purchase: William Rockhill Nelson Trust, 34–147. Photo: Jamison Miller.

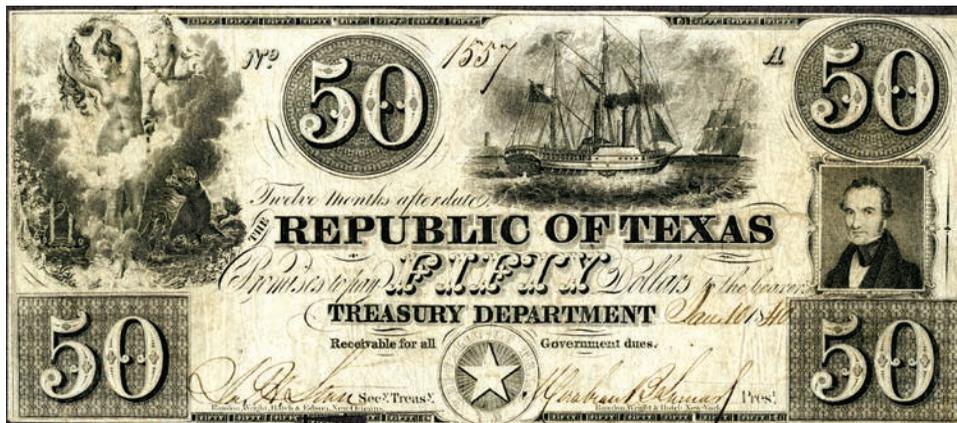


Figure 43. \$50 Note of the Republic of Texas, 10 January 1840, 7.6×18.1 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C. (Written dates on these bills can range from 1839 to 1841.)

Morning Star, another name for the planet Venus when it appears just before sunrise heralding the coming of the dawn. With this detail, the engraver again makes explicit that this is the dawning of a new era, and as such, it is meant to glorify the commercial beginnings of the newly created United States (or later, as we have just seen, being employed to fit Texas’s circumstances). In its own way, Rawdon’s vignette, albeit more subtly and with a more universal application, is as patriotic as Hatch’s, but while Hatch’s allegory can be more easily comprehended, Rawdon demands that his viewer take the time to “read” and contemplate his meaning. By signing his name, he boldly claims the image as his own—an image that, in a creative and fascinating dialogue with the original, transforms its meaning.

Although Rawdon’s image, in which beauty is placed in the service of economic growth, heralds the dawning of a new, exalted age born from the benefits of maritime trade, his adaptation brought with it a new set of problems. By placing his goddess squarely within the commercial realm, he allows her to conform more closely to American values. But by introducing this more profane purpose, he jeopardizes Venus’s status as an allegory of sacred love. His image comes perilously close to suggesting that love is for sale.

Rawdon mischievously hints that because it is filthy lucre that makes financial transactions possible, there is a sordid side to the business of business. Paper money itself is inherently suspect. While contributing to the growth of wealth, at the same time it devalues everything by putting a price on it. The bank note on which the image is printed performs both functions—it is a work that embodies ennobling ideals, while it is also a medium of exchange in a world of greedy acquisition. The vignette expresses the grandeur of the concept of a burgeoning commercial empire along with its less-than-ennobling underpinnings. In this design, Venus as a goddess and Venus as a prostitute are increasingly more difficult to distinguish. The figure is both a goddess and a strumpet, appealing simultaneously to one’s exalted principles and baser instincts.

Rawdon’s adaptation of Barry’s design was thoughtful and diabolically clever. His Venus can inspire both love and lust. Those who handled his notes would

certainly have responded to both Venuses, the goddess and the strumpet. In this way, he has required his Venus to negotiate some slippery footing. Presumably, he relished the precarious nature of her situation, one that mirrored his own, with one foot planted in the realm of high art and the other in low art.

Providence: Adapting an Allegory from London's Guildhall

Another example of Rawdon, Wright & Hatch adapting a late-eighteenth-century English engraving after a contemporary painting can be found in the central vignette of the \$10 note for the Illinois and Michigan Canal Fund in Lockport, Michigan, as represented by the State Bank of Illinois (Figure 44).³⁵ In this design, an allegorical female, seated in clouds, overlooks the world, the curvature of the earth visible below her. She is clearly a beneficent figure, presiding over angels who are spilling out fruits from a cornucopia on the earth beneath. The angel on the left points to the celestial bodies of the nourishing sun with his left hand and the crescent moon with his right hand, representatives of day and night, and the angel at the right squeezes out of a cloud a downpour of life-giving rain. But who exactly is this allegorical female, and how would the public—those who were to receive and exchange these bills—interpret her meaning beyond a generalized sense of bountiful well-being? Such details as the keys dangling from the steering oar supporting her right hand are more puzzling than enlightening. Once again, recognizing the vignette's source—a 1799 print after John Francis Rigaud's 1794 fresco in London's Guildhall (Figure 45)—clarifies the design's intent, thereby offering insights into the engraving firm's reasons for choosing it.³⁶

In 1794, Rigaud (1742–1810) was given the greatest opportunity of his career. John Boydell (1719–1804), a renowned print publisher and a City of London alderman and at one time its Lord Mayor (1790–91), commissioned Rigaud to execute four frescoes for the pendentives beneath the cupola of the Common-Council Chamber at Guildhall, the ceremonial and administrative center of the City of London and its corporation. The subject matter of the frescoes consisted of four allegorical women



Figure 44. \$10 Note, State Bank of Illinois for the Illinois & Michigan Canal Fund, Lockport, Mich., ca. 1838–early 1840s, 32.3 × 18.7 cm (from sheet of \$10, \$10, \$20, \$50). Collection of William L. Pressly.



Figure 45. Stipple engraving by Benjamin Smith after J. F. Rigaud, *Providence*, 29 September 1799, 53.3 × 41 cm. Image courtesy of William L. Pressly.

is expressive of Omniscience, watchful care and foresight.”³⁸ Providence’s crown is entwined with stalks of wheat and grapes, which are intended to evoke the consecrated bread and wine of the Eucharist. The two keys are like those that Christ entrusted to Peter, “the keys of the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 16:19), that help control human destiny, binding and loosening the things of heaven and earth with God and his followers exerting power over human affairs. In addition, the eye on Providence’s breast radiating beams of light is a common symbol for an all-knowing God, a feature that we have already encountered in the Continental note reproduced as Figure 6.

The bank-note firm used this vignette to set an important tone for the fund’s enterprise, modifying it for its most common bill (on the sheet of four notes, two \$10 bills would be produced for every one of the other two denominations).

representing Providence, Innocence, Wisdom, and Happiness, all surrounded by various attributes. Because the frescoes never dried properly, Rigaud’s attempt eventually ended in failure, with the works being removed in 1814. For the public, however, the images lived on in the form of the prints after them.

In 1794, anxious that the message of the frescoes was not lost on its audience, Boydell solicited from Rigaud an explanatory text.³⁷ A portion of the description of Providence reads, “She is seated on the clouds, to shew that she presides over all the affairs of the world, and crowned with ears of corn (in England, corn can mean wheat) and grapes, to denote that all the good things we enjoy proceed from her. The keys and helm of a ship shew her secret power, and the safety we enjoy under her guidance and government. The eye on her breast, surrounded with rays of light,

The Illinois & Michigan Canal was, indeed, a monumental undertaking that would help transform the Midwest. The Erie Canal, which ran from Buffalo on Lake Erie to Albany on the Hudson River, had opened in 1825, giving the Great Lakes region easier access to New York City. The Illinois & Michigan Canal was destined to do the same for a southern route, connecting Chicago to New Orleans and the Gulf of Mexico. Construction on the ninety-six-mile canal began in 1836 and was completed in 1848. The waterway linked Lake Michigan with the Illinois River, which, flowing into the Mississippi River, gave access to a vast territory. The canal proved invaluable as a vital commercial artery that stimulated the region's agricultural and industrial growth.

In adapting Rigaud's design for the vignette on the \$10 bill, the engraver compressed the image at top and bottom to make it more suitable for the format of an oval vignette on a horizontal axis, at the same time suggesting the overarching firmament. The designs on the other two notes on the sheet, the \$20 and \$50 bills, by featuring bustling waterways, trains, highways, industry, and farming, focus even more on the active shaping and use of the land. In this regard, the Illinois & Michigan Canal is itself not a scar on the land but a beneficent waterway, an example of advanced engineering in keeping with humankind's stewardship of the world with which it has been blessed.³⁹ In this context, *Providence* offers an emblem of America's promise, encouraging its citizens to participate in the cultivation of the young nation by turning its frontiers into a fruitful and commercially productive new Garden of Eden presided over by a caring and beneficent Providence.

Within the vignette *Providence*, the engraver made two subtle but telling changes. One was to delete the Eye of God placed in the center of Providence's breast. One explanation for this omission might be that, at this point in nineteenth-century America, this common symbol had become too closely identified with Freemasonry. Early in the life of the republic, the Freemasons had enjoyed great popularity, George Washington having been one of its most illustrious members. The Eye of God (or Providence), along with other Masonic symbols, had even been incorporated into the Great Seal of the United States, adopted in 1782. But the Morgan affair of 1826 had put American Freemasonry on the defensive. In that year in Batavia, New York, after threatening to publish an exposé of Freemasonry's secret rituals, William Morgan was kidnapped, never to be seen again. Because he was presumed to have been murdered by a group of outraged Masons, the engraver may not have wanted to associate the vignette with any details that might be linked to this secretive organization that had been connected, unfairly or not, to such a heinous crime.

The engraver made an even more significant change to the crescent moon, which is waning in Rigaud's design and waxing in the vignette. In the vignette (Figure 44), the moon's orientation in relationship to the sun is an astronomical impossibility, as the sun on the left-hand side should be illuminating the moon's left side. This anomaly would seem to be a deliberate choice rather than the result of inattention. An image that in Europe had been preparatory to a valediction and the end of all things mortal is modified in America to become a hymn of praise to a new, vibrant civilization. This new beginning may itself be connected to the end times, but in this context, America enjoys a special place within this

brave new world. As stated by the social critic Robert Bellah, Americans had their own interpretations of biblical prophecy: “The pristine newness of the ‘new world’ seemed to be heavy with an even more radical newness: the coming of the millennium, the fullness of times, when God would create a new heaven and a new earth beginning right here with North America.”⁴⁰ American engravers subtly, as in the case of this image, and not so subtly, as in the case of Rawdon’s adaptation of Barry’s design, adapted European academic imagery to express their nation’s own needs and aspirations.

Converting an Old Master’s Detail into an Image of America’s Youthful Commerce

The vignette appearing on the \$1 note of the Bedford Commercial Bank, New Bedford, Massachusetts, produced by the firm of Draper, Toppan & Co. in the early 1840s, depicts a young nude Mercury straddling an affectionate dog (Figure 46).⁴¹ The engraver identified the child as Mercury simply by positioning small wings in his hair, a reference to the god’s traditional winged hat. In addition, the child’s nudity is appropriate to the depiction of a classical god. To the left is a strongbox with a sack of money and coins beside it, and on the right in the distance is a sailing ship, a commercial lifeline to far-flung markets. Yet these elements do not interfere with the dominating presence of the child and dog.

The engraver borrowed his central motif from a detail in a print after the fresco *The Donation of Constantine* (Figure 47), one of Raphael’s celebrated works in the Vatican *Stanze*. Unfortunately, Raphael died before beginning to paint the frescoes in the room devoted to Emperor Constantine, but his assistants, Giulio Romano and Gianfrancesco Penni, were able to execute his preparatory compositions, albeit with some changes of their own. The bank-note vignette quotes the boy and dog prominently positioned to the left of center in the immediate foreground.

The eighteenth-century English artist, collector, and writer Jonathan Richardson wrote a well-known and influential book with his son, Jonathan Richardson, Jr., which provides a lengthy critique of Raphael’s achievement. The subject of the fresco shows the moment when the pope obtains temporal supremacy, in addition to spiritual supremacy, over Western Christendom. The setting is the vast, impressive

interior of the original St. Peter’s Basilica, where, in the left-middle ground, Emperor Constantine kneels before Pope Sylvester I to offer him a golden statue signifying the pope’s sovereignty over Rome. The foreground figures threaten to upstage the main event, and the Richardsons criticized their distracting presence: “The rest of the Figures are chiefly People of no



Figure 46. \$1 Note, Bedford Commercial Bank, Bedford, Mass., 1847. Image courtesy of Heritage Auctions.



Figure 47. Fresco, School of Raphael, *The Donation of Constantine*, 1520–1524. Stanza di Constantino (Vatican Palace), Rome. Scala/Art Resource, New York.

Distinction, Men, Women, and Children, a Lame Beggar, a Boy astride on a Dog, &c.”⁴² Writing in the first person, they continued, “I can’t see why those who had the Conduct of this Story should represent this great Transaction as done with so little Dignity, in the Presence of few other than Mob, and not without something Ludicrous, or Trifling.”⁴³ The motif of the boy astride the dog, which provides a link between the left-hand and right-hand groups, is the worst offender—seen in isolation, it stands out in this multi-figure composition.

Why would the bank-note engraver choose the “ludicrous” and “trifling” detail of the boy and dog as his subject? In turning the boy into Mercury, the engraver left the original subject far behind, and the meaning underlying the dog is also compounded. Dogs appear frequently in bank notes as faithful guardians of strongboxes filled with specie, which is the role the dog plays here. Thus, the vignette proclaims that the bank contributes to the nation’s growing economy by not only facilitating commerce but also by guaranteeing the security of the wealth it generates.

The engraver presumably relished transforming an incidental detail thought to have been conceived by Raphael into an image of a youthful nation’s first steps toward becoming a commercial power. He translates the papal power commemorated in the fresco into an American myth of burgeoning commercial greatness, the original sacred context having been converted into a profane one. In choosing

this well-conceived motif, he also offered a stinging rebuke of the Richardsons' condemnation, reflecting a common attitude on the part of artists toward critics, who, in their minds, are blind to art's full potential.



Money has always been about communication, and the size and complexity of bank notes gave their creators and the bankers who issued them an opportunity to address a broad audience as the notes passed from hand to hand in countless anonymous transactions. But the public's reception of bank-note imagery was not always uniform. Freeman Rawdon intended his *Venus* to attract notice, but as far as its being too provocative, he (and the banks) had plausible deniability in having used a respectable European source. Regardless, many contemporaries were surely shocked and titillated by this and similar subjects. As for modern critics, they too have difficulty with subjects they deem indecent, referring to "the mischievous cherubs or half-clothed women in classical garb that served as cheap, discrete sources of pornography."⁴⁴ In his article "Female Beauty as Depicted on U.S. Obsolete Notes," Clifford F. Thies introduces the proposition that imagery he defines as being risqué, such as Rawdon's vignette adapted from Barry's painting, could have had a greater appeal for fraudulent and failing banks than for conservatively managed ones. From this perspective, he sees an inclination on the part of a banker to use images of female nudity and "sexual intrigue" (i.e., erotic classical myths) in opposition to "the sexual mores of the times" as possibly an indicator of lax morals in terms of banking practices.⁴⁵ Whether such figures are perceived as nude or naked is crucial in determining the banker's or the viewer's response. The banks that chose this type of subject matter would have claimed that they were motivated by a desire to identify themselves with the edifying cultural sophistication of academic art, even if they were not unhappy with such imagery's attention-grabbing appeal. In terms of the noteholders, some would have seen the vignettes as sublime expressions of high art, rooted in the classical tradition, whereas others as salacious, transgressive departures from polite society.⁴⁶

Fighting the Stigma of the Low Art of Filthy Lucre

Ultimately, the binary of high and low art is an artificial one, and in practice these two perspectives are intimately intertwined. Bank notes have a foot in both camps, that of the fine arts and that of visual culture, with each contributing to the unusual place it occupies. Unquestionably, however, the bank-note engraving firms and their artists and engravers aspired to be identified with the status of high art. In pursuing this goal, bank-note engravers had to battle against prejudices both from within their profession and from without.

The academic canon assigned a low status to engravers and engraving. In Europe, academic painters viewed themselves as creative men of learning who were practitioners of the liberal arts, whereas they looked down on engravers as artisans whose "mechanical" abilities were largely confined to reproducing the work of others. (Commercial printing, of course, was far removed in intention and reception from the creation of original prints by the likes of Dürer and Rembrandt.) The Royal Academy of Arts in London on its founding in 1768 pointedly excluded engravers from membership, a testimony in part to their own insecuri-

ties about status in a nation where authors overshadowed painters. In a younger and rawer America, where academic formalities were not as pervasive, there was a more fluid relationship between the disciplines. For example, after Asher B. Durand had made an important contribution to early bank-note design and engraving, no one disparaged him for this once he moved on to become one of the republic's most successful painters. A century earlier in England, before the establishment of the Royal Academy, William Hogarth had embarked on a similar trajectory.

In their desire to be perceived as on a par with artists, American engravers could console themselves with the knowledge that they had better opportunities for training than did their fellow painters. Prints of high quality were more easily imported than the expensive old masters they reproduced. As a young man, Durand is said to have spent his evenings drawing from prints and studying the technique of engravings by Francesco Bartolozzi (1725–1815), Raphael Morghen (1758–1833), and William Sharp (1749–1824), Italian and English engravers who were held in high esteem.⁴⁷ Painters, on the other hand, could not turn to pictures by Sir Joshua Reynolds, J. M. W. Turner, or Jacques Louis David. Thus, American engravers had at their fingertips what were Europe's finest examples, whereas painters needed to travel across the Atlantic to profit from Western civilization's best work. As a result, commercial engravers could more readily achieve a higher standard of technical proficiency than their counterparts working in oils, but the question of artistic status remains. Should these "artisans" even be engaged in creating high-art subject matter?

Although the nineteenth-century public was more knowledgeable than most viewers today, there could still be problems concerning a vignette's identification. Given Asher B. Durand's immersion in classical subjects, his vignette of a man wrestling with a lion (see Figure 25) most likely shows Hercules and the Nemean lion, but just as surely there must have been many in his audience, who, more knowledgeable about the Bible than the classical account of the twelve labors of Hercules, saw this as depicting Samson and the lion.⁴⁸ From the point of view of the public, either interpretation is correct, the vignette's identification depending on the mindset of the beholder. Other vignettes might have proved too complex to fully comprehend. For example, a detailed interpretation of Providence as seen in Figure 44 presumably eluded many holders of this note.

Some went so far as to argue that grand-manner subjects were ill-suited and inappropriate for an American audience.⁴⁹ In his use of Hebe as representing American Liberty, George Hatch was following well-established precedent (see Figure 40), but not all Americans were pleased with this type of mixing of classical imagery with contemporary subject matter. On visiting Cincinnati in 1828, Fanny Trollope reports an exchange related to her about how the subject of Hebe offering nectar to Jupiter's eagle was, in one man's opinion, inappropriate when applied to an American subject: "I was also told of a gentleman of High Cincinnati, TON [i.e., belonging to the fashionable elite] and critical of his taste for the fine arts, who, having a drawing put into his hands, representing Hebe and the bird, umquhile [i.e., formerly] sacred to Jupiter, demanded in a satirical tone, 'What is this?' 'Hebe,' replied the alarmed collector. 'Hebe,' sneered the man of taste, 'What the devil has Hebe to do with the American eagle?'"⁵⁰ The erudite characterization of the young republic in terms drawn from classical mythology

only irritated this self-proclaimed “man of taste,” but regardless, such learned references appear frequently in mainstream American art and in bank notes.

Even Asher B. Durand’s son John, when writing in 1894 about these kinds of high-minded vignettes, seems unsure at times as to their meaning and purpose. He correctly places Archimedes, whose vignette appears at the right of the first row beneath the title of the specimen sheet reproduced as Figure 25, within the context of an American landscape that pays homage to the nation’s engineering skills: “Archimedes on a cloud lifting the world with a lever, its fulcrum being a supposed American mountain peak, with a canal lock at its base.”⁵¹ But the vignette reproducing the famous Hellenistic sculpture *Laocoön*, which in the sheet is to the lower left of Benjamin Franklin in the storm, poses a greater challenge. John unsympathetically refers to this image as “the Laocoön [*sic*], of doubtful business meaning.”⁵² Yet this vignette, which illustrates a dramatic scene in Homer’s *Iliad*, allows banks to associate themselves with the high-minded ideals of a shared, common heritage in keeping with the Founding Fathers’ vision of the virtues to be derived from the Greco-Roman past.

Some modern critics have argued that paper currency’s ignoble purpose as filthy lucre makes it an inappropriate vehicle for the elevated subject matter of high art. Richard Doty points out that there is “a disjuncture between the high-mindedness of the scene [depicted in a vignette] and the inherent nature of the note upon which it appears—which, after all, is *money*, pure and simple.”⁵³ As one example of an ill-suited design, he cites the central vignette on the \$3 bill of the Bank of Washtenaw, Ann Arbor, Michigan (Figure 48), the work of Draper, Toppin, Longacre & Co., which he dismisses as containing, “horses, levitating deities, and a cherub thrown in for good measure.”⁵⁴ The scene’s subject is Apollo, the sun god, beginning his daily ride through the heavens with a cherub holding a torch, symbolizing the dawn, lighting the way. Yet this image, drawn from the European grand-manner tradition, cannot be so easily dismissed. The vignette celebrates the sun’s life-giving rays, which nurture Michigan’s crops, examples of



Figure 48. \$3 Note, Bank of Washtenaw, Ann Arbor, Mich., 9 March 1836, 7 × 17.4 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

which are held by the accompanying women who represent the Four Seasons—in the foreground, from left to right, are Spring, Summer, and Fall with a dormant Winter relegated to the background. This vignette, an ennobling rendering of rejuvenation and abundance, is not ill-suited for the bank's purposes.

The subject of Apollo in his chariot also depicts the advancement of the light of civilization, as the god rolls back the darkness before him. The most celebrated prototype was Guido Reni's *Aurora*, a ceiling fresco executed in 1614 for the Casino on the grounds of the Palazzo Pallavicini-Rospigliosi in Rome. But in America, this academic conceit had a meaning beyond that of a European sensibility. In an address to the Cambridge Phi Beta Kappa Society, published in 1815, William Tudor, Jr., said that the disappearance of Indigenous Americans before the onslaught of Western civilization reminded him of the "sublime allegorical painting of Guido, in which Apollo encircled by the hours, is chasing night and her shadows over the surface of the globe," an allusion for him to "the extinction of our savage precursors before the dawn of science and cultivation."⁵⁵ This was far from an isolated attitude. Horatio Greenough's monumental, classicizing sculpture of George Washington, first placed in the Capitol Rotunda in 1841 (now in the National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.), employs the same theme.⁵⁶ Given this mindset, an image of Apollo in his chariot for a bank on America's Western frontier is eminently appropriate.

Seeing a note as a whole also calls into question the choice of grand-manner subjects. By placing vignettes in different positions and choosing different combinations, security-engraving firms could use their stock of images repeatedly without any one bank note duplicating another. But the incongruity of some of the resulting combinations in which heroic grand-manner subjects were seen alongside the commonplace was not lost on contemporaries. On 27 October 1837, Timothy Tredwell, the president of the Bank of Ypsilanti, Ypsilanti, Michigan, wrote to his friend, John Horton, Jr., cashier of the Michigan State Bank, a comically exaggerated recommendation for a new note: "Get a real furioso plate—one that will TAKE with all creation—flaming with cupids, locomotives, rural scenery, and Hercules kicking the world over!"⁵⁷ Both banks were on shaky ground, closing in 1839 soon after the Panic of 1837 (the Michigan State Bank was revived in 1845), but Tredwell's humor captures the exuberant, unbridled spirit of hucksterism that animated so much of banking practices. A note's overall "TAKE" is often purposefully extravagant and eye-catching, and Tredwell did not have to stretch the truth all that far when making his mock proposal. Yet, despite the jarring nature of some of the pairings, variety gives a stimulating appeal and energy to the face of bills in which the sum is greater than the parts.



Bank-note firms had reason to be defensive about where they ranked within the academic hierarchy. Despite, or because of, its business roots, the firm Burton & Gurley used its specimen sheet to declare its identification with art and artists (Figure 49). The vignettes include a wide variety of high-minded classical allegories and subjects, along with more contemporary scenes, such as a cowboy corralling a steer, a Native American on horseback, cattle, and a standing horse in profile. Yet the vignette that crowns the whole is a personification of Art, who is a beautiful woman leaning on a pedestal, beside which is an easel with a framed canvas.



Figure 49. Specimen sheet, Burton & Gurley, New York, 1840s, 35.5×26.7 cm. Image courtesy of Heritage Auctions.

ing produced by a geometric lathe are the allegorical figures of Liberty on the left and a seated Justice on the right. On top of the globe peeking above the shield is the American eagle. At the two ends, portraits of DeWitt Clinton, who died in 1828 while serving as governor of New York, and George Washington, the victorious general and first president of the United States, add a dignified gravitas with its cultural patina of respectability and reliability. But of greater interest for our purposes is the screaming eagle at bottom center, which represents the firm's aspirations rather than those of the bank. This eagle, stretching upward, clutches a ribbon banner inscribed "RAWDON, CLARK & Co. ALBy," which crosses over a palette with brushes. Behind the eagle and palette is a radiant sunburst. At the dawn of a new era, the American eagle proclaims the glory of this printing firm, but its owners, Rawdon and Clark, choose to conceive of themselves as belonging to the realm of art spelled with a capital "A."

The Rawdon/Clark vignette demonstrates that bank-note engravers identified with the image of Art as symbolized by painting.⁵⁹ Yet, in this regard, they are not identifying themselves as engravers who aspire to be painters but rather as

Beneath the easel are portfolios containing prints and drawings, a palette, brushes, and a maulstick. On Art's other side are sculptures and a classical temple representing architecture. Burton & Gurley wraps itself in patriotic glory by centering a portrait of Washington within its company's name, but by placing the vignette of Art at the sheet's apex, it also associates itself with academic art's highest principles.

An unissued \$5 note for the Bank of Bennington, Bennington, Vermont (Figure 50), produced ca. 1828 in Albany, New York, by the firm of Ralph Rawdon⁵⁸ and Asahel Clark, says a great deal about questions of identity for bank-note engravers. This unissued \$5 note features an elaborate vignette in its upper center. Flanking the "V" shield with its intricate pattern-

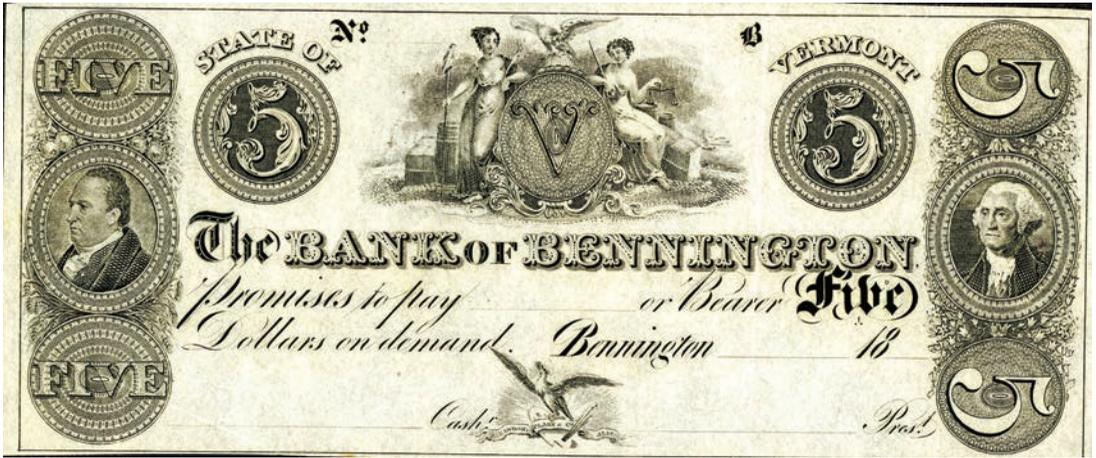


Figure 50. \$5 Note, Bank of Bennington, Bennington, Vt., ca. late 1820s, 7.1 × 17.1 cm (remainder). National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

engravers who feel their profession deserves the same respect and status awarded to painters. There was merit in their assertion that their refined and elaborate vignettes should be considered as works of art, which, like paintings, participate on an elevated level in the nation's civil discourse. This bold claim may not have even occurred to the holders of such notes, but the bank-note engravers had a point—their notes do provide a “canvas” for a fledgling nation. Certainly, the inconvenient realities of how their work was perceived by both their clients—the bankers who commissioned the notes and the public who trafficked in them—did not deter engravers from seeking a more exalted status by creating original works meant vigorously to participate in shaping the nation's self-perceptions. Although one purpose of paper money is to provide a medium of exchange, its deeper meanings, conveyed through imagery and design, speak to a larger purpose.

Constructing America's Image

The Flattering Portrait of a New Nation

Assisting in the Creation and Dissemination of an American Iconography

In chapter 3, a great deal of attention is paid to the subject matter of high art because this category is so little understood by modern viewers. As we saw, during the first decades of bank-note production, the use of classical mythology and allegories gave a gravitas to the bank notes they adorned, firmly rooting American aspirations in the virtues of the Greco-Roman past. Although nationalistic depictions of American landscapes, genre scenes, and history had formed part of the canon of bank-note iconography from the beginning, grand-manner classical imagery held a higher status. In privileging such imagery, bank-note firms were continuing the Founding Fathers' efforts to craft a government and its people along the lines of Roman republican ideals. The mythological subjects adorning paper money were an expression of this desire to put the public good, through the promotion of classical values and principles, ahead of private interests. Soon, however, such subjects came to be seen as arcane and elitist. By the 1840s, elaborate vignettes dedicated to contemporary life supplanted them, even if allegorical figures promoting such concepts as Liberty, Justice, Commerce, and Agriculture continued to proliferate throughout the bank-note era and beyond.

The shift in the privileging of classical subjects to contemporary scenes was, in part, a response to the rise of Jacksonian Democracy, which, beginning in 1828, opposed Eastern elites in favor of a larger segment of the population. Scenes commemorating the country's history, portraits of national heroes, and images of progress and industry as well as those featuring everyday life helped to foster patriotic pride. As with the earlier subject matter drawn from the classical past, these notes too were meant to please, to uplift, and to instill confidence and trust in the money and the banks issuing it. Their imagery helped create a national identity of a country of boundless energy, abundance, opportunity, and optimism. Almost invariably, this voluminous repertoire of images distanced itself from life's harsher realities, insistently depicting the United States through an idealizing lens.¹

Bank-note firms were not operating in a vacuum. Some of the mainstream painters who helped to spearhead this movement favoring more egalitarian and democratic scenes of everyday life were William Sidney Mount, Francis William Edmonds, George Caleb Bingham, and Richard Caton Woodville in what became known as the American Genre Movement. Although such artists influenced bank-note engravers, the subject matter of paper currency tended to favor matter-of-fact, descriptive portrayals of the "common man," leaving it to the painters to depict anecdotal and humorous situations stocked with amusing characters.

In the mid-1840s, after the economy began to recover from the Panic of 1837, there was an explosion in the number of banks operating throughout the country, and paper money became ubiquitous. Permeating America's every nook and cranny, its imagery provided the nation with its most comprehensive and widely distributed iconography. The security-printing firms were largely responsible for creating the stock of images from which their clients could choose. Because they operated out of the major population centers, particularly New York and Philadelphia, their artists and engravers were attuned to popular tastes, which they not only reflected but also helped to shape. Many were part of American art's mainstream. Some, like Asher B. Durand, Henry Inman, George Hatch, Moseley Danforth, James Smillie, Alfred Jones, Francis Edmonds, F. O. C. Darley, and Edwin White, were associate or full academicians of the National Academy of Design in New York, founded in 1825.

Thomas F. Morris points out that "good engravers were paid larger salaries [by the security-engraving firms] than they could earn from the publishers [who commissioned pictorial engravings for periodicals and books]."² Even so, this did not stop bank-note designers and engravers from participating fully in America's burgeoning, middle-class print culture by contributing regularly to illustrated periodicals and books. James Smillie, who was employed by Rawdon, Wright & Hatch (RW&H) as a bank-note engraver, attempted to expand his artistic horizons in 1841 by entering into a partnership titled Rawdon, Wright, Hatch & Smillie, in which he oversaw the creation of engraved images for books and magazines. This type of work allowed both for greater freedom in the choice of subjects and in the expansion of the plate's size, giving the engravers a greater opportunity to display their talents. One of the early fruits of this partnership is the book *Georgia Illustrated in a Series of Views Embracing Natural Scenery and Public Edifices* (1841), which contains engravings after sketches by T. Addison Richards. In this instance, RW&H, by joining with Smillie in a new venture, expanded its horizons to be the generating force, a leader and not just a follower, in the larger world of print publishing. Smillie himself went on to become renowned for his etchings after paintings by contemporary American artists, but he also continued to produce bank-note vignettes, the two worlds sharing a great deal in common in terms of projecting an American ethos.

An important landmark in the development of American art was the founding of the American Art-Union in 1839 in New York City. For over a decade, through its exhibitions and sales, the Art-Union supported contemporary art and artists focusing on American landscapes and manners, thereby promoting a populist program more suitable to middle-class tastes than were the principles of Greco-Roman classicism. It strove for public inclusiveness: by 1849 nearly three-quarter of a million people had visited its free gallery, and it had 18,960 subscribers for the prints it commissioned after paintings that it had purchased, resulting in the dissemination of these images throughout the country.³ Bank-note engravers were closely involved in this endeavor: for example, Alfred Jones engraved William Sidney Mount's *Farmers Nooning* in 1843; John Casilear engraved Daniel Huntington's *A Sybil* in 1847; James Smillie engraved Thomas Cole's *Voyage of Life: Youth* in 1849 and *Dream of Arcadia* in 1850; Alfred Jones engraved Francis William Edmonds's *Sparkling* in 1850; and Charles Burt engraved William Sidney Mount's *Bargaining for a Horse* in 1851.

In 1835, also in New York City, Nathaniel Currier founded what was to become a celebrated printmaking firm (it is better known by its name Currier & Ives, which it adopted in 1857 after James Ives was made a partner). This firm specialized in producing inexpensive lithographs, often hand-colored, featuring popular, romanticized images of American life. The subject matter of bank-note vignettes had led the way, and the content of the lithographs and America's paper money overlap extensively, both exuding pride and confidence in the burgeoning new nation and evoking a nostalgia for an earlier, supposedly simpler and more harmonious time.

Almost from the beginning, bank-note vignettes extolled America as a land of hardworking citizens, a country that values the dignity of work. Over time, the imagery featured a wide variety of occupations, such as blacksmiths, glassblowers, tanners, miners, carpenters, wheelwrights, woodcutters, coopers, the humble cobbler working alone or a host of shoemakers in a factory setting, masons, machinists, soldiers, sailors, intrepid whalers, hunters, trappers, and laborers in foundries, textile mills, and shipbuilding yards. The \$10 note of the Mechanics Bank, Memphis, Tennessee (Figure 51), with the written date 1 March 1855 and the imprint Danforth, Wright & Co., highlights America's industrial power. On the left, a single worker oversees the operation of large, complicated machinery, whereas on the right, six men labor, with intense concentration and heroic dignity, at a furnace producing iron.

Women are also featured in industrial settings, another reflection of the changing dynamics brought on by the Industrial Revolution. The central vignette of the \$2 note of the Sanford Bank, Maine (Figure 52), bearing the imprint of Toppan, Carpenter, Casilear & Co. (TCC) and the written date 17 July 1861, depicts two women at looms weaving cotton into cloth. The composition's strong diagonal is both dynamic and engaging, and the tight focus of this large vignette conveys more easily read information about the machinery and the task at hand. At the lower left is a separate vignette of a woman spinning cotton in preparation for the looms. In both compositions, the women wear similar attire: they are a

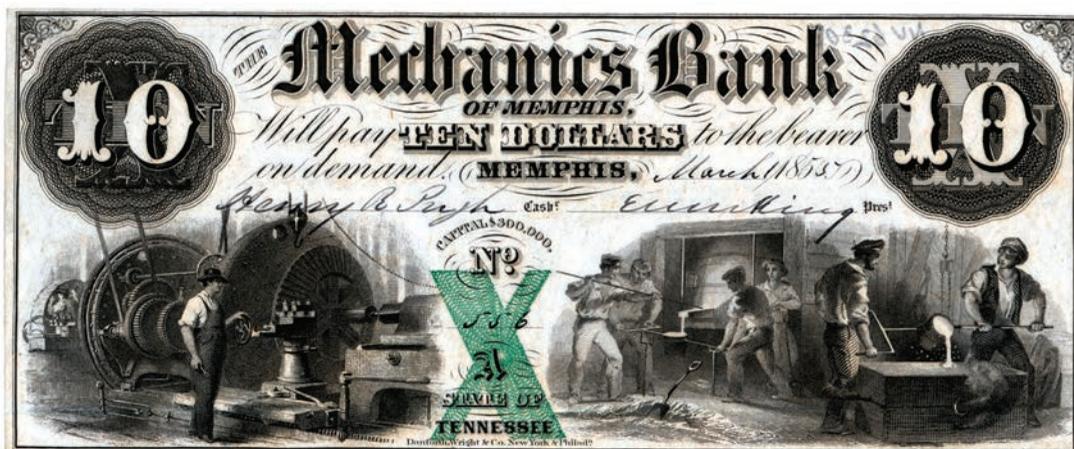


Figure 51. \$10 Note, Mechanics Bank, Memphis, Tenn., 1 March 1855, 7.4 × 18 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

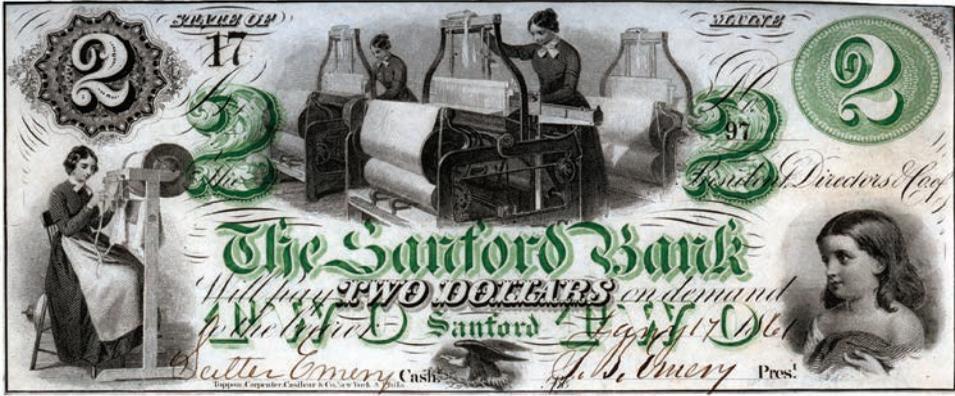


Figure 52. \$2 Note, Sanford Bank, Sanford, Maine, 17 January 1861, 7.1 × 17.5 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

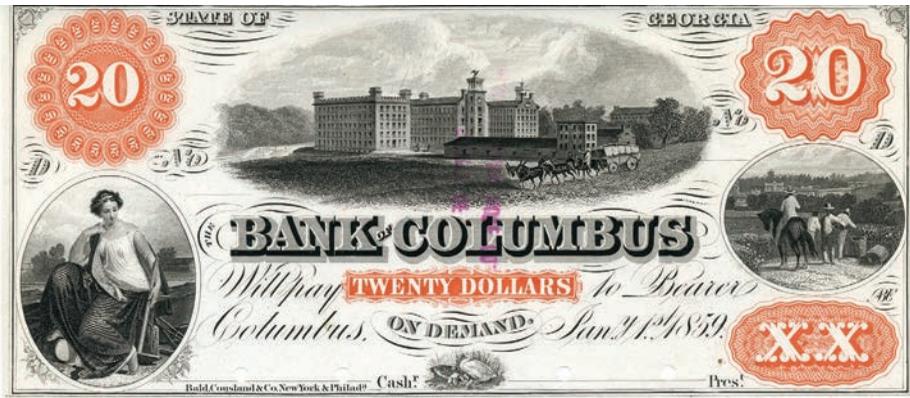


Figure 53. \$20 Note, Bank of Columbus, Columbus, Ga., 1 January 1859, 7.9 × 18 cm (punched-cancelled proof with bleed through of ABNC stamp on the back). Collection of William L. Pressly.

part of a well-regulated, all-female workforce. The sentimental image of the young girl at lower right was created independently of these images, but when introduced into this setting, she is shown admiring these mill workers as role models worthy of emulation.

The central vignette on the \$20 note of the Bank of Columbus, Columbus, Georgia (Figure 53), proudly records the large, palatial complex of the Eagle Mill situated in downtown Columbus on the east bank of the Chattahoochee River, the waters of which provide a power supply enabled by the dam seen stretching across the river. The note is the work of Bald, Cousland & Co., Philadelphia/Baldwin, Bald & Cousland, New York (BC/BB&C) and is dated 1 January 1859 (earlier versions, dated 1 September 1856, had already appeared, and in this instance the discrete monogram “ABC,” which stands for the American Banknote Co., has been added at the lower right, referencing a name that the firm also used for a short period). Heralding the textile mill’s name, the sculpture of an American eagle spreads its wings atop the

main tower (the mill was burned in April 1865 by federal troops as the Civil War was ending but was soon resurrected). An oval vignette on the right-hand side shows the task of picking cotton, and on the left is Navigation, the Chattahoochee River serving as an artery for transporting cotton textiles to the Gulf of Mex-

ico and beyond. The South can claim, along with the North, its own impressive industrial structures that are of national as well as local importance.

In depicting the profession of printing, of which it forms an important part, paper money also honors itself. The central vignette on the \$1 note of the Nassau Bank, New York City (Figure 54), captures a milestone in printing's heritage. In a well-equipped shop, three men prominent in the history of printing discuss the pages of a book. As identified in the underlying labels, on the left is Johann Faust (or Fust), who has financed this operation; on the right is Peter Schöffer, a high-ranking assistant who wears a printer's cap; and in the middle stands Johannes Gutenberg, the inventor of printing from movable type. The vignette presents Gutenberg as a commanding sage who solemnly peers into the future, the only one of the three to comprehend the historical significance of what is being accomplished. In this context, the portrait of Benjamin Franklin at the lower left pays homage to this Founding Father in his role as America's most celebrated printer. What had begun in fifteenth-century Mainz, Germany, and had continued in eighteenth-century Boston and Philadelphia is now being brought to even greater perfection in the offices of Baldwin, Adams & Co. in New York, where steel engraving has taken mass-produced printing to a new level.

Scenes featuring farming and rural life were ubiquitous. The rhythms of country living differ from those of urban life. In the country, the seasons set the pace in an annual cycle, whereas, in the hustle and bustle of the city, the manager dictates when work begins and ends in a soulless routine based on the tyranny of the clock. Following this old trope of the simplicity and purity of country life, vignettes frequently honor the family. Careful distinctions are drawn between the sexes. Vignettes depict farmers at work or resting in the fields, scenes of plowing, sowing, harvesting, haying, and driving hay wagons. Women are portrayed in terms of courting couples, motherhood, families at work or play, and domestic chores. Scenes portray animal husbandry: grazing cattle, the milking of cows, sheep and sheep shearing, scattering feed to chickens, and spirited horses inspired by European animal painters. These scenes of noble simplicity and dignity, where farm chores never seem to be all that onerous and where health, contentment, and plenty abound, are, of course, highly romanticized, exhibiting a nostalgic longing for a time and place that had never existed.

The central vignette on the \$2 note of the Allegany County Bank, Cumberland, Maryland (see Figure 102), dated 1 June 1861 and printed by the American

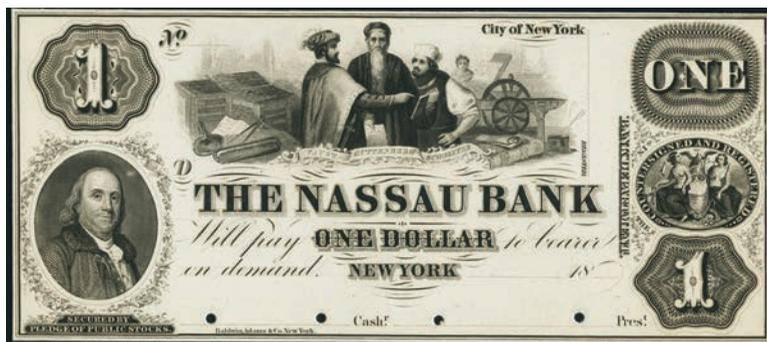


Figure 54. \$1 Note, Nassau Bank, New York, 1850s, 7.6 × 17.9 cm (punched-canceled proof). Collection of William L. Pressly.

Bank Note Company (ABNC), offers a quiet, reflective moment in a corner of rural America. The lazy, off-center name of the bank curls over and shelters this idyllic scene of lassitude on a hot summer's day. Reality is magically suspended in an intense reverie of the delights of an imagined childhood. This genre scene eclipses the mythological subject matter of earlier bank-note engravings, as small rural delights become heroic in their presentation. The serviceable local engraver operating at the beginning of the nineteenth century has evolved into the skilled professional, operating under a security firm's high standards.

In celebration of America's growing prosperity and interconnection, bank notes, both early and late, characterize the nation as a country on the move. They depict well-traveled roads, bridges, viaducts, and canals spanning the distances, as well as all manner of sailing ships, steamboats, rowboats, barges, rafts, and canoes. From the 1830s on, trains become a popular subject, joining the other forms of transportation. The \$10 note of the Western Bank of Missouri, St. Joseph, produced by the ABNC ca. 1860 (Figure 55), focuses on three major types of transportation. In the distance is a steamboat, which, given the bank's location, is navigating the Missouri River. In the foreground are men with horses. Behind them is a canal boat, and the horses are being used for pulling these barges (a horse collar and chains can be seen in the left foreground). Splitting the two waterways is a train, whose line of cars extends out of view. The number "76" appears on its coal tender, a reference to the nation's founding. The two vignettes featuring women in the note's lower corners offer a domestic touch, but the note's primary function is to honor the various forms of transportation uniting a vast country, all under the direction of men.

A long train is the protagonist on the \$10 note, printed by TCC for the Sanford Bank, Maine, and bearing the handwritten date 17 January 1861 (Figure 56).⁴ The train has crossed over a broad expanse of water with another train steaming across in the opposite direction. In the foreground, three figures are resting at the end of a rocky promontory, thereby inviting the note's holder to enter and join them in ruminating on this majestic landscape, where natural splendor and industrial progress are harmoniously combined.



Figure 55. \$10 Note, Western Bank of Missouri, St. Joseph, Mo., early 1860s (punch-canceled proof). Eric P. Newman Numismatic Education Society.

A vignette on the \$3 note of the Lawrence Bank, Lawrence, Kansas (Figure 57), from the late 1850s, shows a bustling wharf, presumably along the banks of the Mississippi. Although Lawrence is situated on the Kansas River, the scene is still an appropriate choice, as the Mississippi River is its life-line (the Kansas River flows into the Missouri River at Kansas City, and then joins the Mississippi at St. Louis). The vignette depicts goods piled high on the riverbank, and a seemingly endless parade of steamboats with smokestacks extends into the distance, overwhelming the lone church steeple rising up on the right. Given the elaborate and ambitious nature of the vignette and the dramatic use of orange tones and intricate lathework, the bill exemplifies the heightened quality of late bank-note design. A resplendent orange surround encloses the Native mother at the left, as if the viewer were perceiving through a telescope a rapidly receding way of life. The note also incorporates George D. Lyman's clever system.

Underneath the words "Lyman's Protection" at lower left, the ABNC printed a description of how the proportions of the panels reflect the denomination for \$1, \$2, \$3, and \$5 bills. In this instance, as befits a \$3 note, the panel on the left occupies one-third of the face, thereby stymieing any attempt to raise the amount.

The \$2 note of the Marine Bank, St. Paul, Minnesota (Figure 58), produced by the ABNC in 1859, celebrates river traffic on the left and a train rolling through the countryside on the right. The Mississippi River runs through St. Paul, but this

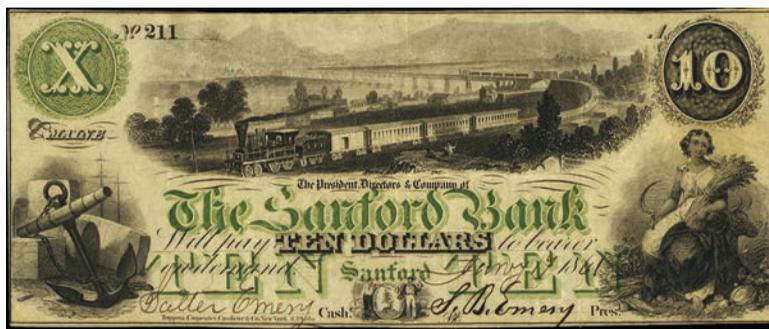


Figure 56. \$10 Note, Sanford Bank, Sanford, Maine, 17 January 1861. Eric P. Newman Numismatic Education Society.



Figure 57. \$3 Note, Lawrence Bank, Lawrence, Kans., ca. 1858–early 1860s (remainder). Eric P. Newman Numismatic Education Society.



Figure 58. \$2 Note, Marine Bank, St. Paul, Minn., late 1850s–early 1860s (punch-canceled proof). Eric P. Newman Numismatic Education Society.



Figure 59. George Caleb Bingham, *The Jolly Flatboatmen*, 1846, oil on canvas, 96.5 × 123.2 cm. National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., Patrons' Permanent Fund.

view presumably depicts waterborne traffic farther downstream. In the distance is an impressive steamboat, whereas an entertaining genre scene unfolds on the large raft in the foreground. A makeshift shelter, shaped like a tent, sits atop the raft. Only the two men at the rear, manning the steering oar, are at work. Instead, the focus is on the boy dancing to the fiddler's tune. This conception is deeply indebted to the paintings of the Missouri artist John Caleb Bingham, yet another instance of how bank-note imagery drew its inspiration from contemporary American painting. Bingham's *The Jolly Flatboatmen* of 1846 (Figure 59) is one example of his depiction of life on the river. He aggrandizes this genre scene by placing the exuberant dancing boatman atop an impressive pyramid formed by the other figures. The seated man at the right makes eye contact with the viewer, breaking down the wall between this fictional space and the viewer's, a step the self-enclosed vignette eschews. Along with America's majestic rivers, multiple vignettes underscore the country's dynamic seagoing commerce: scenes of harbors, ships, sailors, and allegories of navigation evoke the country's command of the seas.

Bank-note imagery frequently glorifies the drama of America's continuing push westward, reinforcing the nation's belief in Manifest Destiny, in which the United States' right to expand supersedes any territorial claims of the Native American nations or of Mexico. Bank-note imagery embraces the self-reliance and rugged individualism of the anonymous frontier settler and later the cowboy.

In addition, pioneering figures, such as Daniel Boone, enter its pantheon of American heroes. Scenes of trains pushing across the prairies are particularly effective in promoting Manifest Destiny's inexorable progress. The sheet of four notes, printed by Danforth, Wright & Co. and dated 2 November 1857 (Figure 60), emphasizes the sweeping grandeur of this western expansion. Created for the Western Exchange Fire & Marine Insurance Co. of Omaha City, Nebraska, the first two notes both depict trains rushing across the plains, which the Natives in the foreground are powerless to stop. Agitated Native Americans gesture fruitlessly in the central vignette on the \$1 note, whereas in the \$2 note a lone, noble Native American, holding his lance and fiery steed, looks out on this scene, which foretells the demise of his culture and the buffalo he hunts. The \$3 note celebrates a Native American's prowess as a buffalo hunter in an image influenced by such artists as George Catlin and Karl Bodmer.

The Western Exchange Fire & Marine Insurance Co. sheet demonstrates not only how security-printing firms promoted heroic and engaging pictures of America, but it also shows how they created an identity for the financial institutions dispensing this money. In this instance, the four notes are closely integrated in terms of the lettering, the tone of the paper, and the use of color, portraiture, lathework, and overall layout.

The lower-right vignettes in the \$1 and \$2 notes feature additional Indigenous subjects, whereas the \$3 note introduces a White female in a pastoral landscape. By the \$5 note, authoritative White male portraits occupy the left and right sides along with a classical cameo of Mars, the Roman god of war. The central vignette displays an impressive steamboat, an American flag flying from its bow, navigating the Missouri River. Living close to nature, Native Americans had no concept of fire and marine insurance, which helped to mitigate nature's disasters. In the span of just these four bills, one moves from the displacement of Native Americans to the greater mastery of the land and water by Euro-American civilization. Danforth, Wright & Co. provided the Western Exchange Fire & Marine Insurance Co. with an indelible brand that fits within a grand national purpose.

Introspective self-doubt is not a part of the bank-note repertoire. In its place is a hymn to White America's ambitions and dominance. Native Americans were



Figure 60. Sheet of four notes (\$1, \$2, \$3, \$5), Western Exchange Fire & Marine Insurance Co., Omaha City, Neb., 2 November 1857, 29.8 × 18 cm. Image courtesy of Heritage Auctions.



Figure 61. \$5 Note, Holyoke Bank, Northampton, Mass., 1 October 1867, 7.4 × 18.3 cm (punch-canceled proof). National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

upheld as noble, even if sometimes ferociously violent, outliers disappearing from their former homeland with sad resignation and dignity. African Americans, on the other hand, were seen as a valuable commodity within a system that encouraged their productivity as enslaved laborers and breeders. Tellingly, whereas security firms featured Native Americans prominently on their specimen sheets as part of the country's proud heritage, vignettes of Blacks are conspicuously absent.

Vignettes often evoke a sense of place by focusing on local subjects. One finds topographical views of towns, town greens, main streets, and important public buildings, as well as private ones, such as factories or the banks themselves. The \$5 note of the Holyoke Bank, Northampton, Massachusetts (Figure 61), from ca. 1860 and bearing the dual imprints of Jocelyn, Draper, Welch & Co. and the ABNC, shows the prosperous, inviting splendor of the town's village green. In addition to numerous structures constructed by humans, natural scenery is prominently featured. The grandeur of an attraction, such as Niagara Falls, appeals both to local and national pride. The frequent inclusion of such devices as state seals reflects this prideful identification with a specific region, in addition to invoking government authority.

A vignette can represent more than one site, with the whereabouts of the actual location mattering less than the scene's sense of prosperity and well-being. For example, the vignette of the railroad train in the Maine note reproduced as Figure 56 also appears in the \$10 note of the State Bank of Wisconsin, Milwaukee.⁵ The vignette in Figure 58, showing a rafting scene on the Mississippi River, appears on notes of the Timber Cutter's Bank, Savannah, Georgia, where the steamboat and raft are now plying the Savannah River.⁶ A vignette showing a cartload of cotton appears on three different notes: the \$10 note of the Mechanics Savings Bank, Savannah, Georgia; the \$1 note of the Central Bank of Alabama, Montgomery; and the \$2 note of the Bank of Athens, Georgia (the vignette is reproduced in Figure 207, where it appears on a Confederate bill).⁷ As with the other examples, the location of the bank determines the location of the scene—in the first, the cart is exiting one of Savannah's squares, and in the other two, it rumbles down a street in either Montgomery or Athens. As this vignette suggests, when focusing on what is appropriate for a specific locale, sectional differences

can be writ large—unsurprisingly, images of slavery occur almost exclusively on Southern notes.

Taken as a whole, vignettes of urban prosperity, agricultural abundance, and the hustle and bustle of commerce contribute to a sense of a common national identity. The \$1 note of the Illinois Central Bank, Newton, proudly displays an ABNC vignette of the launch of the *Sirius* in New York harbor in 1856.⁸ Here, no one could mistake the scene as taking place in Wisconsin, but rather the West and the East are knitted together in mutual admiration of one of America's great industrial triumphs. The trains shown in vignettes crisscrossing the countryside offer further testimony to the nation's unification, as do the telegraph wires that can accompany them. Such depictions bind together the American experience no matter how far-reaching the country's ever-expanding boundaries.

In the service of facilitating a nuanced and varied portrait of the new nation, vignettes could be easily altered. One needs only to repurpose the original image by engraving changes on a new die. After the die is hardened, a transfer roll imparts the image onto a new bank-note plate.⁹ Sometimes, vignettes were reduced to their essence, a larger scene being stripped down to its central feature. Conversely, they could be combined as composites. This manipulation of existing designs gave notes a new look, while helping to reduce costs. An alteration could be as simple as changing the name on a steamship to accommodate a different locale.

The ability to make changes allowed firms to provide more appropriate messaging for a particular bank or institution. Regional differences called for adjustments. One example is a vignette that appears on a Michigan note, in this instance hand-dated 14 January 1853 (Figure 62), and a North Carolina note hand-dated 1859 (Figure 63), both the work of TCC. The earlier Michigan note appropriately shows the harvesting of grain, and the North Carolina note, the picking of cotton.¹⁰ The Michigan note also provides a more expansive scene, continuing the split-rail fencing on the left-hand side. The North Carolina note's composition has been adumbrated, and consequently portions, such as the nub of the end of a rail



Figure 62. \$1 Note, Adrian Insurance Company, Adrian, Mich., 14 January 1853, 7.5 × 17.9 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

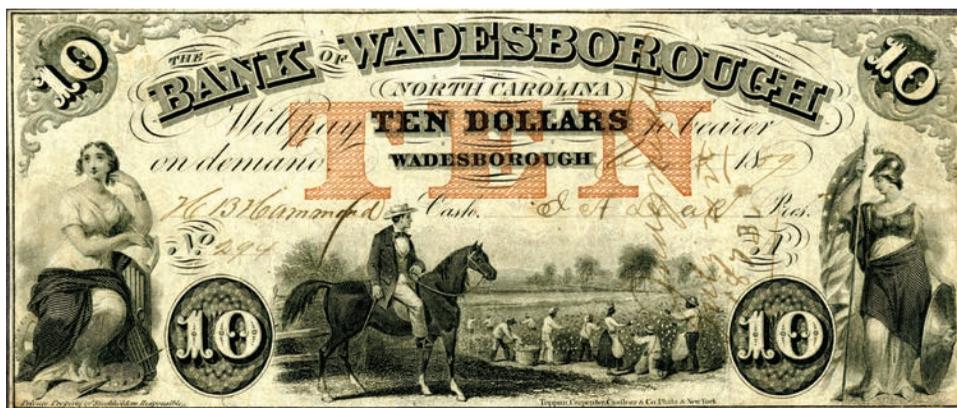


Figure 63. \$10 Note, Bank of Wadesborough, Wadesborough, N.C., 15 October 1859, 7.6 × 18.2 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.



Figure 64. \$3 Note, Dane County Bank, Madison, Wis., 15 September 1854 (punch-canceled proof). Eric P. Newman Numismatic Education Society.

sticking out from behind the oval counter, are puzzling intrusions when seen outside their original context. Yet in this instance, the transference of an image from North to South contains another complication. What is one to make of the well-dressed man on horseback? In the Southern version, he is obviously an overseer, but such a reading does not fit the Northern context, in which he is more likely a prosperous farmer overlooking the laborers he has hired.¹¹

Allegorical subjects were also highly malleable. The \$3 note of the Dane County Bank, Madison, Wisconsin (Figure 64), dated 15 September 1854 by Danforth, Wright & Co., offers a grand, overarching design. Seated in the center is a winged angel, who represents Providence bestowing divine blessings. On the left, accompanied by a cornucopia, Plenty reaches out to her, their fingertips touching. The allegorical female in dark attire on the right holds in her right hand a sextant, signifying Navigation. These flanking figures also suggest Day, with its life-giving sunlight that nourishes the crops, and Night, a common time for celes-

tial sightings on the open seas. The clouds supporting the three figures suggest the curvature of the earth, recalling the earth's diurnal cycle, where day and night follow each other in an endless round. Providence looks to Navigation and is handing her what may be a piece of fruit derived from Plenty (another possibility is that the small orb refers to Navigation's ability to unite the globe). This imposing configuration was adapted to apotheosize a portrait of Lyman Dayton, a prominent St. Paul's business leader. In the Dayton Bank's \$2 bill (Figure 65), the two flanking women now direct the viewer's attention to the dour portrait of Dayton, even if Navigation's worshipful gaze literally goes over his head.¹² Such shapeshifting allows for variations on a theme encompassing both the sublime and the ridiculous.

The protean nature of pictorial vignettes makes possible changes to an image's messaging. The overall effect, however, is to marshal these kindred elements into the service of a shared, unifying vision of progress and prosperity. In the case of the two men carrying a basket of corn, one free and one enslaved (see Figures 170 and 171), they share a common purpose in honoring the land's bounty. In addition, the omnipresent allegories, featuring patriotic themes and universal principles, appear on the money of banks big and small throughout the country, another important way in which paper money promulgates shared values. Such repetition reinforces a sense of familiarity and commonality, further bonding all to all.



Portraiture is a well-established category with its own set of expectations. It, too, plays an important role in paper money's patriotic messaging by evoking the Founding Fathers and other leading citizens of the new republic. Whereas pictorial vignettes focus more on the productivity of manual laborers than on white-collar professionals, portraits feature people of distinction in public life as we saw in chapter 3. Males predominate, offering role models of patriarchal authority from bank presidents up to the nation's presidents, as well as men like Columbus, who also enjoy an elevated status for their prominence in the national discourse. In Figure 74, there are ten male portraits forming part of the circle around the unseen center of the main design, all distinguished citizens of the eighteenth and nineteenth



Figure 65. Sheet of four notes (\$1, \$1, \$2, \$5), Dayton Bank, St. Paul, Minn., ca. 1850, 29×18.2 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

centuries. Atop this commanding chain of figures is a female head—rather than a portrait, this is the bust of Minerva, the goddess of wisdom, whose inclusion affirms that she is the lodestar for the line of men stretching out beneath her.

Whereas women dominate the genre of allegory, portraits of identifiable women are few and far between. In the specimen sheet reproduced as Figure 74, the only female portrait is of Queen Victoria, a concession made to the firm’s Canadian clientele. All the other heads of enticing young women on this sheet fall within a category that proved highly popular on bank notes, a type which the engravers referred to as “fancy heads,”¹³ a term derived from the eighteenth-century genre of “fancy pictures.”¹⁴ The two notes reproduced as Figures 55 and 61 both feature the same fancy head of a young woman with coifed ringlets. The identity of this woman is irrelevant. She is a model whose engaging beauty is meant to exalt an idealized conception of womanhood. Such depictions of women accord them an unsullied, elevated status, more fantasy than fact.¹⁵ This type of portrayal also borrowed heavily from the popular representations of fashionable women as

depicted in contemporary magazines produced for a female clientele, the most prominent of which was *Godey’s Magazine and Lady’s Book*.

Like the Durand, Perkins & Co. specimen sheet (see Figure 25), the broadside designed by Rawdon, Wright, Hatch & Edson (RWH&E) from the late 1840s (Figure 66) uses pictorial vignettes as its primary vehicle with the informative texts gracefully intertwined. Both sheets adhere to a strict symmetry. Theirs is a world where harmony and balance are paramount. However, rather than focus on mythological narratives, this later advertisement favors allegorical figures. Two identifiable men anchor the sheet’s bottom,¹⁶ but the women at the top are generic idealizations. The fashionable woman on the left with a wreath in her hair is demure and withdrawn, the eternal image of the passive and nurturing female. The representation of the woman on the right is far more assertive. Dynamic and intense, she looks up at the light in a mo-

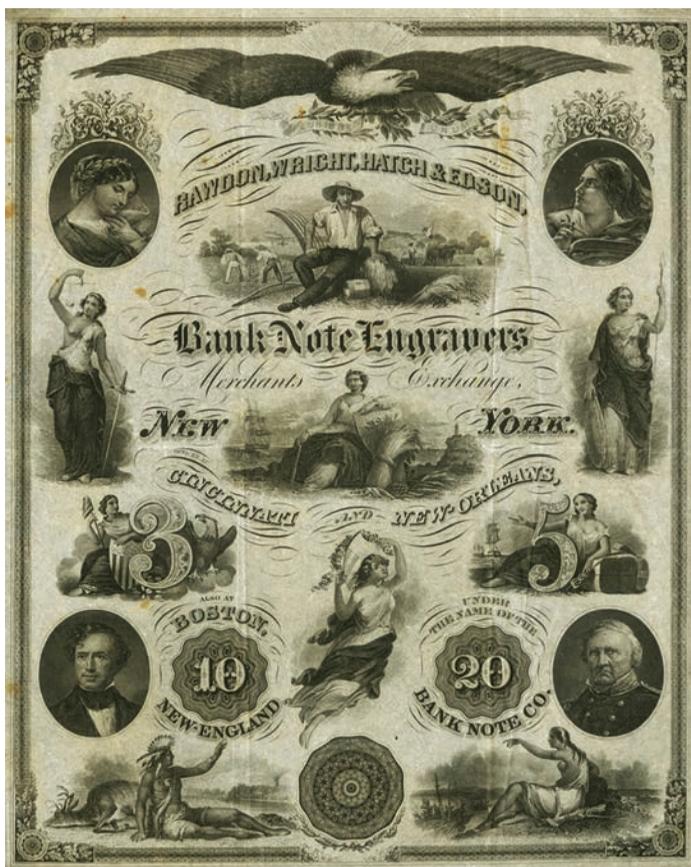


Figure 66. Specimen sheet, Rawdon, Wright, Hatch & Edson, New York, Cincinnati and New Orleans, and the New England Bank Note Co., Boston, late 1840s. Image courtesy of Heritage Auctions.

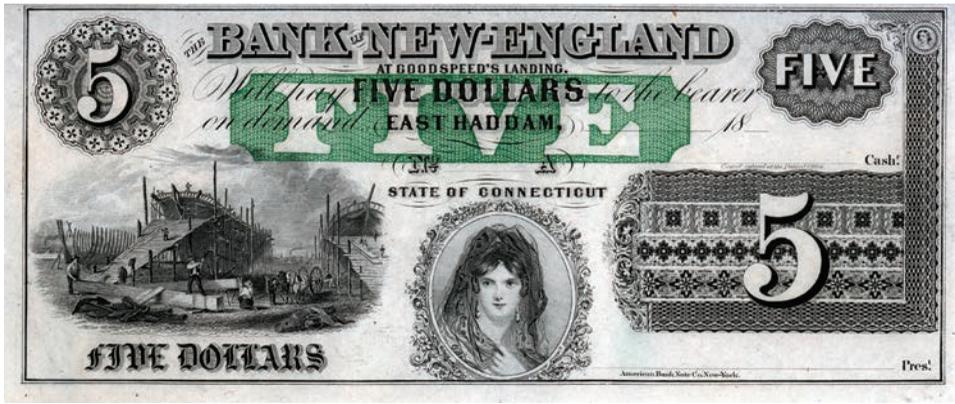


Figure 67. \$5 Note, Bank of New-England at Goodspeed's Landing, East Haddam, Conn., early 1860s, 7.6 × 18.5 cm (from sheet of \$1, \$1, \$2, \$5). National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

ment of inspiration. Richard Doty senses her departure from the norm in describing her as “an unfathomable, disturbing presence.”¹⁷ Holding a compass over an open book resting on a terrestrial globe (the longitudinal lines are visible), she represents Geography. Her intellectual fierceness effectively captures navigation’s awesome power in radically changing perceptions of the world we inhabit. One suspects there is an underlying source, such as a theatrical portrait of Lady Macbeth, that might help explain the intensity of this characterization, which expands the tamer conventions of the fancy head.

The portrait of Henriette Sontag, Countess Rossi (ca. 1803–1854), which appears on the \$5 note produced by the ABNC in the early 1860s for the Bank of New-England at Goodspeed Landing, East Haddam, Connecticut (Figure 67), offers another instructive example (there is an earlier printing by Danforth, Wright & Co., 1850s).¹⁸ Sontag, a famous European singer, was known to Americans from a tour she had undertaken in the early 1850s, but the vignette is based on an 1835 engraving by H. T. Rydall after a drawing by the English artist John Hayter, which shows her in her youthful prime. In 1877, the Goodspeed Opera House opened in East Haddam, suggesting that the town had a tradition of enthusiastically supporting music and theater, which would make the earlier choice of the Sontag vignette for its bank particularly appropriate. But the question arises as to how many would have recognized the sitter. In any case, her portrayal fits comfortably within the countless vignettes of anonymous women, all of whom conform to the same idealized cultural stereotype. In this light, the vignette of Sontag is not so much a portrait as it is an idealization of winsome beauty.

Beatific children, alone or in the company of their mothers, also proved popular. Even when the name of the child who modeled for a vignette is known, the rendering, like the fancy heads of women, inhabits an idealized realm of its own.¹⁹ The subject’s actual identity is again irrelevant, even including, as we shall see in chapter 6, a vignette depicting the Christ Child (see the child repeated twice at the bottom of the specimen sheet reproduced as Figure 103, where the identification with Jesus is no longer accessible).

Civil Religion: Sanctifying the Secular

Although bank-note firms would not have been familiar with the term *civil religion*,²⁰ they well understood that public rituals and symbols could express implicit religious values. By assigning a sacred aura to national subjects, civil religion encourages the heady mixture of patriotism and religion, helping to establish a national narrative and the sense of a shared history. One of its basic tenets is the veneration of political leaders, holding them in the same esteem formerly reserved for saints. Of all of America's historical figures, no one was better suited for veneration than George Washington. Befitting his status as the Father of the Country, he is the most frequently portrayed individual on American paper currency.²¹ His presence on bank notes instills an aura of authority, credibility, and trust, linking the issuing banks to a sense of national purpose. He performs the role of an *exemplum virtutis*, a model of virtue for all to honor and emulate. In the years before the Civil War, with the rise in tensions between the North and the South, the Father of the Country became more important than ever as a symbol of the common bond that could help hold together a fracturing nation. Paradoxically, at the same time, Washington's inclusion on bank notes in both the North and South strengthened each region's claim to his legacy.

Washington's first appearance on paper money is his most extraordinary. He debuted as early as 1777, when he appeared on a small change note issued by John Hough, Jr., of Loudoun County, Virginia (Figure 68). This flat folk-art pattern makes no attempt to show the corporeal man. Rather, this is a portrait of Washington's spiritual body.²² George III claimed to rule by divine right, and in this portrayal, the American George has taken away the prerogatives of the English George to claim them for himself. Washington's initials, "GW," intentionally echo George III's royal ciphers, "GR" [Georgius Rex], which are often, as is the case with the initials here, surmounted by a crown. As God's anointed, Washington is now America's new spiritual leader. In this symbolic representation, organic forms dominate, testifying to the leader's regenerating powers: life-giving waters flow along the borders of his "cloak;" a star, perhaps the Sun of Truth, hangs around his neck, a beacon for his people, and beneath him is the cosmic rotation of the planets. Washington is a semidivine, otherworldly being who brings fecundity, order, and vitality to this new world that he is helping to create and nurture. The Hough family's friendship with Washington helps explain such an exalted and mystical conception, but it also gives witness to the awe and reverence in which the general was held and his impact, even at such an early date, on the American psyche. In the mainstream of nineteenth-



Figure 68. 9-Pence, three-quarters of a shilling, one-eighth of a dollar note, printed for John Hough, Jr., Loudoun County, Va., 1777. Eric P. Newman Numismatic Education Society.

century American art, paintings and prints often depict the apotheosis of Washington, where he is sometimes even placed in heaven, thereby explicitly viewing him with a godlike reverence. Paper money also awards the general, first president, and Father of the Country an unparalleled status bordering on idolatry.

Amos Doolittle was the first to introduce Washington on bank notes, executing in 1800 a plate of four bills containing, as we saw (see Figure 14), a portrait based on Joseph Wright's etching of 1790. Although these notes were probably never issued, Doolittle's approach anticipates what was to follow. His borrowing from an existing image became the norm. Convenience was a motivating factor, but by relying on the familiar, vignettes could more easily evoke a strong, collective, patriotic response. Unsurprisingly, the most frequently used image was Gilbert Stuart's iconic "Athenaeum" portrait, executed in 1796 (numerous examples appear in this book; for one, see Figure 29). In reproducing this work and others like it, bank notes were in lockstep with popular tastes. Portraits of Washington linked the banks more closely to the national fabric while enhancing a sense of their credibility and trustworthiness.

Wright had already chosen to depict Washington in classicizing profile, but Doolittle emphasized this connection with antique virtue by crowning the general with an honorific laurel wreath. Washington as an heir to the Roman Republic was to prove a popular theme in both mainstream art and bank notes. He appears in two classicizing conceptions on a single bill, the \$100 note of the Exchange Bank, Hartford, Connecticut, printed by C. Toppan & Co. (Figure 69). In addition to the lower-left vignette depicting Antonio Canova's statue of Washington in Roman dress, the central vignette shows his bust resting on a high plinth. With Niagara Falls as a backdrop, Minerva, the protector of the arts, prepares to place a laurel crown on top of the bust. Rays radiate from Minerva's wreath, signaling the promise of a glorious beginning. Albeit in a more realistic mode, this image is as exalted and reverential as the Loudoun portrayal. Its underlying model is the classical subject of a laurel-crowned Apollo surrounded by the Muses, as seen, for example, in Raphael's fresco *Parnassus* (Raphael Stanze, Vatican).

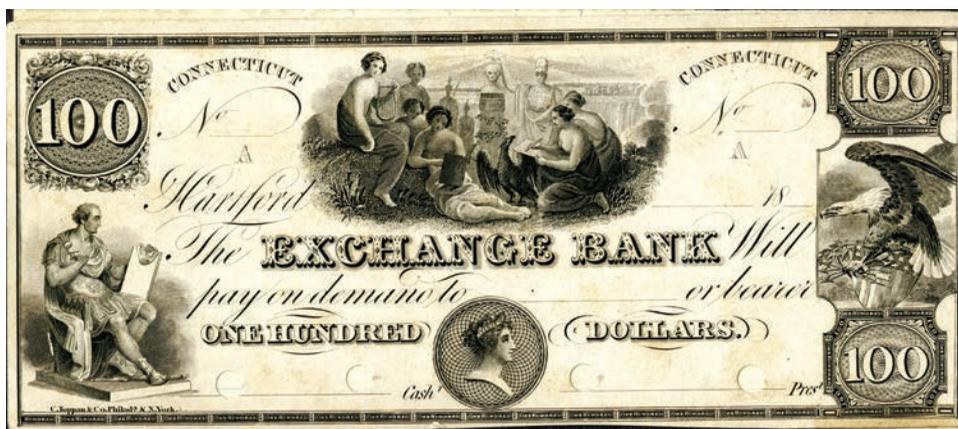


Figure 69. \$100 Note, Exchange Bank, Hartford, Conn., 1830s–1850s, 7.8×17.7 cm (punch-canceled proof). National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

The source for the central vignette again intimately connects it to the larger print culture, the engraving having been taken from the title-page design, which had been conceived by Robert Walter Weir and engraved by Asher B. Durand for *The New-York Mirror: A Weekly Journal Devoted to Literature and the Fine Arts*. In its edition of 7 July 1832, *The New-York Mirror* provides a description of the vignette’s meaning. The following is Mark Thistlewaite’s summary, which incorporates direct quotes, of its contents:

This “allegorical representation of the present 1832 period in the history of our country,” shows the Genius of Liberty crowning the hero “with a halo of glory, whose brilliant beams spread far and wide, lighting up the whole picture with radiant beauty.” . . . Here the eagle represents American literature. History, with Truth by her side, has written Washington’s name first on her tablet. Painting reclines with her board, near Poetry and Music. Niagara Falls thunders in the distance, while “the poor Indians . . . are wending their melancholic way to the setting sun.”²³

Washington has replaced Apollo as the god of light and inspiration. Here, he oversees America’s transformation in literature and the arts, as the Old World’s civilization is transplanted into the New World, where it can flourish with a new brilliance. Throughout the nineteenth century and beyond, Washington’s semidivine presence supplies the essential bond in unifying Anglo-Americans in all their endeavors in every corner of the Republic.

Another popular category of Washington iconography is images of the general as a Revolutionary War hero. The specimen sheet reproduced as Figure 25 gives pride of place to two equestrian designs to the left and right of the central vignette of Justice. On the left, Washington, calm on his rearing steed, is rendered in the form of a monumental sculpture, and on the right, he is shown as a commander pointing out the path to victory. Coolheaded and in control, the general, in both images, leads his troops and his nineteenth-century audience onto greater glory. Another of the Revolutionary War vignettes can be seen in the middle of the left-hand margin of Figure 74. This vignette reproduces Gilbert Stuart’s 1806 full-length portrait *Washington at Dorchester Heights* (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston), an impressive portrayal of the general overseeing a battle that took place in March 1776 just outside Boston.

An exception to grounding Washington within a familiar context is the original composition, executed in the early 1830s by Chas. Toppin & Co., in which the mounted general appears in a scene germane only to banks and banking (Figure 70). First designed for the Bank of North America,



Figure 70. \$20 Note, Citizens Union Bank, Scituate, R.I., 1830s–1850s (punch-canceled proof). Image courtesy of Heritage Auctions.

Philadelphia, which, chartered in 1781, helped finance the Revolution, the vignette is seen here on the \$20 note of the Citizens Union Bank, Scituate, Rhode Island.²⁴ Although founded in 1833, the Citizens Union Bank was happy to associate itself with banking's distinguished and patriotic past. In the vignette, the general is too engaged with the war effort to take the time to dismount as he reaches out to receive a purse from the classical goddess who represents the bank and who appears on the steps of her "temple." This allegorical figure closely associates the bank with the values of the classical tradition, and she makes it possible for the general to sustain the soldiers in the encampment seen in the distance. Thus, Washington, as the leader of the Continental Army, and the bank work hand in hand to establish a government on American soil grounded in the values of the Roman Republic.

Civil religion also has its own "holy scriptures," which for the United States are primarily the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights. Their principles are embodied in the frequently used vignettes of the American eagle, the national flag and shield, and the countless confections of the personification of America or Columbia with Liberty. (The section on "The American Indian as an Allegory for the Nation" in chapter 7 discusses in greater depth how this female Liberty is rooted in classical Roman prototypes that are often merged with characteristics of the Native American.)

The nation has its own "sacred" calendar as well, such as the veneration of the Fourth of July, with Jonathan Trumbull's painting of the "signing" of the Declaration of Independence being a favorite subject, even appearing on the back of the federal government's \$100 bill in its National Bank Note series (it still appears on the back of the U.S. \$2 bill). The Revolutionary War was to provide a number of retrospective military commemorative scenes, an important part of the story of a nation's birth, but the first historical scenes of this type were drawn from current events. The successful engagements of the War of 1812 immediately inspired painters and engravers to celebrate the victories that had ignited newspaper headlines, written with heady nationalistic pride as this second war against Great Britain was being fought to preserve the hard-won independence achieved three decades before. In 1814, before the war had ended, Thomas Birch exhibited in Philadelphia his painting of Oliver Hazard Perry's victory on Lake Erie on 10 September 1813 (Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Philadelphia). Initially, because of a faltering wind, Perry's ship *Lawrence* had to duel the British fleet on its own. When his supporting ships could finally join him, the young naval officer abandoned his badly damaged flagship. Birch shows Perry standing in the stern of a small boat, exposed to enemy fire, as his men row to the *Niagara*, from which he will successfully prosecute the remainder of the battle. A number of bank-note vignettes from the 1830s onward reproduced Birch's image of Perry.²⁵ Yet, much earlier in 1817, Charles Peter Harrison, a member of a family of Philadelphia engravers who was then working in Pittsburgh,²⁶ executed his own version of this climactic moment on the \$3 note of the Jefferson Bank of New Salem, Ohio (Figure 71).²⁷ With the smoke of the cannons hanging in the air, Perry stands in the back of a rowboat, pointing with his sword to the *Niagara* with its large American flag flapping in the breeze. Harrison does not bother to depict any men on board the ship: the focus is exclusively on Perry and his small crew. The \$1 note of this same bank displays a vignette of another proud victory: General Andrew Jackson's crushing defeat of the British at the Battle of New Orleans on 8 January 1815,



Figure 71. \$3 Note, Jefferson Bank, New Salem, Ohio, 1 March 1817, 7×17.1 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

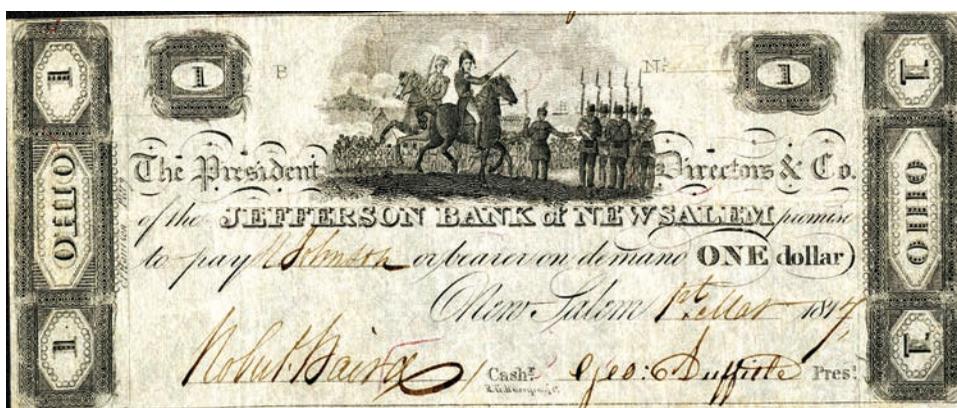


Figure 72. \$1 Note, Jefferson Bank, New Salem, Ohio, 1 March 1817, 7×17 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

a battle that was famously fought, unbeknownst to the combatants, after a treaty had already been signed (Figure 72). Basically, this is a crude equestrian portrait of Jackson facing the viewer rather than his troops. Like Perry's victory, this was only the first of several more refined renderings of this patriotic event.²⁸

Harrison's two vignettes are the earliest dated depictions of major historical events on bank notes. One suspects, however, that a note produced by Murray, Draper, Fairman & Co. (MDF) of Philadelphia influenced his decision. The central vignette on the \$5 note of the Bank of Washington, Washington, Pennsylvania (Figure 73), dated by hand 17 April 1816, shows General Washington on a rearing horse preparing to lead his men from their encampment. The reference is to the Whiskey Rebellion in western Pennsylvania, when, in 1794, the president led a militia to quell opposition to an excise tax on domestic distilled spirits that was enacted in 1791. The law was of national importance in that it established the federal government's right to levy taxes, but the choice of the image was for its local significance. Because the military action had resulted in no deaths and because the tax was later repealed

in 1802 by President Thomas Jefferson, the town could look back to its resistance more with pride than anger (Washington, Pennsylvania, still celebrates the rebellion with an annual festival). Since he was living in nearby Pittsburg, another hotbed for the insurrection, Harrison was presumably aware of MDF's innovative departure.

In addition to Harrison's dated notes, there are early undated vignettes devoted to scenes of the War of 1812. C. John Ferreri illustrates two remaindered sheets of the Bank of the New York Manufacturing Co. in New York City.²⁹ Because the company was granted banking privileges in 1814 and became the Phenix Bank of New York in 1817, the sheets were presumably executed around the same time as Harrison's notes, becoming obsolete at the time of the bank's name change. Based on Ferreri's identifications of the subject matter, the first sheet, printed by Leney & Rollison, shows three vignettes dedicated to one engagement: the \$1 note depicts the *USS Constitution* engaged in battle with *HMS Guerriere* on 19 August 1812; the \$2 note shows a more advanced stage of the same battle; and the \$3 note depicts the *Constitution* to one side as the defeated *Guerriere* spectacularly erupts in a planned explosion. In maritime painting, the recording of a battle over multiple scenes is commonplace, but adopting this cinematic approach to bank notes was highly creative, with each step up in the denomination revealing a later development in the narrative. On the second sheet, the \$6 note depicts, also according to Ferreri, the *United States* successfully battling the *Macedonian* on 25 October 1812. From such beginnings, a variety of vignettes went on to depict a range of significant events that cast America's past in a highly flattering light.³⁰



In their specimen/advertising sheets, the security firms chose how they wished to represent themselves to the public. While displaying a catalog of the firms' finest designs, these sheets are weighted heavily toward patriotic imagery. They feature numerous historical scenes and portraits of America's great men, often drawn from well-known paintings in order to reinforce and participate in the nation's heritage. Three of the largest-known specimen sheets demonstrate just how ambitious such presentations could be. The sheet designed and printed by TCC (Figure 74) forms only the lower-left quadrant of four, which together make up an imposing whole. Danforth, Wright & Co., Philadelphia and New York, produced its own four-piece specimen sheet (Figure 75), dating to ca. 1853 and measuring, when assembled, over 91.5 × 81.3 centimeters. RWH&E orchestrated a large sampling on a single oversized sheet (Figure 76), measuring 90 × 66 centimeters. These and the other specimen sheets reproduced in this book (see Figures 25, 49,



Figure 73. \$5 Note, Bank of Washington, Washington, Pa., 17 April 1816. Eric P. Newman Numismatic Education Society.



Figure 74. Lower-left quarter of four-piece specimen sheet, Toppan, Carpent[er, Casilear & Co.], Philadelphi[a, New York, and] Cinci[nnati], ca. 1851–1855. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C.

66, and 103) all emphasize patriotic themes: in Figure 25, Washington appears seven times, one of which is a portrait forming the keystone of the crowning arch (in addition, a vignette of Benjamin Franklin examining the properties of lightning occupies a prominent position at upper center, while the work also includes two portraits of him); in Figure 49, the sheet's central lettering cradles a portrait

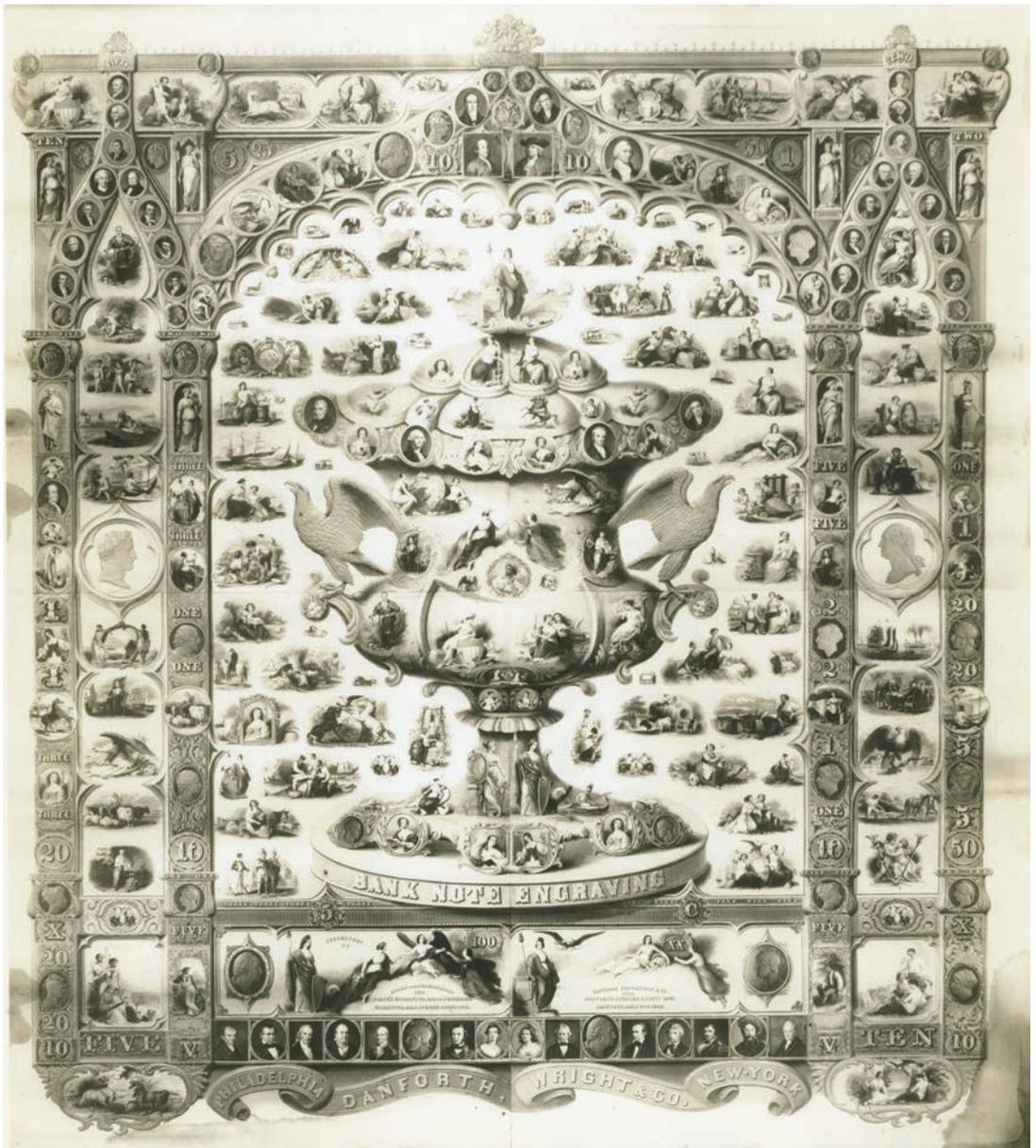


Figure 75. Four-piece specimen sheet, Danforth, Wright & Co., ca. 1853, 91.5×81.3 cm. Image courtesy of Mark D. Tomasko.

of Washington; in Figure 66, an American eagle protectively hovers at the top of the sheet; and in Figure 103, the vignette within the mock note shows a winged angelic female removing a veil, assisted by Cupid, covering a painting of the American eagle. Although Figure 74 represents only a fourth of the whole, it reproduces in the left-hand margin, as we have seen, Gilbert Stuart's painting *Washington at Dorchester Heights*. It also displays a host of America's great men in the inner ring forming the four-page center, including Washington again with Franklin

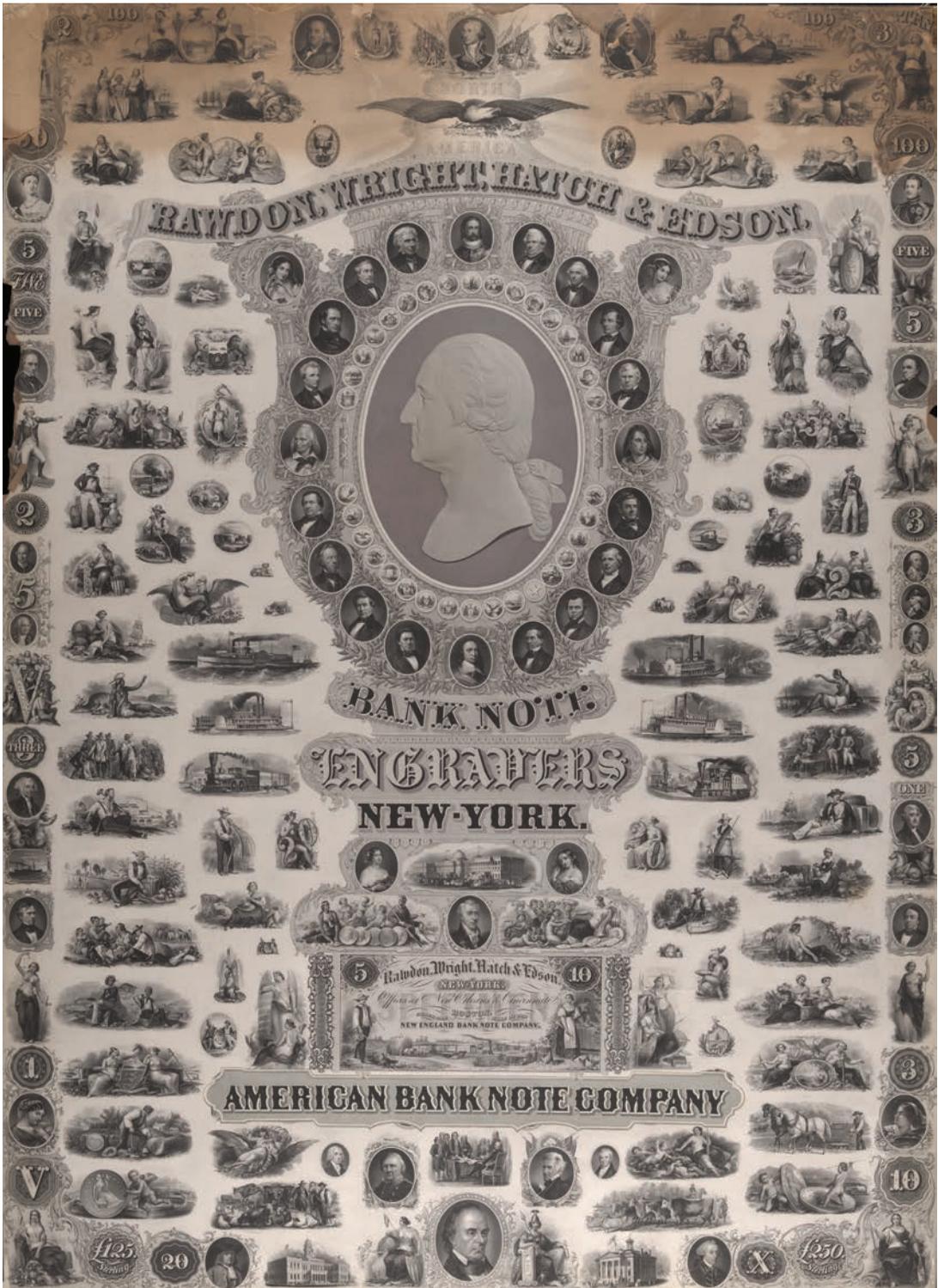


Figure 76. Specimen sheet, Rawdon, Wright, Hatch & Edson, mid-1850s, 90×66 cm. The Mariners' Museum and Park, Newport News, Va.

alongside. Like Washington, Franklin appears twice (his bust in a classical-style cameo can be seen at upper right).

The four sheets composing Figure 75 display a grand “silver” trophy urn, which sits within an impressive and elaborate neo-Gothic frame. Numerous vignettes drawn from the firm’s stock of images adorn the urn, the Gothic frame, and all the spaces in between.³¹ As with other specimen sheets, portraits of men, such as Washington and Franklin, are encountered more than once. Of greater interest is the repetition of Chief Red Jacket, who appears on the upper left-hand side and in the urn’s decoration in the lower left quadrant. *Pat Lyon at the Forge* also appears twice (on the lower left-hand side and on the right-hand side of the urn, where the wing of the American eagle forming one of the handles points to him). Allegorical figures also reoccur. For example, the figures of Agriculture (Day) and Navigation (Night) seen with Providence at the bottom left are repeated on their own in a place of honor beneath the urn’s lid. All the vignettes occupy their own allotted spaces except for the Native American paddling a canoe, who is seen in the urn’s base in the lower-right quadrant. He appears to be moving, as he effortlessly glides around this silvery, watery world.

Like neoclassicism, neo-Gothic is a style imported from England, and in America, it became increasingly popular toward the middle of the nineteenth century. When appearing in collegiate architecture, it associated academic institutions with the knowledge and ancient traditions embodied in such English campuses as Oxford and Cambridge. It also affected domestic architecture and furniture, but its strongest association was with ecclesiastical architecture. Thus, Figure 75’s neo-Gothic arch is not only a stylish reflection of new cultural tastes, but it also displays reverence for the work of bank-note engraving. The firm’s larger purpose is again underscored, as it is shown to be deeply rooted in old European traditions associated with spirituality (church architecture) and wisdom (collegiate architecture).

The sheet reproduced as Figure 76 is another example of the *horror vacui* so typical of this period, as the firm crammed multiple vignettes throughout to include as much content as possible. Pining down the whole is a large, oval, profile cameo bust of Washington surrounded by bank-note size portraits of other famous men related to the United States, including two Native Americans. Among its images of American history can be found a vignette of peaceful Dutch settlers purchasing Manhattan from the Natives in 1626 (near the center left),³² along with three Revolutionary War scenes: the Signing of the Declaration of Independence (bottom center), George Washington in a commanding pose on a battlefield (upper left-hand margin), and *Francis Marion’s Sweet Potato Dinner* (near the middle of the right-hand side). The page’s primary organizing structure is a design of another large ornamental urn. In contrast to the urn in Figure 75, this object is more two-dimensional than three-dimensional. Its presence is subtler, acknowledging bank-note engraving’s medium: the flat surface of a printed piece of paper. A fancy head of a young woman appears in each of the vase’s handles, and another portrait of Washington crowns its lid, beneath which the eagle is framed by the words “NORTH AMERICA.” The firm’s name ripples across and beyond the urn’s top. Heavy, bold lettering, beneath which are more vignettes anchored by a mock-up of a specimen bill, compose a solid, elaborate base. The bottom of the

sheet's central spine concludes with yet more patriotic subjects: the imagery of civil religion thoroughly permeates and dominates bank-note culture.

In both silver trophy urns displayed in Figures 75 and 76, the firms' profession is strongly emphasized. In Figure 75, "BANK NOTE ENGRAVING" is displayed on the urn's base, as if this profession supports the whole. The identity of the specific firm, Danforth, Wright & Co., unfurls across the bottom of the design in a more discrete manner than the announcement of the profession itself. In the case of the urn in Figure 76, its stem is made up of the bold lettering "BANK NOTE/ENGRAVERS/NEW-YORK." In both conceptions, the profession of bank-note engraving awards these trophy urns to the nation, evoking the foundations of an idealized past leading to a progressive society with its promise of an even more glorious future. Yet, at the same time, while the firms are honoring the nation, they also are honoring themselves. Their imagery both expresses and even helps to create the country's transcendent ethos while at the same time proudly proclaiming the bank-note business's own imposing grandeur and importance.

The Golden Age of Bank Notes, 1850s to Early 1860s

Entitled to Rank as a Branch of the Fine as well as Useful Arts

Following the Panic of 1837, a significant number of banks failed, causing the demand for bank-note production to diminish greatly. In Maine, for example, only two new banks opened in the 1840s, whereas fifty-five opened in the 1850s.¹ This return to prosperity and optimism fueled an ever-increasing demand for new notes. As a result, security-engraving firms found themselves in intense competition with one another. Their efforts to expand the quality and content of their offerings generated new levels of excellence, leading to the 1850s and early 1860s being called the golden age of bank-note engraving.

Vignettes grew in size and importance, becoming technically more proficient and complex. The advent of photography liberated the size of the original artwork, allowing artists greater freedom to create larger and more detailed wash drawings that could then be easily photo-reduced for engraving. The engravers, in turn, became more detailed in their treatment, more polished in their execution, more attuned to representing the subtlety of multiple textures on a small scale in black and white.

Within the division of labor required to produce a note, the most demanding and prestigious job was that of the engraver of the vignettes. Even this one element could require collaboration. Two media, each by a different hand, could be employed in a single design: the rendering of flesh and clothing was generally cut with a graver, whereas the background would be etched.² Artists such as James Smillie, a celebrated bank-note engraver,³ and John W. Casilear might execute the etched backgrounds for the figures, which had been engraved by someone else. Because engraving was a more difficult and slower process than etching, the creation of large steel plates for the art market might involve several engravers, each of whom would be assigned to different parts of a plate's execution. In 1848, an anonymous writer complained that, in this instance, the introduction of multiple hands resulted in a "labored patchwork" effect.⁴ But, at same time, the writer had nothing but praise for contemporary bank-note engraving, proclaiming vignettes and the notes on which they appeared as having the potential to be seen as works of art.⁵ In this case, a division of labor was, for this anonymous author, no impediment. One surmises that the writer approved of figures and backgrounds having their own distinctive characteristics, with the light, sketchy quality of the etched lines acting as a foil to the weightier lines of steel engraving.

The somewhat cramped vignettes of earlier years were infused with a new vitality, as more accomplished contrasts of highlights and shadow added drama and animation to the scenes. In addition, color was introduced and employed on



Figure 77. Back of \$5 note, Somerset and Worcester Savings Bank, Salisbury, Md., 1 November 1862, 78×184 cm. Collection of William L. Pressly.

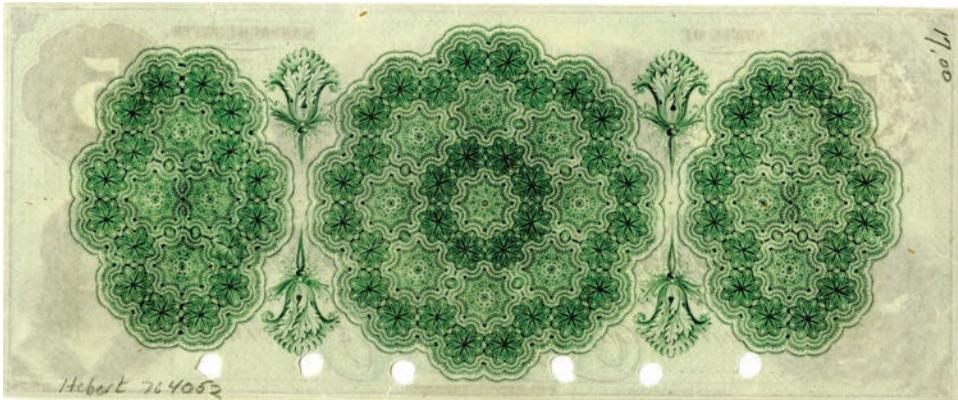


Figure 78. Back of Figure 61, \$5 Note, Holyoke Bank, Northampton, Mass.

an ambitious scale. One or two intaglio colors were most commonly used, and even the note's surface could be tinted with micro-lathework that repeated the denomination (see Figure 80). The denomination's number, known as the protector, could be superimposed in color on a large scale. The backs of notes also received more attention: elaborate patterns in color often fill the entire surface, as can be seen on the back of the Somerset and Worcester Savings Bank, Salisbury, Maryland (Figure 77), which, produced by the American Bank Note Company (ABNC), bears the printed date 1 November 1862. Another mesmerizing decorative example is the back (Figure 78) of the \$5 note illustrated as Figure 61. Because color registered as black if a note were to be photographically reproduced, such additions created yet another level of anti-counterfeiting measures.⁶

Jennifer Roberts writes eloquently about the precision, complexity, and symmetry of the geometric lathe-work that produced intricate designs and hypnotic patterns, their looping and oscillating lines reading as extending both above and below the flat surface of the paper.⁷ A single continuous line reproduces these patterns, and, as in a kaleidoscope, there is an element of unpredictability as to the

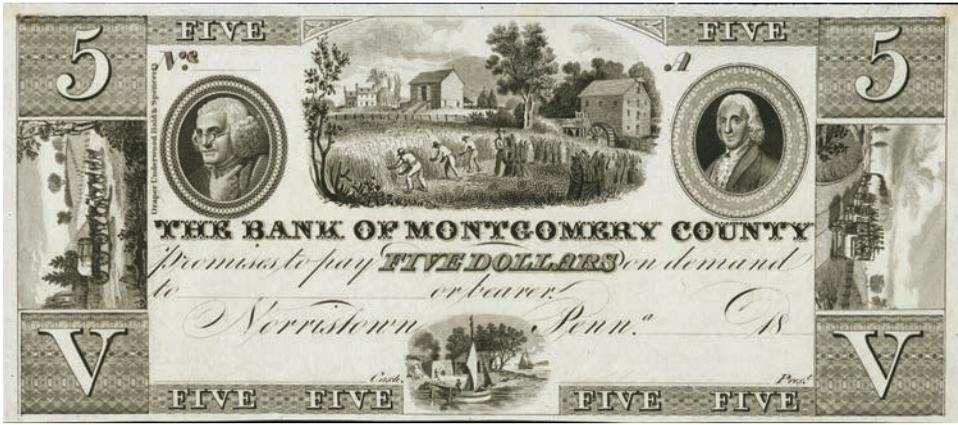


Figure 79. \$5 Note, Bank of Montgomery County, Norristown, Pa., 1830s. Image courtesy of Heritage Auctions.

result. Roberts enumerates the various functions they were intended to serve and their multivalent reception on both conscious and unconscious levels. Overall, these stunning displays of ornamental art play an important role in a bank note's impact, and engravers such as Asa Spencer and Cyrus Durand are far more than mere technicians. As the product of multiple hands and multiple processes, some of which are performed by machines, the artistry exhibited in vignettes is only the crowning achievement of a large supporting cast, involving varying scripts, intricate and mesmerizing geometric counters and micro-lettering, color accents, placement of personalizing signatures and handwritten numbers, and the quality of the overall composition and printing.

Two harvest scenes make for a telling contrast in terms of the evolving conceptions of a note's appearance. The \$5 note of the Bank of Montgomery County, Norristown, Pennsylvania (Figure 79), printed in the 1830s by Draper, Underwood, Bald & Spencer, exhibits an attractive restraint. The composition is symmetrical and repetitive with each side mimicking the other. Comparison with the \$10 note of the Bank of Lexington, Lexington, North Carolina (Figure 80), printed by the ABNC and with a written date of October 1859, shows that a great deal has changed. What is important here is not the advance in farming technology, whereby the McCormick reaper has greatly facilitated the task at hand, but the change in how the vignette is conceived. In contrast to the earlier, small-scale, self-contained image, a strong, dynamic diagonal energizes the expanded central vignette. The viewer, too, is brought much closer to these enlarged figures. The background opens to reveal a distant townscape with an approaching train, a reminder of the interconnectedness of rural and urban life. In the lower corners of the 1859 note, two allegories of Ceres, both of which exhibit a contemporary flavor (the figure on the left is more fancy head than goddess), have replaced the standard male portraits along with scenes of transportation on the 1830s note. In addition, bold lettering and the introduction of a vibrant orange color replace the white spaces of the earlier bill. The 1830s harvesting scene has its own charms and claims to excellence, but there is no mistaking the greater scope and dynamism exhibited in the later work, even though still relying on a symmetrical format.



Figure 80. \$10 Note, Bank of Lexington, Lexington, N.C., 8 August 1860, 7.3 × 17.9 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.



Figure 81. \$1 Note, Bank of Saint Paul, Saint Paul, Minn., 1 November 1858 (punch-canceled proof). Eric P. Newman Numismatic Education Society.

The \$1 note of the Bank of Saint Paul, Wisconsin (Figure 81), dated 1 November 1858, an early product of the newly formed ABNC, features three varied subjects artfully arranged in black and white. The exquisitely detailed river scene, the work of Rawdon, Wright, Hatch & Edson (RWH&E), holds down the left-hand side, with the bank's title gracefully arching above it.⁸ The smoking chimneys of the large steamboat and its distant neighbor on the left harmonize with the belching chimneys of the factories lining the shore, as all work together in contributing to America's prosperity. The vignette of the woman is positioned to the right and slightly above the steamboat vignette, as if she is contemplating this impressive scene. Lost in thought and her immaculate appearance unsullied by labor, she is at a table holding grain across her back. The masculine, public world of factories and waterborne commerce notably contrasts with this rural, domestic sphere. The beehive, a symbol of a fertile, industrious society, occupies its own Edenic corner. Two counters, one small and ornate, one large and dense, punctuate the remaining corners.

The competition among security firms required a constant supply of new images with which to entice the expanding clientele. A letter of solicitation containing vignettes and counters, dated 1 May 1856, produced by RWH&E, boasts, “We are constantly adding to our already extensive variety of Pictorial, Lathework and Ornamental Dies, prepared expressly for Bank Notes.”⁹ The text appearing on a specimen sheet put out by Bald, Cousland & Co., ca. 1857, offers another typical appeal as to the quality, quantity, and newness of its offerings: “We are prepared with every facility for furnishing Bank Note work of unequalled merit for beauty of design and execution, combined with the best protections extant, against alterations and counterfeiting, whether by Photography or otherwise. Our stock of Dies is the most modern in the trade, and embraces probably the most desirable and extensive variety from which to make selections, and we are constantly making additions thereto.”¹⁰

In the competitive market of bank-note engraving, firms astutely promoted their inventory, occasionally producing, as we saw in chapter 4, oversized advertisements assembled from four individual plates, which could be as large as 91.5 × 81 centimeters (see Figure 75). Dating mainly from the mid-1850s, these rare sheets allowed for the display of over 200 vignettes and counters and were undoubtedly framed for showroom viewing. Intended to impress and inspire, they are outstanding demonstrations of the quality of the engraving and compositional skills individual firms wished to convey to prospective clients as well as a proud display of their extensive inventory.

The circulation of counterfeit bills motivated firms to continue to improve the quality of their own notes to combat this threat. Not only did the imagery on paper money become increasingly more attractive and technically proficient, but it also demanded close scrutiny on the part of the holder, who needed to discern the quality of its execution to confirm its authenticity. In 1856, George Peyton published a book whose long title captures the omnipresent concern regarding counterfeiting: *How to Detect Counterfeit Bank Notes; or, An Illustrated Treatise on the Detection of Counterfeit, Altered, and Spurious Bank Notes, with Original Bank Note Plates, Engraved Expressly for this Work by Rawdon, Wright, Hatch & Edson, Bank Note Engravers, of New York*. In his preface, Peyton refers to “the science of detecting fraudulent bank notes,” and later on, he explains that in pursuit of this knowledge “the eye is the determining agent.”¹¹ Thus, his goal is to educate the public in connoisseurship. By being able to appreciate fully the beauty and quality of notes, the holder can determine their legitimacy. Close examination is crucial for establishing their bona fides. In this regard, Peyton lauds the multiple talents involved in a note’s creation: “Few persons would credit the fact, that to prepare a bank note for circulation, the united efforts of a dozen artists are required, each of whom is perfect in his department [lettering, lathe-work ornament, pictorial vignettes, portraits, composition, and printing]. Such, however, is the case: hence it is that our bank-note currency, in an artistic point of view, is superior to any in the world.”¹² Yet behind it all, one can hear the honking of Herman Melville’s goose.¹³ The artistic imagery might represent high-minded values, but this same imagery also held the key as to whether or not the note actually had value. When it came to bank notes, as far as the public was concerned, art and business had indeed to negotiate an extremely fraught relationship at every step of the way. Judging a note’s aesthetic quality provoked anxiety as well as pleasure.

The level of excellence and refinement achieved in bank-note design and its impact on the public did not go unnoticed in the press. As early as 1848, at the beginning of the explosion in the quality of paper currency's design and execution, *Godey's Magazine and Lady's Book* published an anonymous article titled "Bank-Note Engraving" detailing security printing's potential.¹⁴ Significantly, the article situates bank notes within the context of prints produced for the American Art-Union and for book illustrations. However, within this nexus of middle-class print culture, it assigns bank notes the leading role in advancing in America the art of engraving. With a lighthearted touch, the article even maintains, "And now, while we are on the subject, is there not really danger, Messrs. Danforths, Toppans, Rawdons, Drapers & Cos., if you go on improving the ten years over your present efforts as you have over those of the past, that your work will be 'too handsome for anything!'—that your notes will *not* pass, but be framed and *suspended* (whether the bank is [in existence] or not) as works of art!" In the case of the unsung designers and engravers, the anonymous writer asserts, "Though their names are never heard in the 'bank parlor' or seen in the 'signs' of the bank note companies, we need not be surprised that what was once but a mere money-making *trade*, should have risen to the dignity of a beautiful ART."¹⁵

In making its case, the article denigrates what had come before, heaping its most damning ridicule on Abner Reed's use of "his *one* design—that forlorn female, with a Grecian nose and a fool's cap, now standing up for 'Liberty,' now lying for 'Justice,' and anon tortured into a personification of 'Hope,' or such other hobgoblin as the taste or fancy of the [bank] directors' of that day might dictate."¹⁶ The \$5 note of the New London Bank, New London, Connecticut, executed in the 1810s (Figure 82), offers one example of Reed's use of his standardized female type, in this case the seated figure of Liberty. The article gives no quarter to such early embodiments of neoclassical taste, preferring to exploit Reed as a foil to what was to follow.

Charles Toppin's opening declaration in his 1855 article in *The Crayon*, which has already been quoted in this book's introduction, bears repeating: "Bank note engraving in this country . . . [has] of late years become legitimately entitled to



Figure 82. \$5 Note, New London Bank, New London, Conn., 1810s (proof). Image courtesy of Heritage Auctions.

rank as a branch of the fine, as well as useful arts.”¹⁷ Even if his statement, as with the one published in 1848 in *Godey’s Magazine*, is too quick to cavalierly dismiss much of what had come before,¹⁸ there is no question that at this time, the press and the public were beginning to take notice of the impressive developments happening in bank-note design and production. As some of the reasons for security printing’s success, Toppan cites developments made over the years “in every department of these paper mints, each of the companies bringing to their aid the best artists and most ingenious mechanics of the country, fostering and developing talent by liberal rewards, until a currency is furnished, which is well calculated to diffuse throughout the community a refined taste, and a love for the beautiful in Art.” This focus on quality ensured that each security firm had “a *stock* of dies, consisting of exquisitely engraved vignettes, portraits, and other ornaments, and engine turnings of the most elaborate character . . . conducted by men in every way qualified.”¹⁹

As we have seen, in 1858, three years after Toppan’s article was published, seven of the leading security firms, in response to the financial crisis of 1857, merged to form the ABNC. Charles Toppan served for several years as its director (1858–1863, 1866–1867). This consolidation of talent, equipment, and capital further enhanced the high standards achieved during the golden age of bank-note production. Outstanding notes in artistry, design and execution were disseminated in all regions of the country. Some of the newer states, such as Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota (these three are among those carved out of the Old Northwest Territory) were often in the forefront in acquiring innovative currency. Bank notes possessed a more idiosyncratic and uplifting charm in contrast to the more formal and regimented appearance of federal currency, which, beginning in 1861, was starting to replace them.

From early on, a major step in the firms’ attempts to reach a higher standard was their turning to outside artists for inspiration. We saw how Peter Maverick had commissioned the young artist Henry Inman in the early 1820s to execute designs to be engraved as bank-note vignettes. By the 1850s, this practice of looking to mainstream talent for the infusion of new imagery and approaches became ever more pronounced. In his article of 1862, A. H. Guernsey demonstrates how the ABNC presented itself to its customers more as an art gallery than as a complex business operation, the creation of original art being critical to its image. On his tour of the ABNC’s facilities, he was first taken to the modeling and designing rooms, which he describes as “a handsome suit of apartments with a lofty groined roof.”²⁰ The illustration accompanying this part of the article shows an artist painting at an easel and another working on a drawing at a desk by a window. At a table in the center of the room, two men, who are presumably clients, look at sketches while being observed by a man standing beside them. Close by are portfolios in an elaborate stand. Framed, matted artwork hangs on the walls, some of which, given the embarrassment of riches, are cavalierly exposed to full sunlight. Guernsey remarks on the art surrounding him: “The walls are covered with original drawings by [F. O. C.] Darley, [John W.] Casilear, [Francis W.] Edmonds, [Henry W.] Herrick, and others. Port-folios filled with such drawings are opened for our inspection. A connoisseur in art could nowhere spend a more pleasant day than here.”²¹ Thus, the ABNC orchestrated a first impression that, rather than focusing on filthy lucre, focused on the artwork adorning it.



Figure 83. John W. Ehninger, *Blacksmith*, signed and dated December 1856, watercolor wash drawing on card, 23 × 34.9 cm. Collection of Mark D. Tomasko.

An example of the synergy between an artist's drawing and the engraving after it can be seen in the wash drawing executed by John Whetton Ehninger (1827–1889) in December 1856 for Wellstood, Hay & Whiting, New York and Chicago (Figure 83) and DeWitt Clinton Hay's engraving after it executed early in the following year.²² Ehninger was well trained, having studied in Paris with Thomas Couture and in Düsseldorf with Emanuel Leutze. His drawing *Blacksmith* depicts the pleasurable routines centered on daily rural life that he was executing at the same time in his paintings. Yet even here, when the sketch was created specifically for a bank-note vignette, Hay took the liberty of adjusting his model to make it better fit its purpose. As seen on the \$2 note of the Merchants and Mechanics Bank, Whitewater, Wisconsin (Figure 84), printed ca. 1857–1859, Hay chose to lower the top of the preparatory drawing down to the crown of the bareback rider's hat, necessitating the shrinking of the horseshoe hanging from the rod, which would otherwise be too intrusive. In the composition, he applied more shading and darkened the foreground to provide a solid base for the entire design. Hay was so pleased with the result that, seeing this as a collaboration, he placed both his and Ehninger's names on the piece of paper posted on the side of the barn, a rare instance of such an acknowledgment being introduced into a vignette's composition. In this bill, the vignette is framed and highlighted by the micro-lettering of the number two across the surface. This brightly colored frame creates a vibrant design that characterizes the best work of the golden age.

Beginning in 1853, the illustrator Felix Octavius Carr Darley (1822–1888) injected a steady stream of dynamic, influential compositions into paper money's mainstream. Of all the independent illustrators, he was the most influential. Born in Philadelphia, Darley began his career as an illustrator of magazines and books

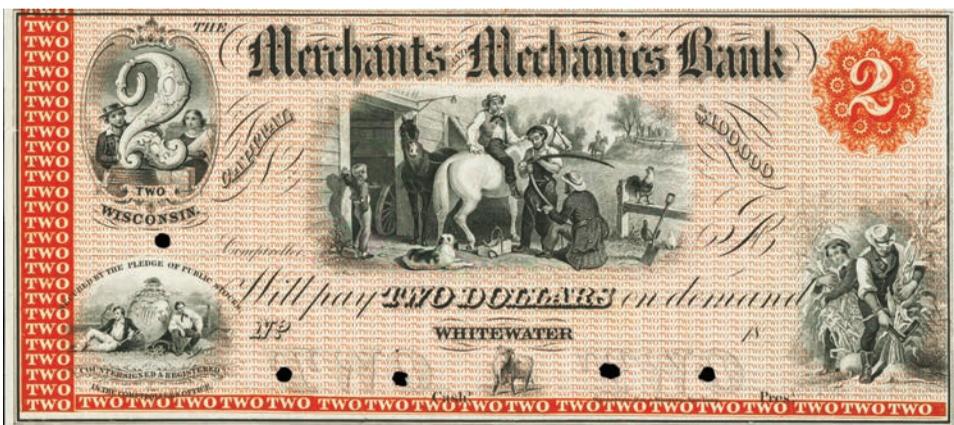


Figure 84. \$2 Note, Merchants and Mechanics Bank, Whitewater, Wis., 1857–1859 (punch-canceled proof). Eric P. Newman Numismatic Education Society.

as early as 1843. Moving to New York in 1848, he was responsible for a vast number of illustrations for important authors, including over 500 designs for James Fenimore Cooper’s novels.²³ He started by supplying drawings to Toppan, Carpenter, Casilear & Co., and his contributions to paper-money designs continued until 1879.²⁴ Darley’s years as a book illustrator had made him sensitive to the needs of engravers, with whom he enjoyed a close working relationship. His drawings, executed in pencil and ink outline, shaded with black wash or sepia ink, were easy to reduce through photography for the purposes of a vignette. His favorite subjects for bank notes were farming and scenes of bucolic contentment, episodes drawn from American history, Native Americans of the Western plains, frontier settlers, sailors, and a wide variety of different types of workers. Rejecting the use of stock figures for his designs, he would persuade his neighbors to pose as models, dressing them in the appropriate attire in order to achieve a level of verisimilitude. Even within the confines of a vignette’s small dimensions, he could infuse his realistic scenes with a dramatic energy.

Darley’s account book has survived, making it possible to track the progress of his oeuvre.²⁵ He also fortunately recorded his prices, which reveal how profitable this undertaking was. For the new arrangement with the Continental Bank Note Co., he began by charging \$60 for vignettes and \$40 for “end pieces,” by which he meant a vignette intended for a note’s side. On 5 June 1863, his prices increased to \$70 for a vignette and \$50 for an end piece. On 16 July 1864, the price of a vignette had jumped to \$125.²⁶ When one considers the artist’s productivity, his income just from the bank-note trade was considerable. Darley was proud of his contributions to this specialized field, submitting drawings for bank-note vignettes to the 1855 and 1856 annual exhibitions of the National Academy of Design. In 1861, Napoleon III, emperor of France, after seeing some of Darley’s wash drawings at the ABNC showroom, commissioned paintings based on four of them at \$1,000 each.²⁷ This transaction further demonstrates that designs for bank notes were seen as artwork rather than merely as a serviceable commodity, with the ABNC’s showroom operating more like an art gallery than a business firm’s shop.



Figure 85. \$5 Note, Menomonee Bank, Menomonee, Wis., 1850s, 7.5 × 17.5 cm (punch-canceled proof). Image courtesy of Heritage Auctions.

Darley's drawing for *Puritans at Prayer Surprised by Indians* is recorded in his account book under the date 11 December 1855.²⁸ In the vignette after it (see Figure 114), the mother on her knees in the foreground is just realizing that the dog is reacting to an approaching menace. Darley depicts the Native American on all fours crawling through the doorway as more beast than human; such savage intruders presage annihilation. On this same \$2 note of the Menomonee Bank, Menomonee, Wisconsin, appears a heroic vision of a Native warrior, for which Darley's drawing is dated to 1 July 1857.²⁹ *Indian* is an end piece that is designed, as here, to burst forth from a note's lower-left corner. The artist shows this rider calmly and commandingly controlling his fiery steed. Wild, free, and formidable, he rides, lance at the ready, in search of buffalo.

Darley's drawing for his popular vignette *Surveying* is recorded under the date 10 February 1856.³⁰ One appearance is on Toppan, Carpenter & Co.'s \$5 note of the Menomonee Bank, Menomonee, Wisconsin, which bears an 1850s date (Figure 85). In other of the artist's wash drawings for vignettes, Native Americans roam freely over an untamed land, but here he depicts Anglo-Americans subduing the wilderness by dividing it into parcels that can be owned and developed. Thomas Morris, Jr., writes that Darley, a consummate professional, tried out ten different positions before he was satisfied with the pose of the surveyor.³¹ Such painstaking deliberation testifies to the high standard that he and others exercised in the creation of their designs. These images were not casually tossed off as unworthy of much time or thought.

The ABNC's \$2 note for the State Bank of Michigan from the early 1860s is a prime example of the excellence achieved in bank-note design (Figure 86). Darley's vignette drawing *Indian Buffalo Hunt* dates to 30 May 1858.³² The artist is again indebted to paintings by his contemporaries, in this instance particularly those by George Catlin. His work is integrated into, and is an extension of, this larger world of American art and artists. Robert Hinshelwood engraved the design, creating an inspired tour-de-force of professionalism and artistry.³³ The frame surrounding the image features curved, decorative corners, reminiscent of the recently invented stereoscopic cards. One may not see this image in three dimensions, but its dynamism and intensity is enhanced by the "window" formed by the frame and the decorative

upper half. One looks at a perilous combat that is simultaneously near and far. Then, too, the overall design, with its dramatic playing of red and black against the white paper, makes for a visually enticing presentation. As in the \$3 note reproduced as Figure 57, the ABNC employed the Lyman system (discussed in chapter 4). Its division of the bill into two equal panels ensured that no one could raise the denomination given that it is built into the presentation.

The central vignette on the \$3 note of the Continental Bank, Boston (Figure 87), designed by Darley and engraved by DeWitt Clinton Hay in the early 1860s for the ABNC,³⁴ stands apart as a dazzling virtuoso display meant to grab one’s attention. Four men in a small boat are attempting to fend off an attacking polar bear.

Although an Arctic scene, as a suspenseful narrative of the unstoppable American exploratory spirit in the face of untold dangers, this subject is compatible with banks in any location. These men are literally voyaging into uncharted waters, risking their lives to learn more about the world in which they live.

Like the early vignettes illustrating victories of the War of 1812, this subject is prompted by current events, having been inspired by the adventures of Elisha Kent Kane, an American explorer and medical officer who had participated in two Arctic expeditions (1850–1851 and 1853–1855). Kane published his account in *Arctic Explorations* in 1856, but although the incident shown in the vignette is not in his book, he may have included this exciting detail in one of his colorful lectures.³⁵ Even if holders of the note did not recognize Kane’s expedition as the source of inspiration, that would not have interfered with their response to the scene’s nail-biting drama.

Darley records this subject in his ledger on two occasions. The first, *Sailors Killing White Bears*, occurs on 15 September 1857, and the second, *Sailors Attacking White Bears*, which is presumably his modified and final concept, is listed as September 1858.³⁶ Curiously, both citations incorrectly refer to more than one bear; more importantly, they both describe the men simply as “sailors,” who, like Darley’s



Figure 86. \$2 Note, State Bank of Michigan, Detroit, ca. 1859–early 1860s, 7.5 × 18.1 cm (remainder). National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.



Figure 87. \$3 Note, Continental Bank, Boston, early 1860s (remainder). Image courtesy of Heritage Auctions.

frontier explorers, are anonymous heroes. Although Kane may have inspired this narrative, the common man is the artist's protagonist.³⁷

Darley's concept harks back to an iconic American image, John Singleton Copley's *Brook Watson and the Shark* (National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.), where crew members in a small boat attempt to fend off an attack by a deadly predator. In Copley's account, the young Brook Watson is swimming in the warm waters of Havana Harbor when a massive shark, with gaping jaws, closes in on its prey. Both images are filled with suspense as a single figure in each, armed with a harpoon, attempts to kill the powerful assailant. But, unlike Copley, whose composition is monumental and epic, Darley chooses a more dynamic, destabilizing portrayal in his bank-note rendering: he orients his boat on a strong receding diagonal; the oars protrude in all directions; and the polar bear threatens to swamp the boat, immersing the sailors in frigid waters.

Darley's participation in both bank-note vignettes and book illustrations underscores a shift in attitudes toward security printing that had already been forecast in the 1848 *Godey's Magazine* article. When the publisher, W. A. Townsend & Co., New York, commissioned illustrations from Darley for a multivolume edition of *The Works of James Fenimore Cooper* (1859–1861), it proudly associated the artist's book illustrations with bank-note vignettes. In the preface to a 1862 book that reproduces Darley's *Cooper* illustrations absent the text, the publishing house writes:

It was known that the extensive bank-note system of our country had developed a style of engraving superior in brilliancy and effect to almost any thing which the European burins afford, but which, from its peculiarly laborious and costly method, had been confined nearly exclusively to bank-note dies. In order, therefore, to secure to these Vignettes a style of execution which should commend them to all patrons of art, it was determined to have them engraved, so far as practicable, by the leading artists in this much admired school. It was the first attempt, it is believed, to introduce the deep cutting and solid lining of a bank-note die into book work, and was only accomplished at a cost fully double that usually paid for book illustrations of a similar character.³⁸

The preface adds, "As a series of subjects, entirely national in theme, the product of our foremost draughtsmen, and executed entirely by American engravers, it is believed they possess an interest to connoisseurs and amateurs which will justify the enterprise."³⁹ It concludes by calling this undertaking "a monument of national art," a characterization made possible by the advances achieved in the golden age of bank-note engraving. Unfortunately, the experiment proved too expensive to bear repeating. Although bank-note engraving and popular illustration were to remain separate in terms of the complexity of their execution, artists and engravers continued to move easily between these categories.

Expanding the Role of Bank-Note Vignettes: Out of Many, One

In the 1850s, security-printing firms began to experiment with vignettes to create even more elaborate presentations. Bald, Cousland & Co. strung together three vignettes across the lower register of the \$5 note of the Bank of Greensborough,

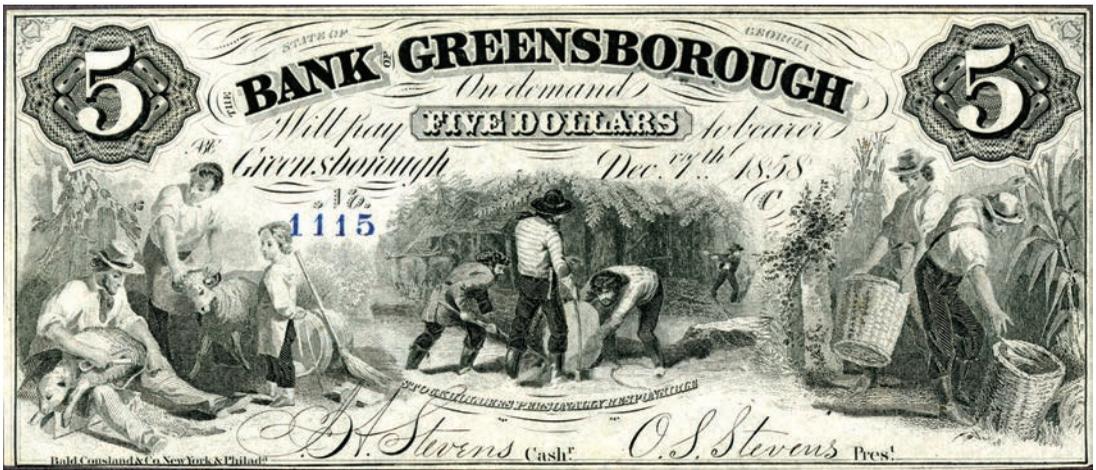


Figure 88. \$5 Note, Bank of Greensborough, Greensborough, Ga., 7 December 1858, 7.6×18.1 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

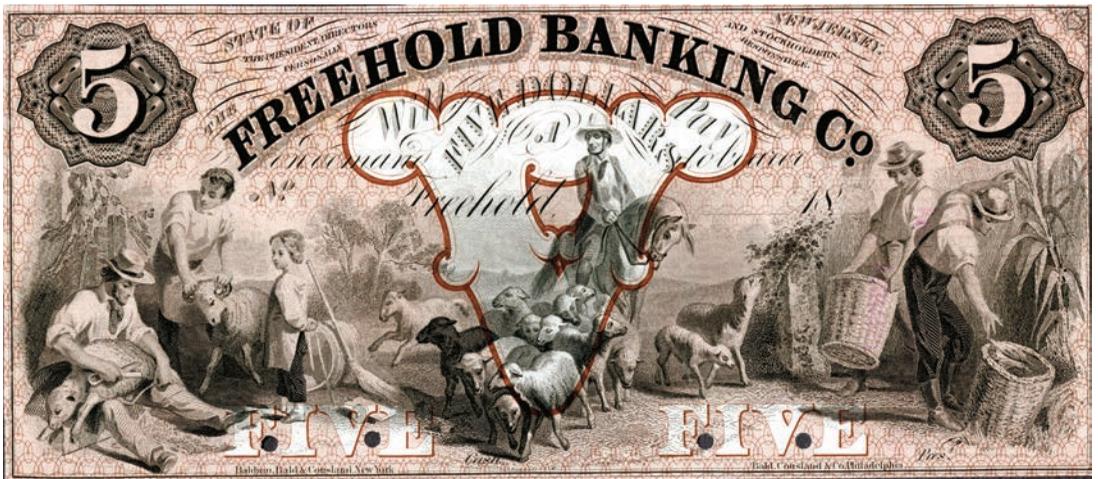


Figure 89. \$5 Note, Freehold Banking Co., Freehold, N.J., 1850s, 7.8×18 cm (punch-canceled proof). National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

Georgia (Figure 88), a bill that bears the printed date 7 December 1858. At the left sits a sheep shearer, the main protagonist in what is presumably a family affair. The younger man, who holds the next sheep at the ready, may well be his son, and a young child watches from the right-hand side. This young boy turns his back on his toy wagon, the cord of which he still holds in his hand, a symbolic gesture suggesting that he is soon to leave the world of childhood behind to participate in the world of adult chores. The central vignette shows woodcutters, and on the right two men, perhaps again father and son, fill baskets with plucked ears of corn.

The same firm, listed as Baldwin, Bald & Cousland, New York/Bald, Cousland & Co., Philadelphia (BB&C/BC), produced a similar configuration in the \$5 note for the Freehold Banking Co., Freehold, New Jersey (Figure 89). Yet, whereas

the three vignettes were kept somewhat distinct in the Greensborough rendition, they are made to form a seamless whole in the Freehold iteration, with a lattice-work security overprint further binding these elements together. In the center, the colored outline of a bold white “V” protector dramatically punctuates the note’s face. The center vignette was swapped out for a larger design that has been brought forward and now relates to the other two, a sheared sheep on the right even nibbling the vegetation on the wall belonging to the far-right design. By enlarging the center vignette with its prosperous landowner on horseback amid a flock of sheep, the design even inserts itself well into the upper register, the text being forced to arc above the rider to accommodate his assertive intrusion. In this portrayal, peaceful harmony reigns in an idyllic and blessed land.

Underlying these elaborate combinations is a strong aesthetic motive, one that sees the note’s face as the ground for one expansive picture, thereby providing a “canvas” for a grander, more imposing image conveying a more elaborate narrative. There may be as well an unspoken political motive. The United States’ motto “*e pluribus unum*” (out of many, one) appears in countless bank-note designs. The sentiment underlying this motto is reimagined in this stringing together of images into a single entity. When these notes were being produced and distributed, the country had never been so in danger of fracturing—a fear that was to be realized only a short time later when the South seceded from the Union. Albeit on a subtle level, these concatenated images may reflect a deep-seated desire that the parts should unite into one grand whole.

The creative combining of vignettes led to more complex compositions within a single design. The \$5 note of the Central Bank of Alabama in Montgomery (Figure 90), also the work of BB&C/BC and bearing a copyright date of 1855, employs a vignette consisting of three parts. At the left, one looks down Dexter Avenue in Montgomery, where the state capitol occupies the vanishing point. On the right, the paddle wheeler *Montgomery*, one of the city’s vital links to the world beyond, steams toward the bill’s right-hand margin. The pyramidal scene, having been placed front and center, is the most prominent. Here, a sailor sits on a barrel while looking up at the standing mechanic. An enslaved man, another important cog in this economy, sits on the margins of the two White men’s fraternal discourse.

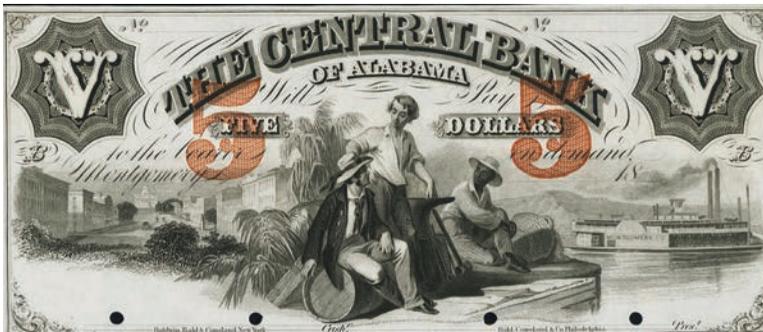


Figure 90. \$5 Note, Central Bank of Alabama, Montgomery, Ala., ca. 1855, 7.4 × 17.4 cm (punch-cancelled proof). Image courtesy of Heritage Auctions.

Another solution to occupying a bill’s entire face can be seen in the \$20 note for the Manufacturers & Mechanics Bank of Philadelphia (Figure 91). Here, two scenes fill the two sides: at left, men load wood onto a wagon; at right, others shovel coal into a cart.⁴⁰ The river with the off-loading barge is the artery for all this activity. The viewer enters the scene

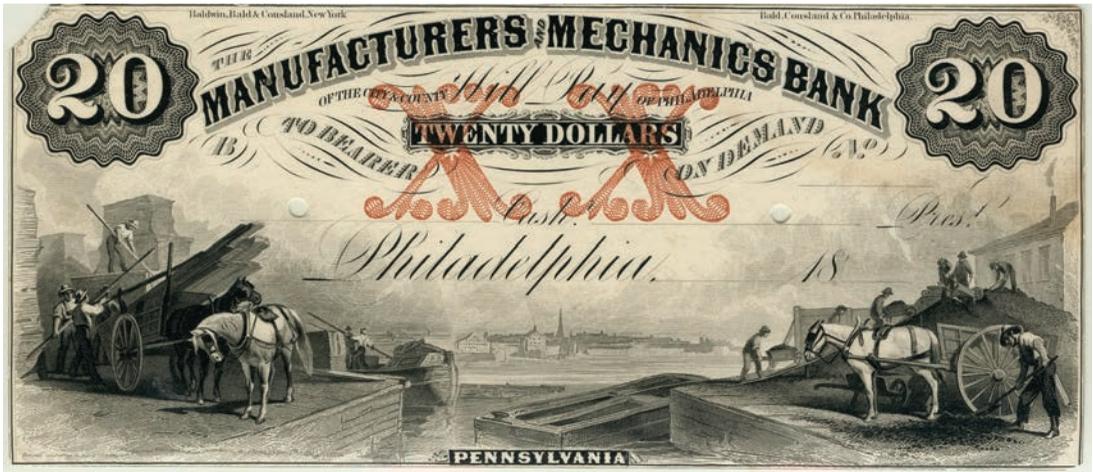


Figure 91. \$20 Note, Manufacturers and Mechanics Bank, Philadelphia, Pa., 1850s, 7.7 × 18.1 (punch-canceled proof). Collection of William L. Pressly.



Figure 92. Proof essay of the vignette used in Figure 128, \$5 Note, Northwestern Bank, Bloomfield, Ind., 1 July 1854. Eric P. Newman Numismatic Education Society.

looking down the sides of a canal emptying into the river, and in the far distance can be seen a cityscape dominated by a church steeple. The combinations of near and far are the opposite of that seen in the \$5 Central Bank of Alabama note, but both succeed in providing a majestic, panoramic whole.

Another dynamic presentation was to employ an expansive single vignette. In Figures 91 and 128, a foreground strip links together the scenes on left and right, turning the vignettes into impressive frames for the textual materials. In such instances, the “one” does not require the combining of the “many,” having been conceived from the start as a bold, impactful whole. The connecting landscape in Figure 91 encapsulates the larger world of transportation, on which the farmers and their urban customers depend. Toppan, Carpenter & Co.’s proof essay of the vignette used in Figure 128 shows how effective such designs are even when standing alone (Figure 92). The white space reserved for the lettering reads as a sunburst dispensing life-giving rays over the land.



Figure 93. \$5 Note, National Bank of the Commonwealth of the City of New York, 5 May 1853, 7.6 × 18.3 cm (punch-canceled proof). Collection of William L. Pressly.

The \$5 note of the Bank of the Commonwealth, New York, N.Y. (Figure 93), produced by Toppan, Carpenter, Casilear & Co. (TCC) and dated 5 May 1853, provides an even more ingenious solution to the use of bank-note art to cover a note's entire face. Given its exquisite detail and painterly effects, the creator of this design may have been John W. Casilear, a named partner of the firm from 1851–1855.⁴¹ The overall design plays on the word “Commonwealth” by chronicling a complex and clever panorama of a countryside managed for the common good. Despite abrupt changes in scale and foci, the parts hold together in one fantastical conceit. With playful inventiveness and radical experimentation, the disparate parts coalesce into a grand design of a thriving whole. At bottom center, the New York State security seal pins down and supports the financial soundness of this endeavor.

At the upper left, Niagara Falls spills its waters into the note's lower register of white paper, a reminder of the sublime beauty of the nation's natural wonders. The curved title of the bank cradles the central scene, showing two milkmaids with pails in a pastoral, bowl-shaped field framed by shrubs. Oversized in relationship to their surroundings, they set a dominating tone of bountiful and nourishing rural life. The view to the right extends the space they inhabit. A canal boat approaches a lock, and on the hill in the distance is a town. A domed government building rises atop the hill, where it is flanked by churches with their steeples, testifying to the harmonious juxtaposition of church and state. The panorama continues to the left in the line of distant hills, but no further attempt is made to integrate the waterfalls and trains with the central scene. The foremost train gracefully curves toward the center, and the bottom of the decorative “5” on the right-hand side provides an elegant parenthesis. Contained within it is a bustling wharf with an approaching paddle wheeler, bearing the name “FULTON,” after Robert Fulton, New York's great steamboat inventor. The “5” is itself a fantastical construct. Its delicate, foliated form stretches from top to bottom without obscuring the note's scenic content. Although it already resembles an organic, living entity, an “actual” vine also wraps itself around the joining of the upper with the lower half.

The designer of this note orchestrates a highly imaginative phantasmagoria in which constantly shifting realities add up to a grand vision of the state of New York from Niagara Falls in the west through a well-maintained pastoral landscape, traversed by trains and the Erie Canal and overseen by a town with a generic government building signifying Albany, to New York City's harbor in the east. The Palisades formed by the Hudson River can be seen on the far side of the harbor, a reminder of this important artery linking New York City to Albany and the Erie Canal. Not only is this a complex and creative work of art, peculiarly suited to the layout of a bank note, but in using the money itself, one can also participate and share in this depiction of the commonwealth's prosperity. Although bank notes achieve in a work like this a remarkable level of excellence, it is short-lived, as they are soon challenged, then replaced, by federal currency, which, given the greatly reduced types of bills printed and the government's conservative bureaucracy, provided far fewer opportunities for creative self-expression.

Great God, Our King

Money's Uneasy Relationship with Christianity

American Exceptionalism

The many themes and currents seen in bank-note iconography are all part of one grand overarching vision, a belief in how the nation is blessed and destined for greatness by a beneficent God. Just how deeply ingrained in the popular imagination was this conviction that America enjoyed a special relationship with divinity can be seen in three prominent antebellum texts.

Samuel Francis Smith's song "My Country, 'Tis of Thee" was sung for the first time at the 1831 Fourth of July celebrations in Boston. Expressing many of the nation's sentiments, it quickly became one of the country's unofficial national anthems. A phrase such as "Land of the Pilgrim's pride!" establishes for the country a Christian foundation. References to "templed hills" and one's heart filling "with rapture . . . like that above" also argue for a strong religious connection. At the song's end, God takes center stage:

Long may our land be bright
With freedom's holy light;
Protect us by Thy might,
Great God, our King!

The irony that the tune was derived from Britain's song "God Save the King" would not have been lost on the public. America has replaced an earthly monarch with a heavenly one.

Biblical references abound in the national discourse. In 1844, after a telegraph wire had been strung between downtown Washington and a railroad station in Baltimore, Samuel F. B. Morse, its inventor, had the honor of sending, without any punctuation, the first message, "What Hath God Wrought," a line taken from the Old Testament (Numbers 23:23). In the Bible, the sentence ends with an exclamation point and not a question mark. Morse's choice of a message gives credit to God for having made possible his technological advance that will help unite a far-flung land, but the context also makes clear that what God has wrought is a great young and formidable nation. The verse following this exclamation begins, "Behold, the people [of Israel] shall rise up as a great lion, and lift up himself as a young lion." The prophecy now applies to this new nation, whose inspiring progress is spiritual as well as technological.

The narrator of Herman Melville's novel *White-Jacket*, published in 1850, expresses even more forcibly how religious sentiments shape the nation's identity:

And we Americans are the peculiar, chosen people—the Israel of our time; we bear the ark of the liberties of the world. . . . God has predestinated, mankind expects, great things from our race; and great things we feel in our souls. The rest of the nations must soon be in our rear. We are the pioneers of the world; the advance-guard, sent on through the wilderness of untried things, to break a new path in the New World that is ours. In our youth is our strength; in our inexperience, our wisdom. . . . Long enough have we been skeptics with regard to ourselves, and doubted whether, indeed, the political Messiah had come. But he has come in *us*, if we would but give utterance to his promptings. And let us always remember that with ourselves, almost for the first time in the history of earth, national selfishness is unbounded philanthropy; for we can not do a good to America but we give alms to the world.¹

Melville's narrator offers a grand, inspirational vision of the country's destiny and purpose.

In creating a national narrative, America cast itself as the new Promised Land and its citizens as the Chosen People. Its "virgin" lands offered a new beginning to carry out God's will on earth. As God's country, it was to lead the world toward liberty and democracy. Many believed as well that American progress was a step toward preparing for the millennium announced in the Book of Revelation. In this telling, God's plans for humanity would be completed on America's shores, giving the nation a truly exceptional role in world affairs. Even if one did not embrace this eschatological vision, the nation still was thought to possess a superior character that distinguished it from all others. This conviction that the United States occupied a special place in world history gave rise in the twentieth century to the term "American Exceptionalism."²

What Hath God Wrought: A Blessed Holy Land

A major source for the nation's self-confidence was pride in the power and majesty embodied in the land itself, which, as a prime example of God's handiwork, was seen as an awe-inspiring celebration of the creation and the Creator. As Asher B. Durand, in his role as one of America's premier landscape painters, wrote in 1855, "The external appearance of this our dwelling-place . . . is fraught with lessons of high and holy meaning, only surpassed by the light of Revelation [i.e., the Scriptures]."³ For him, "the true province of Landscape Art is the representation of the work of God in the visible creation."⁴ Earlier in his 1848 funeral oration on the death of the landscape painter Thomas Cole, William Cullen Bryant had tellingly called Cole's paintings "acts of religion."⁵ Landscape vignettes represent God's wondrous creation, the sublimity of what God has wrought in America's expansive, "unspoiled" spaces. These landscapes are not only an inspiring, virtuous link to divinity, but they are also fundamental building blocks in establishing an American identity.

The vision of a pristine land waiting to be developed by a God-fearing people was there from the beginning. The nineteenth-century response was only continuing one of the nation's early founding myths: the country's vast spaces opened up the promise of leaving behind the decay and exhaustion of the Old World, with

its largely depleted resources, in favor of starting anew in a world of almost unlimited potential. In fulfillment of God’s preordained plan, the White settlers took to heart the injunction, “Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth” (Genesis 1:28). Vignettes often feature those animals, both wild and domestic, that populate this fecund world. From the perspective of White settlers, Native Americans had forfeited any claim to their land because of their failure to carry out God’s instructions to achieve America’s fruitful, productive, and prosperous potential.⁶ A vignette of a surveyor and his crew, engraved from artwork by F. O. C. Darley (see Figure 85), shows White Americans engaged with a “wilderness” whose original inhabitants are little more than interlopers who must make way for the divinely sanctioned transformation of the land into a European model of productivity. Using a felled tree as a workbench, a symbol of mastering the wilderness, these men are laying out boundary lines. By charting this territory, they ensure that this land can be fully possessed by a new people. As we saw in chapter 3, Rawdon, Wright, & Hatch borrowed a design executed for London’s Guildhall in order to turn it into a reference to America, not Britain, as a deified nation, with Providence hovering above sanctifying the earth (see Figure 44).

A vignette titled *The Red Ear* in die proofs shows that it is not just the land that is fertile but also its White inhabitants. The central vignette of the \$2 note of the Nicollet County Bank, Saint Peter, Minnesota (Figure 94), printed in 1859 by the American Bank Note Company (ABNC), depicts a courting ritual associated with husking bees. Because of the time-consuming difficulty involved in husking large quantities of corn, neighbors would join to assist in this undertaking. To allay the tedium involved, couples played the romantic game of Finding the Red Ear. Most ears were yellow, and when someone found a red one, this person could kiss the individual of his or her choice. This subject was popular in contemporary American art, and the vignette’s conception relies, in part, on the work of the painter Caleb Bingham. Even more apropos is Winslow Homer’s raucous “Husking Party Finding the Red Ears,” an illustration published in *Ballou’s Pictorial* of 28 November 1857. The vignette’s rendering, however, is more decorous than Homer’s, as suits its institutional context, but it still exudes abundant drama and excitement.⁷

In the vignette’s exuberant scene, a young man triumphantly holds aloft an eroticized red ear while attempting to embrace the object of his affection. His partner’s modesty calls for feigned resistance, but as with the chicken and rooster below, one can assume that this courtship ritual will end in a fruitful union. The female and male hands joined together at

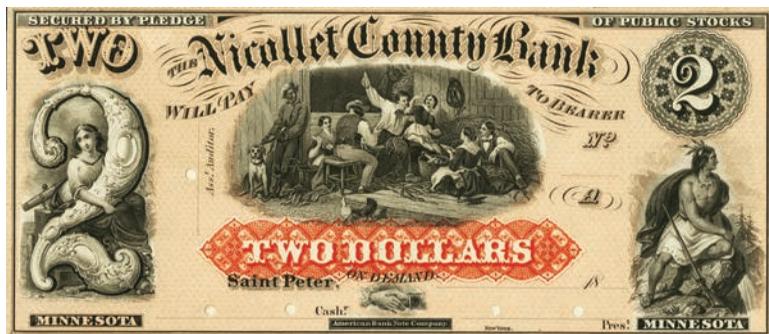


Figure 94. \$2 Note, Nicollet County Bank, Saint Peter, Minn., 1858–early 1860s (punch-canceled proof). Eric P. Newman Numismatic Education Society.



Figure 95. \$1 Note, Elmwood Bank, Cranston, R.I., 8 January 1847. Collection of C. John Ferreri.



Figure 96. \$1 Note, Hackettstown Bank, Hackettstown, N.J., ca. 1855, 7.7 × 17.6 cm (punch-canceled proof with bleed-through of ABNC stamp on back). National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

the bottom center in a matrimonial embrace confirm this expectation. The theme of fertility is continued at the left, where the figure of Hope, sitting on a bale with a ship's anchor behind her, demurely caresses what seems like a living organism in the form of the ornate, semi-tumescient "2." Her male counterpart appears on the \$1 note of the Elmwood Bank, Cranston, Rhode Island (Figure 95), printed by Wellstood, Hanks, Hay & Whiting (WHH&W) in the 1850s, where a farmer, backed by a field of corn, struggles to advance as he carries a large, fully tumescent "1."

The well-earned pleasures of rural life is a favorite subject of bank-note iconography. The left-hand side of the \$1 note of the Hackettstown Bank, Hackettstown, New Jersey (Figure 96), the work of Baldwin, Adams & Co. in the 1850s, features a wife blowing her horn to summon her husband, who stands and greets her with a wave from atop a hay wagon. The decorative curlicues that bracket the bank's name also cleverly double on the left-hand side as vibrations produced by

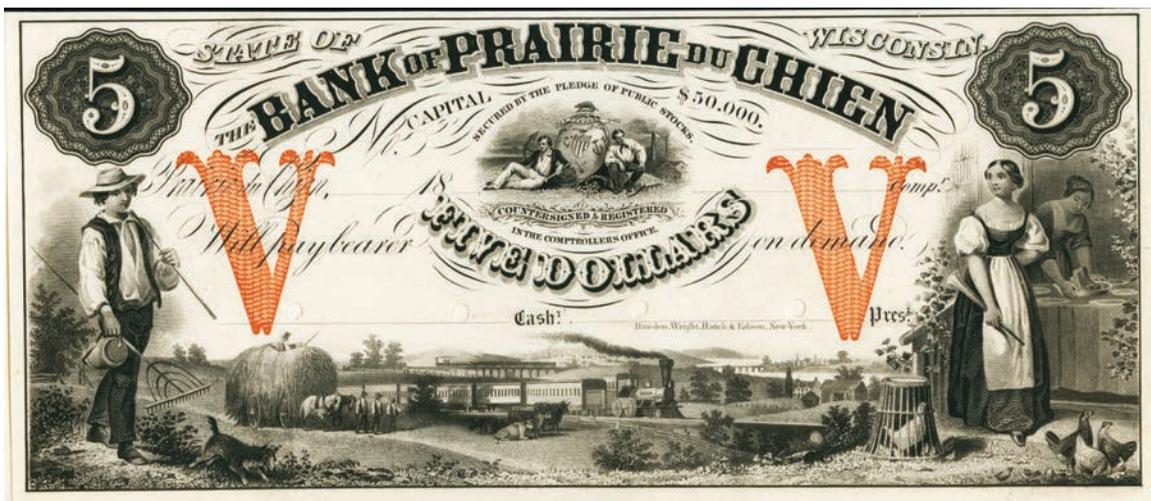


Figure 97. \$5 Note, Bank of Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin, 1850s (proof). Image courtesy of Heritage Auctions.

the horn. The home is on high ground, sheltered beneath trees, and nothing is out of place in this inviting domestic cocoon with its well-prepared table. The hay wagon is close by in the middle distance, whereas other men can still be seen in the fields in the background. Two dogs appear in the note. One, positioned at the bottom center, is the standard image of a watchdog ensuring the bank's security. The other is found resting on the ground to the left of the summoning woman, here as a sign of faithfulness, security, and domestic bliss.

In the \$5 note of the Bank of the Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin (Figure 97), printed by Rawdon, Wright, Hatch & Edson (RWH&E) in the 1850s, an image of the pleasures of rural life extends across the note's entire lower register (this design was employed in the mock note seen in Figure 76). A farmer occupies the left-hand side, returning from laboring in the fields. To the right, his wife, standing beside a set table, turns her head toward him, her summoning horn still in her right hand. The connecting background places this bucolic idyll into a larger perspective. Beyond the hay wagon are two trains, rushing across the countryside in opposite directions, as well as a large waterway with a town beyond, elements that bind together this prosperous republic built on a solid rural foundation. Familial ties are also affirmed: the man is leaving the public sphere of work and commerce to return to the private sphere of home and family, where in this idealized depiction of rural life, even the rooster is momentarily caged, preventing him from disrupting this blissful harmony.

When the Lord's Prayer states, "Give us this day our daily bread" (Matthew 6:11), it speaks to the sanctity and holy purpose underlying agricultural pursuits, the outcomes for which are ultimately dependent on God's grace. Images of farming and husbandry reflect these religious sentiments. Tellingly, when the new religion of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints decided to issue its own currency, it followed this pattern. In 1836, the Mormons, who had settled in Kirtland, Ohio, tried to open the Kirtland Safety Society Bank. In the following year, the bank commissioned paper money from the firm of Underwood, Bald,

Spencer & Hufty.⁸ Instead of paying to have new vignettes created, the Mormons chose images from the firm's existing stock, and their choices unsurprisingly emphasize the virtues associated with rural pursuits.

Images of the harvest could even be conceived in sacramental terms. The small vignette at the bottom center of the \$3 note of the Bank of Washtenaw, Ann Arbor, Michigan (see Figure 48), shows two sheaves of grain piled together. To the right is a field, where more grain waits to be cut, with a farmhouse glimpsed above it. A rake standing upright makes for an evocative image, recalling the cross. Hanging from it is a piece of rope with a pitcher tied to one end and a cup with a handle to the other. Even if the juxtaposition is between grain and water rather than bread and wine, this is still no casual arrangement. The plow that prepared the soil is behind the sheaves to the right, and on the uppermost sheaf lies a sickle, a reminder that death (the cutting of the grain) is followed by rebirth (the transformation into life-giving bread).

In the lower-right corner of the \$1 note of the Columbia Bank in Washington, D.C. (Figure 98), dated by hand 20 October 1852 and printed by Danforth, Bald & Co., a young woman, seated and barefoot, cradles a sheaf in her left arm while holding out a sickle in her extended right hand. Fruits, as if having spilled out from an absent cornucopia, are beside her. She is a modern version of Ceres or Abundance, but significantly she looks back and up at the church steeple in the distance with its cross boldly silhouetted against the white paper.

By giving churches and their steeples dramatic prominence, views of towns often emphasize the important role played by Christianity within American life. An early fictional panorama of bustling commerce (see Figure 168) shows a wide range of activities, including African Americans picking cotton, a horse or mule grinding grain, an allegorical nude child with scales that allude to Justice, a loaded wagon, the building of a structure, and a loaded barge on a river with a scene of boatbuilding on the far bank. But most important of all is the tall steeple in the distance aligned on the image's central axis that rises from a cluster of houses. It is a reminder of John Winthrop's stirring call to the Pilgrims to "be as a City upon a Hill" that will demonstrate to all the power and glory of the dedicated Christian



Figure 98. \$1 Note, Columbia Bank, Washington, D.C., 20 October 1852, 7.1 × 18.1 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

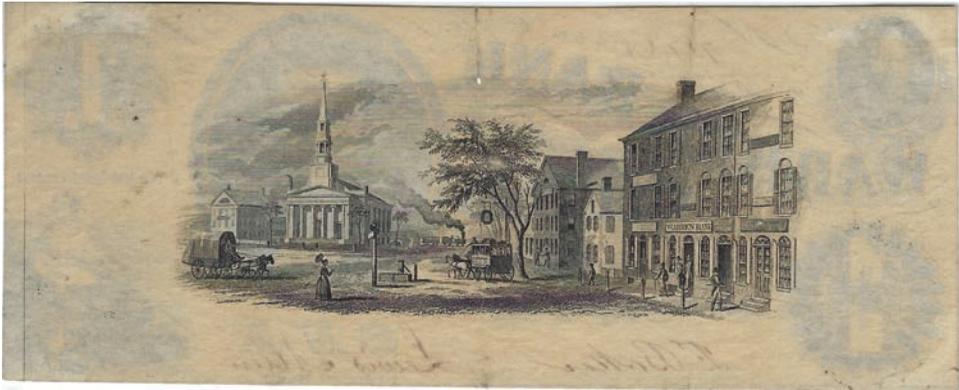


Figure 99. Back of \$1 note, Warren Bank, Danvers, Mass., 1 January 1854. Collection of C. John Ferreri.

community seen in the foreground (“the eies of all people are upon us”).⁹ The back of the \$1 note for the Warren Bank, Danvers, Massachusetts, from the 1850s (Figure 99), shows a view of the town in which the bank on the right-hand side cannot compete for attention with the church, which is the vignette’s focal point. The front of the note bears the imprints of RWH&E and the New England Bank Note Co., along with the printed date 1 January 18__ (blank space to be filled in by hand). It may only be a happy coincidence, but the portrait of George Peabody on the bill’s face, which bleeds through to the back, not only associates this renowned financier and philanthropist with the church rather than the bank, but its oval frame also suggests an overarching rainbow alluding to God’s Covenant with humanity. Then, too, there are the imposing churches facing the green on the \$5 note of the Holyoke Bank, Northampton, Massachusetts (see Figure 61). One can argue that the town, not the vignette, privileges these churches, with the design only reflecting the town’s priorities. Yet the vignette goes a step further in showing the cross on the tallest spire breaking through the note’s inner, heavy border to connect with an unseen world beyond.

Another indication that bank notes pay homage to America as a Christian nation is their many depictions of the country’s forbearers performing acts steeped in Christian piety. The first scene in the narrative of the foundation of the United States is invariably Christopher Columbus setting foot in the New World. The principal vignette on the \$100 note for Farmers Bank, Wilmington, Delaware (Figure 100), printed by Underwood, Bald, Spencer & Hufty (UBS&H), shows Columbus hailing a large cross (significantly, not a Catholic crucifix) with members of his crew reverentially bowing or kneeling in adoration.¹⁰ Vignettes of the landing of the Pilgrims at Plymouth Rock in 1620 recall the steadfast faith that led these determined settlers to start anew in a strange land.¹¹ A vignette on a note of the Agawam Bank, Springfield, Massachusetts, depicts the religious leader Roger Williams being welcomed by the Narragansett Indians on landing in 1638 in what was to become Rhode Island.¹² Williams named the town he founded Providence, in acknowledgment of God’s gracious power. A vignette entitled *First Sabbath/Quinnipiack 1638*, which appears on notes of the New Haven Bank in Connecticut, shows the Reverend John Davenport on 25 April 1638 preaching under a giant oak tree to the Puritan settlers. Although they had landed

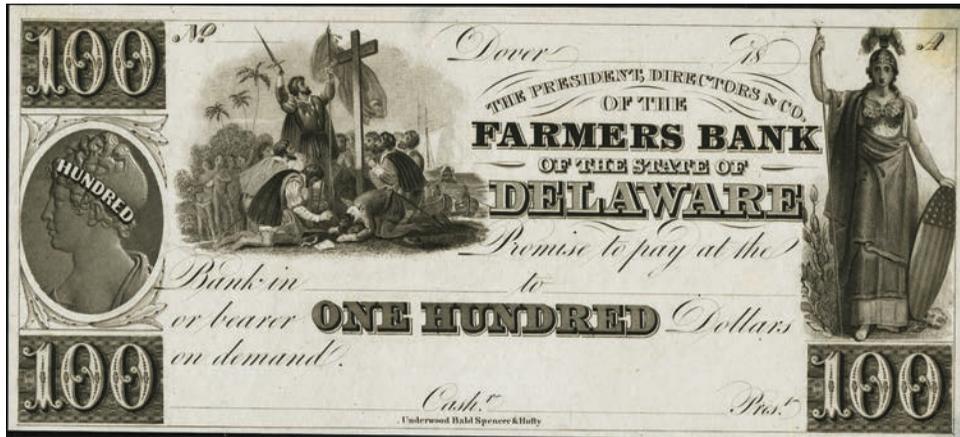


Figure 100. \$100 Note, Farmers Bank, Wilmington, Del., late 1830s–early 1840s (proof). Image courtesy of Heritage Auctions.

at this site only the day before, the colonists still observed the Sabbath as a day of rest and worship. (The Quinnipiack settlement flourished, renaming itself two years later New Haven.)¹³ Two vignettes depict John Eliot preaching Christianity to the Native Americans in their own Algonquin language. One of these bears the title *Eliot Preaching to the Indians, Nonantum, 1646*, which shows his first successful attempt made in what was to become Newton, Massachusetts.¹⁴ A vignette that appears on the \$1 note of the City of Baton Rouge, dated 15 March 1866, shows a French priest counseling Native Americans in Louisiana.¹⁵ They stand on a bluff overlooking the Mississippi River before the red pole from which the city gets its name. The pole is dyed red from the blood of the scalps hanging on it, and one assumes the priest will soon bring an end to such customs. A vignette (see Figure 114) depicting a pious Puritan family at prayer with “savages” silently sneaking up on them demonstrates that there were martyrs as well as pious settlers and missionaries in the planting of Christianity on American soil.

The Absence of Biblical Subject Matter: A Prohibition on Serving God and Mammon

As the preceding examples demonstrate, American bank-note iconography often reflects a belief in an exceptional nation rooted in Christian values. Yet, despite Christianity’s profound influence on America’s sense of self, bank-note vignettes display virtually no scenes drawn from the Bible. For centuries in Europe, biblical subject matter had been one of the mainstays of high art, far more ubiquitous than scenes drawn from classical antiquity. But such subject matter is conspicuously absent from American paper money. Part of this reluctance can be explained by America’s having inherited England’s Protestant bias against depicting religious scenes, which were felt to be too closely aligned with Catholic “idolatry.” Such subjects were also uncommon in American painting, but not to the degree prevalent in the medium of bank-note engraving.

In the first half of the nineteenth century, Christianity’s Second Great Awakening (the First Great Awakening had taken place in the 1730s and 1740s in colo-

nial America) built momentum in the holding of religious revivals that brought ever more people to religious denominations. The dispassionate approach of deism, so popular with the Founding Fathers who had embraced its emphasis on reason over divine revelation,¹⁶ could not compete with the intense personal conviction fostered by evangelical brands of Christianity. By the 1850s, an estimated one-third of Americans were affiliated with organized religion,¹⁷ and America was a nation strongly influenced by Christian beliefs and principles, with Protestantism being its culturally dominant form. In the allegories appearing on bank notes, a connection to the Almighty is often implicit, as figures such as America/Liberty look heavenward, but God remains absent either in text or image.¹⁸ The tribulations and soul-searching caused by the traumas of the Civil War led to mottoes that incorporated “God” being considered for coinage.¹⁹ The two-cent coin of 1864 was the first to display the phrase “In God We Trust.” The year before, “God and Our Right” and “In God Is Our Trust” had already appeared on U.S. paper money, albeit on notes that were not in general circulation.²⁰ Paper money had to wait until 1957 before “In God We Trust” was introduced onto the \$1 Silver Certificate and the other denominations soon thereafter in accordance with an act passed in 1955. Yet, beginning with the Civil War, the fact that the national currency, coins in particular, proudly proclaim God’s name makes the deity’s absence on bank notes all the more remarkable.

Asher B. Durand’s work offers an instructive example of how the approach to biblical subject matter on bank-note vignettes differed from that of other popular imagery. Around 1820, the artist produced a certificate for the New York Typographical Society in which he portrays the importance of printing to humanity’s progress (Figure 101). The certificate depicts the Columbian press, a type that was invented in 1813 in Philadelphia by George Clymer. The name “Columbian” refers to America, and whereas a majestic American eagle forms the counterweight on top of Clymer’s frame, Durand transformed this detail into an impressive flying eagle holding aloft a portrait of Benjamin Franklin, the country’s most famous and influential printer, while displaying a banner that reads, “THE ART [OF PRINTING] PRESERVATIVE OF ALL ARTS.” To the left, he depicts the superstition and ignorance that becloud the world. In one part, a bearded elder pauses in the act of dispatching with a knife a young boy on an altar, an action recalling the biblical story of Abraham and Isaac. The divine light radiating from the press’s bed stays his hand. In the foreground, a beseeching, chained man also looks to the press’s published truths for his deliverance.²¹ To the right, ushered in on a cloud, is America, holding a pole surmounted by a liberty cap, and in her right hand she holds up a scroll labeled “INDEPENDENCE.” The artist places a crucial detail at the bottom center of the certificate, where an open book, identified as the “HOLY BIBLE,” is encircled by the inscription, “PRINTING THE SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE.” The dispersal of the Christian religion through text and image is at the heart of the press’s liberating mission, and it is America’s printing presses that will accomplish this feat.

Yet, when one looks at Durand’s bank-note vignettes, there is a notable absence of religious imagery. Taking as an example the firm’s advertising sheet of ca. 1828 (see Figure 25), in addition to portraits of great men, one sees ennobling allegories presented in a classical vocabulary. Only the subject of the man wrestling the lion at the far right of the third row from the bottom has been identified



Figure 101. New York Typographical Society Certificate, P. Maverick, Durand & Co., 5 September 1829. Manuscript and Archives Division, New York Public Library.

as a biblical scene of Samson wrestling the lion. As we have seen in chapter 3, this is probably a misidentification, the subject having more likely been drawn from the classical repertoire showing Hercules and the Nemean lion, one of two of Durand's vignettes drawn from the twelve labors of Hercules, the other being Hercules battling the Lernaean hydra. Despite Durand's having given the Bible in his certificate so prominent a role in printing's mission, such references are absent from his bank-note engravings. The question remains as to why biblical references and imagery are so rarely encountered on bank notes in a nation so strongly influenced by Christian teachings.

The primary reason for the virtual absence of biblical imagery and the invocation of God's name on bank notes lies within the doctrines of Christianity itself. Traditionally, there has been an antagonism between religion and commerce, between the call to live a righteous life and the accumulation of wealth. One could argue—and many did—that wealth was an external sign of God's grace and favor,²² but there was also a strong counterargument that wealth should be seen as a sign of greed and spiritual corruption. As the Apostle Paul wrote to his protégé Timothy at Ephesus, those who desired to become bishops or deacons should be “not greedy of filthy lucre” (1 Timothy 3:3, 3:8). In the same letter, he cautioned, “But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and *into* many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil” (1 Timothy 6:9–10). In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus had already inveighed against the dangers of materialism:

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:

But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

...

No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

(Matthew 6:19–21, 24)

The two realms of money and the sacred had an uneasy relationship, and Jesus again underscored their difference when he physically assaulted the moneychangers in the temple (see Matthew 21:12–13 and Mark 11:15–17). Another famous incident involved the Pharisees, who, in an attempt to trap Jesus, inquired, “Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?” Jesus then had the Pharisees bring him a penny, to which he pointed and said, “Whose *is* this image and superscription?” After they had replied “Caesar’s,” Jesus responded, “Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s; and unto God the things that are God’s,” thereby giving each of the two realms its independent sphere of influence (Matthew 22:17–21).

Although their imagery spoke to many of the country's deeply held beliefs, bank-note firms and the bankers they served presumably thought it best not to introduce biblical imagery into the iconography of bank notes out of respect for the scriptural division between God and mammon, between the things that are Caesar's and those that are God's. When depicting conspicuous wealth, it was better to adopt classical subject matter, such as in the case of Henry Inman's design of a toga-clad, enthroned king enjoying his hoard of coins (see Figure 24) or allegorical vignettes depicting coins spilling out of cornucopias.

Although engravers were reluctant to employ overt biblical imagery, they had no compunctions in showing religious subjects that popular culture had adopted



Figure 102. \$2 Note, Alleghany County Bank, Cumberland, Md., 1 June 1861, 7.4 × 18.4 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

for its own. St. Nicholas or Santa Claus appears in a number of vignettes celebrating Christmas, which is a national holiday as much as it is a religious one.²³ St. George and the Dragon is another subject that through the centuries had taken on more than just religious connotations; this third-century warrior, who is commonly depicted as a medieval knight, is honored for his chivalry and courage.²⁴ But far more common was the conversion of religious imagery into secular subjects, with the new subject matter retaining more than a hint of the sacred glory embodied in the original source. Whereas engravers of vignettes eschewed portraying Mary and the Christ Child, their many renditions of a contemporary mother and child were still imbued with a holy resonance, retaining some of the power and aura of the archetype. This approach was hardly restricted to banknote engravings, having proved popular in European art from an early date. To give a nineteenth-century example, one could point to Sir Thomas Lawrence's painting *The Calmady Children*, which was translated into a popular vignette, as seen on the \$2 note of the Alleghany County Bank, Cumberland, Maryland (Figure 102), dated 1 June 1861 by ABNC. In this work portraying two young girls, Lawrence deliberately evokes images of the Christ Child with the slightly older St. John the Baptist looking on. By associating his subject with the high-minded, sacred art of the old masters, he successfully elevates his portrayal beyond the level of mere portraiture. Prints after this painting proved highly popular, and an 1835 mezzotint bore the title *Nature*, demonstrating again that this work was perceived as something more than portraits of Laura Anne and Emily Calmady, offering instead a winsome, if somewhat overly sentimental, expression of the exuberant purity of childhood within a Christian framework.

A specimen sheet (Figure 103) produced by the firm Durand & Co. Bank Note Engravers, ca. 1839–1842, unlike the earlier Durand, Perkins & Co. sheet, contains several vignettes derived from Christian imagery. The head in the oval above Washington's portrait is based, although reversed, on the head of the angel in Leonardo's *Madonna of the Rocks* (Louvre, Paris).²⁵ The woman in the upper right-hand corner has been taken from a print after Raphael's *Saint Catherine of Alexandria* (National Gallery, London), where she is shown standing beside the wheel that had been intended as her manner of execution. The vignette, however, transforms her into an image of Maritime Commerce, substituting the anchor of

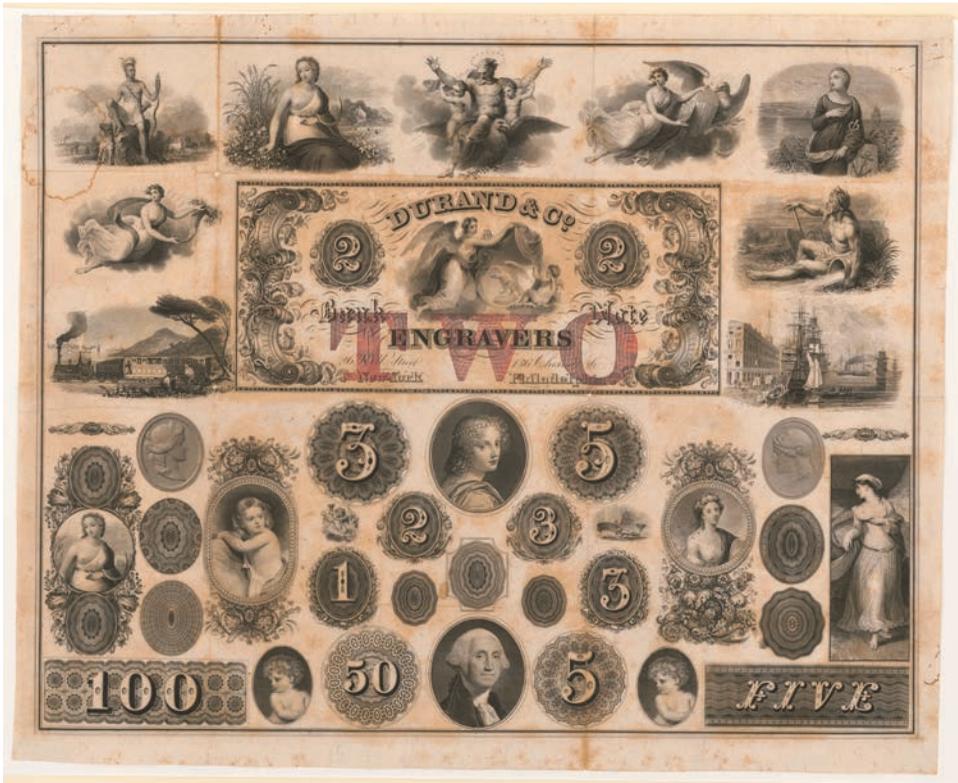


Figure 103. Specimen sheet, Durand & Co., New York, ca. 1839–1842, 26.7×34 cm (plate mark). Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Marion S. Carson Collection, Washington, D.C.

Hope for the wheel, giving her Mercury’s caduceus to cradle, and changing the background to depict a ship at sea.²⁶ Yet her hand on heart and her tender, yearning gaze, which in the painting is directed toward a light breaking through clouds, remain to suggest an experience that is more divine than worldly. In the process, the vignette comes very close to sanctifying maritime trade, as the divine realm is employed to serve the marketplace. The line between God and mammon has become dangerously thin as one realm threatens to subsume the other.

The vignette in the upper center of this same specimen sheet shows an old man with extended arms supported by angels or cherubs riding the back of an eagle.²⁷ This design also harks back to Raphael, in this instance a print after his painting *The Vision of Ezekiel* (Figure 104). As was traditional, Raphael took liberties with this subject, found in the opening to the Book of Ezekiel, by transforming the Hebrew prophet’s vision of divine creatures into the symbols of the Four Evangelists: the large adoring angel is Matthew; the lion is Mark; the ox is Luke; and the eagle is John. But in the vignette, Durand again makes adjustments that negate a straightforward Christian reading. The eagle, shown clutching an olive branch and arrows, is now America, and with this transformation, the old man riding on the eagle’s back is more easily read as the classical god Jupiter than as Raphael’s God the Father.²⁸ Despite this change, the Christian source for this design still reverberates, derived, as it is, from a revered grand-manner source.



Figure 104. Raphael, *The Vision of Ezekiel*, 1518, oil on panel, 40×30 cm. Galleria Palatina (Palazzo Pitti), Florence. Scala/Art Resource, New York.

In 1968, the bank-note researcher John A. Muscalus refuted the claim that biblical imagery is a rare occurrence when he published a pamphlet entitled *The Extensive Use of Christ on Paper Money Circulated in the United States*. This publication traces the vignette of a young boy in an oval (for an example, see the child who appears twice in the bottom level of the specimen sheet reproduced as Figure 103) to a print after Sir Joshua Reynolds's painting *The Holy Family with the Infant St. John* (Tate Britain, London), where this boy is indeed the Christ Child. Muscalus's identification of this easily overlooked source is a significant achievement, but he readily acknowledges that the public would have been ignorant of the image's origins.²⁹ When excerpted from *The Holy Family*, the child approximates something closer to Beatific Innocence, much like any number of other images of appealing children who adorn paper currency of the period.³⁰



Figure 105. \$10 Note, Bank of Pittsylvania, Chatham, Va., 16 May 1861. Image courtesy of Heritage Auctions.

As we have seen, references to the Bible are generally discrete, modifying and secularizing the Christian context without entirely losing sight of the original association. A vignette on the \$10 note of the Bank of Pittsylvania, Chatham, Virginia, conceived by John W. Casilear and printed by the ABNC (it bears a written date of 16 May 1861),³¹ shows a young woman in timeless attire pouring water from a jug into a trough from which sheep are drinking (Figure 105). Next to her is the well from which she has drawn the water. The vignette is titled on the die proof *Rebecca*, thereby confirming its association with the Old Testament story of Rebecca at the well (Genesis 24:19–20). In the biblical account, Rebecca pours water into a trough for camels, an animal that was obviously alien to America, but a biblically literate nineteenth-century audience could be counted on to see this idyllic, pastoral scene as echoing the well-known religious story. In this way, the vignette carries over a biblical narrative into a highly idealized, contemporary setting and, in the process, shows the continuity between biblical times and modern America, the new Holy Land.

Rebecca strikes a nostalgic chord for an idyllic innocence, for a peaceful, pastoral harmony. However, another reference to biblical iconography strikes a very different cord, an apocalyptic one summoning the nation to take up arms in an epic confrontation. This vignette, titled *The Death-Blow* (Figure 106), is one of two designed by Emanuel Leutze, an artist who enjoyed a commanding reputation.³² Charles Burt executed the engraving after it in 1863, seemingly too late for it to appear on a bank note. This vignette, however, offers a quintessential expression of one vision of America's role in the world.



Figure 106. Die-proof essay after Emanuel Leutze, *The Death-Blow*, 1863, 9.5 × 6.4 cm (plate mark). Division of Work and Industry, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution.

America, armed like Minerva with a spear and shield, strikes the death blow by piercing the neck of a large, grotesque dragon under her feet. On her breast, instead of Medusa's head, she wears the Sun of Truth. But also underlying the conception is the Christian image of St. Michael casting down Satan in the form of a dragon taken from the Book of Revelation (12:7–9). America's sacred mission of vanquishing evil with the light of truth is told in an amalgam of both classical and Christian iconography. The Western cultural tradition combines to support her role as the new defender of the faith in liberty and democracy. In general terms, the dragon that is being slain represents all the evils that plague humanity, for which America is the only nation equipped with the special endowments required to overcome them. In a more specific level, however, the dragon represents the malignant evil embodied in the Confederate States of America. In this regard, the vignette is also attuned to Julia Ward Howe's lines in "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," first published in *The Atlantic Monthly* in February 1862:

Let the hero, born of woman
Crush the serpent with his heel
Since God is marching on.

Howe's hero is Christ, and the crushing of the serpent's head by Eve's seed is foretold in Genesis (3:15). Both Howe's war with the satanic serpent and the vignette's war with the satanic dragon characterize the conflict with the South in terms of apocalyptic imagery that puts the Union on the side of Christian truth and justice. In Leutze's vignette, America has taken the place of St. Michael as the avenging archangel who rights humankind's wrongs. In this eschatological vision, America becomes the means by which satanic forces are cast down into the bottomless pit, thereby ushering in the millennium according to the Book of Revelation (20:1–4), when Christ will reign on earth for a thousand years at the beginning of the end times. It would be hard to imagine a nation being cast in a more grandiose and divinely inspired mission than this, where the sacred, drawn from the Bible, and the secular, drawn from classical mythology, merge into an image of implacable and invincible divine fury.

The War between God Almighty and the Almighty Dollar

Bank notes unsurprisingly endorse America's progressive capitalist system. Promoting a belief in the merits of imperial expansion and White supremacy, bank-note imagery valiantly attempts to smooth over the strong fissures between religious beliefs and a competitive, even cutthroat, marketplace and the collateral damage caused by Manifest Destiny and slavery. Even the medium itself—filthy lucre—testifies to money's tense relationship with religious values.

One of the first observers to use the word "exceptional" in describing America was the acute French observer Alexis de Tocqueville. His book *Democracy in America*, which was based on a visit he had made in 1831, was, however, not entirely positive in its assessment of the American experience:

The American position is, therefore, entirely exceptional and it is quite possible that no democratic nation will ever be similarly placed. Their

strictly Puritan origin, their exclusively commercial habits, the country they inhabit, which appears to divert their minds from the study of science, literature, and the arts, the nearness of Europe which allows them to neglect such study without relapsing into barbarism, a thousand such reasons of which I have been able to signal only the main ones, must have focused the American mind, in this unusual manner, upon purely practical concerns. Everything—his passions, needs, education, circumstances—seems to unite in inclining the native of the United States earthward. Only religion persuades him to raise an occasional and absent-minded glance toward heaven.³³

Tocqueville describes America as exceptional but not because of any divine mission, focusing instead on its “exclusively commercial habits.” He paints a bleak picture of a largely soulless nation, whose creative side must continually be nourished by European culture. America’s emphasis on commerce creates deficiencies that only European sophistication can help remedy. The Declaration of Independence had spoken of “the pursuit of Happiness” as an inalienable right, but Tocqueville is more concerned with Americans’ interest in “the pursuit of wealth.”³⁴ For him, greed has diverted its citizens “from the pleasures of imaginative thought and the labors of the intellect.”³⁵ In a later passage, he admonishes, “usually love of wealth lies at the heart of Americans’ actions.”³⁶

Tocqueville was hardly alone in his condemnation of the nation’s commercialism. In 1836, the American writer Washington Irving published a short story in which the narrator furnishes a romanticized account of the tranquil and contented life of the inhabitants of a creole village in Louisiana, where little has changed in generations. These villagers of Spanish, French, and Native American descent enjoy a life that has “none of that eagerness for gain, and rage for improvement, which keep our people continually on the move, and our country towns incessantly in a state of transition.”³⁷ By way of contrast, a nearby, newly created town is a hive of activity, but anxiety and division accompany its production of wealth. The narrator sarcastically writes of the dire influence of banks and commercial pursuits that threaten to introduce a debased religion of their own: “The almighty dollar, that great object of universal devotion throughout our land, seems to have no genuine devotees in these peculiar villages [i.e., villages like the creole one described in such glowing terms]; and unless some of its missionaries penetrate there, and erect banking houses and other pious shrines, there is no knowing how long the inhabitants may remain in their present state of contented poverty.”³⁸ On his departure from the creole village, he prays “that the inhabitants might long retain their happy ignorance, their absence of all enterprise and improvement . . . and their contempt for the almighty dollar.”³⁹

After his first trip to the United States in 1842, Charles Dickens picked up on the phrase “almighty dollar” in summarizing his disenchantment with the nation’s worship of this false idol, which he, again adopting a religious perspective, personifies as the Old Testament’s golden calf. His comments were made in the context of praising Boston’s culture, which he felt had not so completely succumbed to revering this false god as had the rest of the country: “The golden calf they worship at Boston is a pygmy compared with the giant effigies set up in other parts of that vast counting-house which lies beyond the Atlantic; and [in Boston] the

almighty dollar sinks into something comparatively insignificant, amidst a whole Pantheon of better gods."⁴⁰ But the dollar is indeed God Almighty in the counting-house, which stands for the rest of the nation, and paper money is its lifeblood. From this perspective, the uplifting imagery on bank notes serves the interests of avarice and greed.

The Marxist historian Walter Benjamin proposes that the designs on paper money go so far as to herald a new religion, the "religion of capitalism:" "For nowhere more naively than in these documents [i.e., nineteenth-century world bank notes] does capitalism display itself in solemn earnest. The innocent cupids frolicking about numbers, the goddesses holding tablets of the law, the stalwart heroes sheathing their swords before monetary units, are a world of their own: ornamenting the façade of hell."⁴¹ In this interpretation, the designs adorning the Almighty Dollar serve a different deity than God Almighty: mammon has assumed God's mantle.

There is a spiritual side, as well as a materialistic one, to bank notes' content, even if some people may uncharitably insist on seeing this higher dimension as being literally paper thin. Bank notes valiantly attempt to serve two masters, both God and mammon, in what is ultimately an unresolvable, tension-filled relationship. In terms of monetary value, the holder of this currency needed to be extremely concerned and cautious about its worth, but at the same time, the images to be found on these notes attempt to inspire and uplift (or, from the cynic's perspective, to bamboozle). Yet bank-note iconography effectively establishes a public memory that fosters national pride in a heroic vision of a mythic past and a glorious sense of the nation's identity and purpose. In framing its version of the nation's culture and its place in world affairs, this imagery helps to create, elevate, and enshrine the republic's identity, enthusiastically projecting the popular, more expansive idea of American Exceptionalism that regards the country as the vanguard of all nations in fulfilling God's plan for humanity. Of all America's arts, bank notes reach by far the widest audience in their exaltation and popularization of the nation's imagined self.

Visiting Europeans were all too aware of the country's propensity for self-congratulation and self-deception. As Tocqueville comments, "There is nothing more irksome in the conduct of life than the irritable patriotism Americans have. The foreigner would be very willing to praise much in their country but would like to be allowed a few criticisms; that is exactly what he is refused."⁴² Fanny Trollope had the same reaction to Americans' stubborn belief that "they are the first and best of the human race."⁴³ In this regard, Americans were not only greedy for money but were also "greedy for praise,"⁴⁴ a result of their insecurities as much as their pride, and their paper money pandered to both cravings.

American Indians and White Culture

After the defeat of the British and their Native American allies in the War of 1812, American Indians became increasingly viewed as less of a threat and more as tragic figures. Beginning in the 1820s, the American Indian was to become a favorite protagonist for the nation's most prominent writers and poets, a distinguished list that includes James Fenimore Cooper, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and William Cullen Bryant. Gareth E. John writes, "Between 1824 and 1834 about 40 novels, epitomized by James Fenimore Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826), were published informing what G. Harrison Orians termed the 'cult of the Vanishing American.'"¹ This interest intensified after the passage of the Indian Removal Act of 1830, which required all Eastern tribes to relocate west of the Mississippi, and witnessed the forced, brutal Cherokee exodus that took place in the winter of 1838–1839, known as the Trail of Tears, a designation that, if anything, understates the harsh reality.

Painters quickly followed the lead of writers in employing American Indians as a quintessentially American subject, as a part of a national heritage that was slipping away. During the 1830s, there were several important expeditions to document the Plains Indians and other tribes before the inevitable encroachment of Western expansion. The artist George Catlin (1796–1872), using St. Louis as a base, embarked on five trips from 1830 to 1836, his 1832 trip traveling among the tribes of the upper Missouri and the southern plains being his most productive. Based on these expeditions, he exhibited close to 500 paintings in New York in 1837, the first of a number of tours of his Indian Gallery to American cities (and to European ones as well), which included portraits of Native Americans from a variety of tribes, landscapes, and views of Indigenous villages and customs.² In addition, Catlin published in 1841 *Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs, and Conditions of the North American Indians: Written during Eight Years' Travel (1832–1839) amongst the Wildest Tribes of Indians in North America* (the dates assigned to his travels in the book's title are the exaggerations of a born promoter who wanted to make his qualifications seem more extensive and current). In 1849, Daniel Webster, who wanted the government to acquire the collection, characterized the Indian Gallery as "an *American* subject, as belonging to us, to our history, to the history of a race whose lands we till, and over whose graves and bones we tread every day."³ Karl Bodmer, a Swiss artist who had accompanied Prince Maximilian of Wied on his Western expedition in 1832–1833, also made a significant contribution to American Indian iconography. Numerous other books documenting Native American life were also published during the second quarter of the nineteenth century, including Thomas L. McKenney and James Hall's *History of the American Tribes in*

North America (1837–1844), illustrated with portraits by Charles Bird King, and James Winer's *Events in Indian History* (1842).

Although American Indians appeared on bank notes from the 1810s onward, this iconography was particularly popular from the late 1830s to the Civil War. At its best, bank-note imagery could encapsulate the ambivalence and conflicting feelings that permeated public opinion at mid-century. Firms employed a wide repertoire of visual sources to contextualize this theme for a popular audience, and during their most creative period in the late 1840s and 1850s, they produced notes that, while indebted to America's painters, developed and expanded on their themes to create their own impressive body of work mythologizing the American Indian as an essential part of the nation's identity. Although Native Americans were never included in any meaningful way as citizens of the new republic, they formed a critical part of the country's sense of self. The land to which the United States laid claim could be seen, like its original inhabitants, to be wild and savage, a fiercely beautiful, untamed wilderness waiting to be civilized by its enlightened new arrivals. Additionally, the land could be seen as having given birth to peoples, whether Native American or White, who are imbued to an unusual degree with such virtues as nobility, courage, pride, independence, and a love of freedom.⁴

The interest in American Indians on paper money ended with the bank-note era. By the time of the Civil War, the elite literary and art worlds had already moved on from such subject matter.⁵ In 1861, when the U.S. government began issuing its own currency, it employed images of Native Americans sparingly. One exception is John Chapman's 1840 painting of Pocahontas's baptism (see Figure 158). When the decision was made to introduce the historical series of paintings in the Capitol Rotunda on the backs of the National Bank Note series of 1863, of which Pocahontas's baptism was one, a vignette of Chapman's painting entered U.S. paper money's repertoire due as much to the importance of its Rotunda site as to the significance of its subject matter.

In terms of U.S. federal paper currency, a last, late vignette depicting a Native American is the most powerful of all, the impressive portrait of Ta-to'-ka-in'-yan-ka or Running Antelope, a Hunkpapa Lakota chief. This image, which appears on the \$5 Silver Certificates Series of 1899 (Figure 107), possesses an ennobling gravitas: an individual whose features depart from European norms is depicted with photographic clarity in a large portrait format.⁶ In fact, the engraving is based on a photograph taken by Alexander Gardner in his Washington studio in 1872, when Running Antelope was invited to meet with President Ulysses S. Grant (the peace medal around the chief's neck had been awarded to him a few years earlier). But, as is often pointed out, despite the sense of heightened ethnic realism, the designer placed a majestic war bonnet on the chief's head unrelated to his tribe instead of the three-feathered headdress in Gardner's photograph. Even at this late date, when the American frontier was perceived as having come to an end and there was increasing pressure to preserve a "vanishing" civilization, the artist privileged pictorial concerns over ethnographic ones. Ultimately, the vignette was meant to be far more than a portrait: it is an image of America's identification with, and usurpation of, the American Indian as a symbol of strength, dignity, and nobility.



Figure 107. \$5 Silver certificate, United States of America, Washington, D.C., series of 1899, 7.6×18.1 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

The following four sections explore aspects of how Native Americans were employed in American paper money. The first examines their role as an allegorical figure, symbolizing a geographical entity, whether it be a continent, nation, colony, or state. The second explores how American Indians were portrayed as protagonists within pictorial narratives, sometimes as villains but more often as the heroic “noble savage,” portrayed as a dignified leader or fearless hunter. The final two sections reflect the ambivalence White America felt about the Native American’s fate by contrasting the two cultures or portraying the trope of the “Vanishing Indian.” Both the artists and their public contemplated with melancholy resignation what they considered was the Native Americans’ unavoidable fate of annihilation before the country’s inexorable expansion.

The American Indian as an Allegory for the Nation

The image of the American Indian as an allegorical representation for Europeans and Euro-Americans of the American landmass has a complex history. In Europe, from classical antiquity, the world was envisioned as the joining of three continents: Europe, Asia, and Africa. With the advent of Christianity, Europeans designated Jerusalem as the world’s geographical and spiritual center. Christopher Columbus’s “discovery” of the New World in 1492 radically altered this conception, but it did not change the West’s Eurocentric understanding of this larger world. Its civilization was superior to all others and, particularly so, its perception of a benighted America, a name that had been coined in 1507, when the German cartographer Martin Waldseemüller printed his pioneering and influential maps of the known world. Waldseemüller placed the name “America” on his version of what was to become South America in honor of Amerigo Vespucci, who, following in Columbus’s footsteps, had explored a greater portion of the southern continent. Soon, the name came to be applied to the New World in its entirety, and America joined Europe, Asia, and Africa to create the concept of the Four Continents, a convention that was to survive well into the nineteenth century, despite the additional discoveries of the continents of Australia and Antarctica. From the

mid-sixteenth century in European art, the Native American, usually a dusky female shown seminude with feathers in her hair and often with a weapon, such as a bow and arrow, represented America. With great elasticity, the American Indian as America, female or male, could stand for the Western Hemisphere, for the land that was to become the United States, or for a single colony, depending on the context.

Just as the name “America” was born from a misperception, so was the name “Indian,” which was infamously derived from Columbus’s egregious miscalculation in 1492, when, arriving on the shores of the New World, he thought he had reached the East Indies. Despite the name’s inappropriateness, it was the established term from the time of Columbus until well into the twentieth century. Today, other terms are preferred, such as American Indians, Native Americans, and Indigenous Peoples of the Americas. Ironically, in the nineteenth century, the definition of “Native American” did not apply to American Indians but instead to Whites who had been born in America.⁷ In this light, Benjamin Franklin, George Washington, and Thomas Jefferson were all Native Americans, but those peoples who had been here for millennia were excluded in a counterintuitive affront to common sense.

Employing American Indians to represent first the colonies and then the United States was a conceit of White culture, a way for Whites to differentiate themselves and their new country from their European origins. For them, the figure of the Native tended to be generic with little regard for the complexities found in the various cultures. Given that these cultures were centuries in the making, the differences among tribes in dress, customs, and languages were immense. But ethnographic variety was of little concern to bank-note engravers, who, for the most part, employed a generalized type. The actual appearance of Indians was subordinated to what Whites wanted and needed to imagine.⁸

The first image on American paper money appeared in 1690, when the Massachusetts Bay Colony issued notes displaying its seal (see Figure 1). In the seal, which, as we have seen, was conceived in 1629, a stalwart Native American male, a figure of strength and generosity, faces the viewer with an open, welcoming stance, a bow in his left hand and an arrow in his right pointing downward to signify peace. The flanking trees, deliberately out of scale, are shorthand for the unending forests with their promise of fertile land waiting to be claimed. Heinz Tschachler has demonstrated that this conception is indebted to the European trope of “the Wildman,” a near-naked figure who was thought to inhabit the Old World’s wilderness woodlands.⁹ The iconography of the Wildman, however, does not account for the full range of complex and nuanced meanings underlying the figure of this American Indian. Richard Trott, the London silversmith who conceived and executed the seal in 1629, also had another model close at hand. An engraving after John White’s drawing of a Native American, published in a book of 1590, shows an imposing Native as naked, save for an animal hide across his loins, and as holding a long bow and an arrow (Figure 108). The book concludes with images of the Picts, the primitives of early Britain, in order “to shewe how that the Inhabitants of the great Britannie have bin in times past as savage as those of Virginia.”¹⁰ According to this interpretation, when the English are looking at Native Americans, they are seeing reflected an image of their own former selves.



Figure 108. Engraving by Theodor de Bry after John White, *A Weroan or Great Lorde of Virginia*, from *A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia*, Frankfurt, 1590. Library of Congress, Rare Book and Special Collections Division, Washington, D.C.

In the seal, the Native American has a scroll issuing from his mouth inviting others to “COME OVER & HELP US.” The Pilgrims habitually construed their lives and that of the world around them within a Christian context. The welcoming figure echoes the man of Macedonia who, appearing to the Apostle Paul in a vision, pleaded with him to “Come over into Macedonia and help us” (Acts 16:9). Early on, the governor of Massachusetts, John Winthrop, in a letter to his predecessor John Endicott, reinforced this point when he described the scroll in the 1629 seal as having been inspired by “the Evangelizing of the Aborigines.”¹¹ The European settlers literally put words into the Native’s mouth, who cries out for Whites to accomplish his people’s salvation. That America’s original inhabitants are inviting more God-fearing people to join in occupying more of their lands is, of course, an expression of the colonists’ desires rather than their own. A lot is packed into this single image: the Native American is an allegorical, uncivilized figure representing the newly discovered lands, cast as a needy supplicant and grateful partner in welcoming Europeans to America and an alter ego for the White settlers themselves.

Whether in a colony’s seal or standing alone, all versions of American Indians on Colonial and Continental currency feature a standing allegorical male. The warrior on Georgia’s £5 note issued in 1775 (Figure 109) is labeled “AMERICA.” A bold, aggressive figure who has just shot an arrow, the warrior signifies the willingness of Georgia’s colonists to stand up to Great Britain’s oppression (as we have seen, in Massachusetts, the Sons of Liberty had literally dressed as Natives in rebellious



Figure 109. 5-Pound note, Georgia Colony, 1775. Eric P. Newman Numismatic Education Society.

opposition to British authority when they took part in the Boston Tea Party).¹² Yet, it was one thing to employ the American Indian to represent the colonists and another to see the Native peoples as themselves belonging to the polis. During the American Revolution, Georgia's Indigenous populations, as well as those from the other colonies, were viewed with suspicion and hostility. The Declaration of Independence, issued on 4 July 1776, in its list of twenty-seven grievances against King George III concluded with its most serious charge: "He . . . has endeavoured to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages, whose rule of warfare, is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions."

In terms of nineteenth-century bank notes, the less threatening image of the American Indian maiden or princess, as a personification of the political entity America, soon overtook that of the male warrior.¹³ As late as 1858, Rawdon, Wright, Hatch & Edson (RWH&E) featured a Native American maiden as the symbol of the youthful nation within an oval bordered by seals of the various states that helped compose the Union (Figure 110). Unlike the scantily clad allegories that dominated earlier depictions, she is fully clothed and unusually thoughtful. Although armed with bow and arrow, she is still far from formidable. Her armband, necklace, and elegant feathers speak instead to sophisticated refinement, and her European profile places her within the world's "civilized" countries.

The Native American maiden as the United States often borrows even more directly from European conventions. In Toppan, Carpenter & Co.'s vignette on the \$5 note of the Strafford Bank, Dover, New Hampshire (Figure 111), America or Columbia as Liberty is as much a classical figure as a native one (although the American Bank Note Company [ABNC] printed the note reproduced here in the early 1860s, the vignette's patent date is 1857). Her feathered bonnet and quiver of arrows establish her American identity,¹⁴ but the pole with the liberty cap and the national shield speak to a classical heritage. The two wellsprings, classical and native, harmonize in the visual pairing of the compact rods of the Roman fasces at her feet with the compact cluster of arrows in her quiver. These two traditions complement, rather than compete with, one another.

A pitfall to be avoided in interpreting these images is to assume an Indigenous maiden is representing her people when she is in fact representing America. On the \$20 note of the Bank of Washington, Washington, North Carolina (see Figure 136), for example, a kneeling woman, who alludes to the goddess Ceres, points out the land's fruitful abundance to the Native American. In an earlier version of this vignette, a White female in classicizing attire, representing America, stands beside Ceres.¹⁵ The Native maiden is still endowed with this figure's features. She, in her turn, is another allegorical figure representing America rather



Figure 110. \$3 Note, Merchants' Bank, Syracuse, N.Y., 1 July 1852, 7.7×17.7 cm. Image courtesy of Heritage Auctions.



Figure 111. \$5 Note, Strafford Bank, Dover, N.H., early 1860s (proof). Image courtesy of Heritage Auctions.

than just its Native peoples: the classically based model employing Ceres and the Native American model are variations on the same theme.

The cross hanging from the necklace of the American Indian maiden appearing at the right of the \$100 note of the Elm City Bank, New Haven, Connecticut (Figure 112), also sends mixed messages. This vignette is the work of Jocelyn, Draper, Welsh & Co. and dates to either 1854 or 1855, when it also employed its ABNC imprint. It is not so much about Native conversion as it is about personifying the United States as a Christian nation.¹⁶ Her handsome feathered bonnet, totally out of place on a Native American female, signifies her lofty role in representing the entire country.

In the antebellum era, engravers represent the allegorical figure of America in a variety of forms, some of which overlap. At times, the classical prototype stands alone. America or Columbia, without any reference to an Indigenous

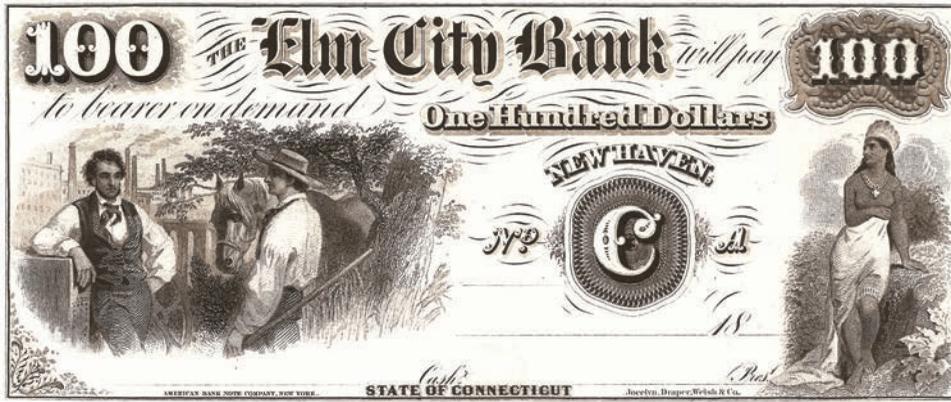


Figure 112. \$100 Note, Elm City Bank, New Haven, Conn., mid-1850s (from sheet of two notes: \$50 and \$100). Image courtesy of C. John Ferreri.

component, is far from unusual, but the Native princess on bank notes offers a viable option.¹⁷ As will be discussed in chapter 9, which examines federal currency, the most prestigious commission for a representation of the republic was awarded to Thomas Crawford, whose statue was designed for America's grandest pedestal, the top of the dome of the U.S. Capitol. In its penultimate incarnation, the statue represented America as Liberty in a purely classical guise, but the final version, the one represented on American paper money, incorporated an element derived from Indian culture. In this, the most prominent of the nineteenth-century allegories of America before the 1886 installation in New York Harbor of the Statue of Liberty, the American Indian plays a role, even if this reference had initially been excluded.

In the nineteenth century, as the nation asserted its role on the world stage, American paper money also featured vignettes showing the allegorical American Indian within a global context. The trope of the Four Continents had long been popular in Europe, and bank-note imagery adopted it for its own. Despite its crude execution, one of the more attention-grabbing portrayals of the Four Continents is a vignette created by Wellstood, Hanks, Hay & Whiting dating to the 1850s, which appears on the \$1 note of the Globe Bank of Providence, Providence, Rhode Island (Figure 113). A kneeling Atlas supports on his shoulders the globe with the Four Continents perched on top and beside it. The two most important continents, as seen from the point of view of Western history, are Europe and America, and their seated personifications occupy the globe's apex with a crowned Europe looking to America, who wears a feathered Indian head-dress and holds the shield of the United States. Thus, America, which in the trope of the Four Continents represents both North and South America, is here more specifically associated with just this one all-important country. Asia, holding a parasol, stands on a cloud at the right, where she is appropriately related to Europe because they are adjoining land masses. On the opposite side, Africa, holding an ivory tusk, stands beside America, again an appropriate association given the slave trade between the two continents. From the top of the globe, America looks down at a reclining female, who rests her head in her left hand with her arm propped up on books. Her right hand touches a scroll filled with writing



Figure 113. \$1 Note, Globe Bank, Providence, R.I., 1850s (proof). Image courtesy of Heritage Auctions.

as she looks to Father Time. This contemplative figure symbolizes History, but a history that is concerned only with the unfolding of the U.S. experience.

Savages and Noble Savages

In the nineteenth century, American Indians were often depicted on paper money as protagonists in pictorial narratives. A few vignettes depict the “savage” Indian, but most are weighted heavily toward the “noble” Indian who exists in harmony with nature. Negotiating rivers and lakes in canoes and inhabiting transportable teepees, these Native Americans leave a light footprint. Significantly, even when characterizing American Indians in a negative light, the bank-note repertoire rejects the category of the debased Native brought low by contact with White civilization, particularly regarding the availability of alcohol. Bank-note imagery also excludes Native Americans from the economic world. They are perceived as having no more use for money than the animals they stalk. This is, of course, a fiction. Even before the Europeans’ arrival, they had long proved to be skillful traders. Although Natives adorn the paper money that fuels the cash economy, they are rarely shown participating in it.

The polar division of Indians into the categories of either good or bad existed long before bank-note imagery came into existence. The colonists’ ongoing warfare with the Native tribes created tensions that had made it second nature to demonize the land’s original inhabitants. As already quoted, the Declaration of Independence was hardly unusual in referring to “merciless Indian Savages.” Such attitudes found their way into vignettes, usually in the form of reporting on a historical event, but one should remember that these characterizations were created at a time when Indians posed little threat to those living east of the Mississippi River. Felix O. C. Darley’s vignette *Puritans at Prayer Surprised by Indians*, seen here on a note of 1859 by Tappan, Carpenter (Figure 114), depicts a pious family at a table presumably during the troubles of King Philip’s War, which lasted from 1675 to 1678.¹⁸ The American Natives, led by Metacomet, who took the English name King Philip, fought against the New Englanders and their Native allies.



Figure 114. \$2 Note, Menomonee Bank, Menomonee, Wis., ca. 1858 (punch-canceled proof). Image courtesy of Heritage Auctions.

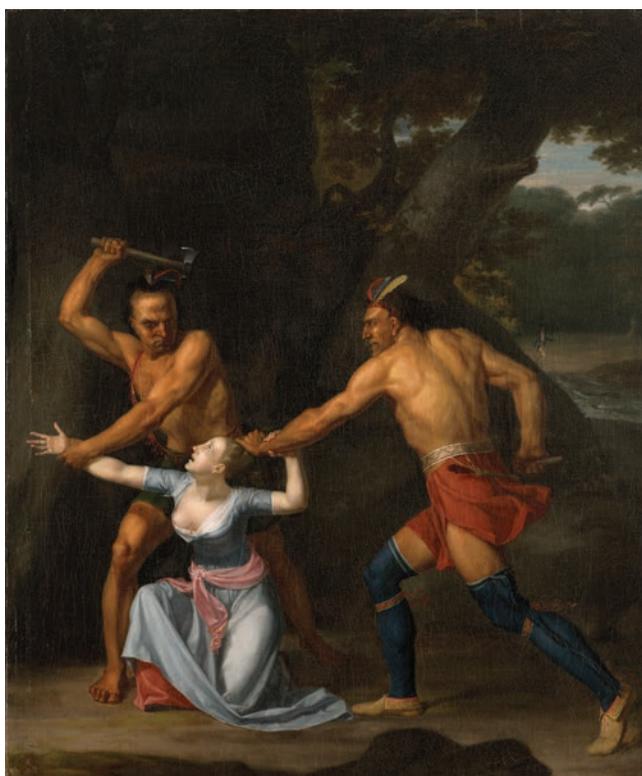


Figure 115. John Vanderlyn, *The Murder of Jane McCrea*, 1804, oil on canvas, 82.5 × 67.3 cm. Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, Conn. Purchased by subscription, 1855.4. Photo credit: Allen Phillips/Wadsworth Atheneum.

This vignette shows a family of soon-to-be martyrs being led in prayer by the head of the household, who humbly kneels on the floor, as “savages” stealthily enter through the door. No one, not the women or the child playing on the floor, will be spared—another reminder, as stated in the Declaration of Independence, that the American Indian’s “rule of warfare, is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions.” (This note balances the central vignette of bloodthirsty “savages” with an earlier vignette, also by Darley, depicting an exotic, proud, ennobled Prairie Indian on horseback.)

In 1804, the American painter John Vanderlyn completed a dramatic representation of another atrocity, the scalping of Jane McCrea at the hands of two warriors on 27 July 1777 (Figure 115), a painting that he exhibited at the 1804 Paris Salon. The story had been widely circulated as propaganda against the British during the American Revolution, but Vanderlyn’s inspiration was Joel Barlow’s epic poem *The Columbiad*, which he had read before its

publication in 1807. Jane McCrea, a Loyalist, had set out to marry her fiancé, who was serving in General Burgoyne’s army. The Indian scouts, who had been

sent by the British to escort her from Fort Edward to Fort Ticonderoga, began quarreling among themselves, with the result that these “savages” killed and scalped the defenseless young woman. For American Patriots, her brutal ending only pointed out British depravity in having aligned themselves with such diabolical allies, whose conduct Burgoyne chose to ignore. For all Americans, McCrea became a tragic heroine, a White damsel in distress at the hands of perfidious, bloodthirsty Natives.

Appropriately, the Bank of Fort Edward commissioned the scene of McCrea’s murder for its \$10 note, which was produced by the firm of Wellstood, Benson & Hanks, New York.¹⁹ By the late 1850s, when the vignette was engraved, the threat of women being scalped in New York State had long ceased to be a concern, but the incident was indelibly linked to the bank’s site, and like the one showing the Pilgrim family’s massacre, it had a strong dramatic appeal. Although the vignette’s composition is related to Vanderlyn’s painting, its actual source is far less distinguished. Rather than looking back to the painting, the engraver lazily chose for his model a design already rendered in line on a small scale, which turned the dynamic, onrushing warrior on the right into a passive bystander. Samuel Edgerton scathingly describes this image as “a small, crude wood engraving—perhaps the ultimate debasement of Vanderlyn’s masterpiece . . . which appeared over an advertisement at the back of David Wilson’s *Life of Jane McCrea* published in 1853.”²⁰ In this instance, the heroic, statuesque neoclassicism exhibited in the original source gives way to an inferior, commercial adaptation.

Another vignette, which is compositionally related to the vignette of Jane McCrea, appears on the \$5 note for Oconto County Bank, Laporte, Wisconsin, dated 1 August 1857 and printed by RWH&E (Figure 116). It shows a kneeling mother attempting to stop the blow of a tomahawk directed at her child, a secular version of the biblical Massacre of the Innocents. Here, however, the spectator can feel a frisson of horror while having the satisfaction of knowing that the frontiersman, presumably her husband, can be counted on to thwart this cruel, barbaric onslaught. Despite having a powder horn slung around his neck, he



Figure 116. \$5 Note, Oconto County Bank, Laporte, Wis., 1 August 1857 (punch-canceled proof). Image courtesy of Heritage Auctions.

confronts the Indian with a knife, their combat promising to be a particularly intimate and bloody affair.²¹

The Native American was a brutal foe in frontier warfare, but in Europe, which was far removed from the theater of conflict, the noble savage was a more popular concept.²² From the first contacts, American Indians were frequently characterized as primitive, noble beings, living in a harmonious state of nature. Lacking in sophistication and guile, they instead exhibited innocence, gentleness, honesty, generosity, agility, and athleticism. They could be seen as having been blessed with a land of abundance or, alternatively, as having uncomplainingly embraced a rigorous life; in either case, they were free of moral decadence, living in societies that valued equality, liberty, and rationality, a testimony to their innate sense of goodness. This idealized projection, a figment of the White imagination, owed a debt to the biblical Eden and to the classical Arcadia. In terms of appearance—robust physiques clad in little clothing—and in terms of the simplicity and nobility of their manners, this concept of the “savage” offered for many European writers a pointed contrast to what they perceived as their own

overcivilized, deceitful, and decadent culture. In creating this narrative, the American Indian too was closely identified with Europe’s own earlier classical period, both cultures being held up as stalwart and uncorrupted. In the mid-eighteenth century, the influential German scholar J. J. Winckelmann reaffirms, albeit more vividly than most, a standard identification of Indians with classical Greek heroes: “Behold the swift Indian outstripping in pursuit the hart: how briskly his juices circulate! how flexible, how elastic his nerves and muscles! how easy his whole frame! Thus, *Homer* draws his heroes, and his Achilles he eminently marks for ‘being swift of foot.’”²³

The association of classical sculpture with Native Americans is most famously related in the story of Benjamin West’s first encounter with the prized sculpture *Apollo Belvedere* (Figure 117). In 1760, West (1738–1820) became the first American-born artist to travel to Rome to study antique art and the old masters. His biographer John Galt describes how the cognoscenti, who thought West as an American had “received the education of a savage,”²⁴ were curious to hear his response to this masterpiece. When the doors to the cabinet containing the *Apollo Belvedere* were thrown open, West blurted out, “My God, how like it is to a young Mohawk warrior!”²⁵ The



Figure 117. *Apollo Belvedere*, ca. 120–140 AD, 2,224 cm high. Museo Pio Clementino, Vatican Museums, Vatican State. Photo © Ghigo G. Roli/Art Resource, New York.



Figure 118. \$3 Note, Bank of Chippeway, Sault de St. Marys, Mich., 3 January 1838, 7.3 × 17.3 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

story, told late in his life, may have been more fiction than fact,²⁶ but it illustrates how the Native American was firmly connected to the heroic classical tradition.

Nineteenth-century bank-note engravers carried on this well-established convention of associating Native Americans with classical statues and the values they represent. Many of these sculptures, like the *Apollo Belvedere*, were well known through engravings and plaster casts, making the association readily accessible. The *Apollo Belvedere*'s Native counterpart appears on the left of the \$3 note of the Bank of Chippeway, Sault de St. Marys, Michigan, printed by the New England Bank Note Co. and dated 3 January 1838 (Figure 118). He emerges from the woods with the broken bow of the statue having been fully restored.

Even Metacombet early on metamorphosed into a heroic figure. In his short story "Philip of Pokanoket," published in London in 1820, Washington Irving offers a highly sympathetic portrayal of King Philip that is indebted to the concepts embodied in the noble savage.²⁷ In 1829, in his popular play *Metamora; or, The Last of the Wampanoags*, which was based on King Philip's life, John Augustus Stone also portrays his protagonist in an admirable light, having him die a hero's death. When King Philip appears in a vignette on the Southern Bank of Indiana, Terre Haute, Indiana (Figure 119), printed by Wellstood, Hanks, Hay & Whiting, his pose is sympathetically based on the classical statue of the *Capitoline Gaul* (Figure 120).²⁸ The engraver introduces one major difference: in the vignette, King Philip looks back toward the Native who, as an ally of the New England settlers, had shot him. He clutches his knife in his right hand, refusing to submit to his fate quietly.²⁹ His death is to be lamented—at heart, this is the passing of a valiant man who could no more prevent the settlers' encroachment than the Gaul could prevent the expansion of Imperial Rome.

An early engraving (Figure 121) depicts twin statues over eighteen feet high that stand atop the Quirinal Hill in Rome. Over the centuries, these figures have had many identities, including that of the *Dioscuri*, in honor of the twins Castor and Pollux, but are given here one of their generic names, *The Horse Tamers*.³⁰ The bank-note vignettes based on these well-known classical sources excluded the horses to focus on the muscular, superhuman men.³¹ The Native American posed

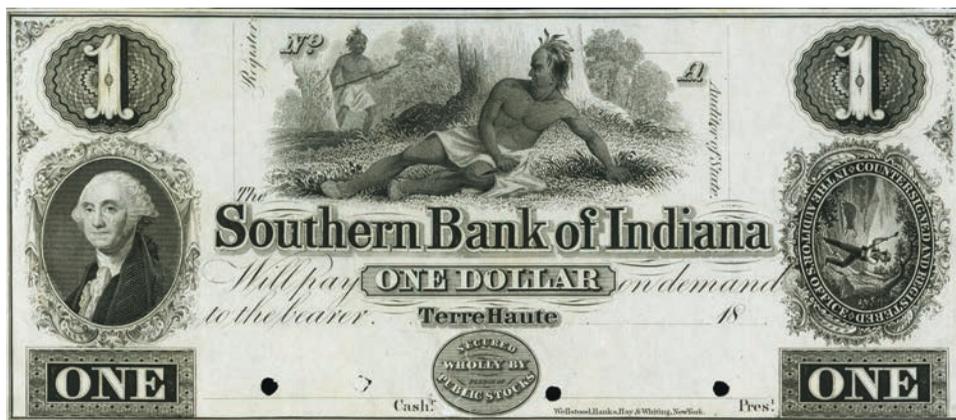


Figure 119. \$1 Note, Southern Bank of Indiana, Terre Haute, Ind., 1850s (punch-canceled proof). Image courtesy of Heritage Auctions.



Figure 120. *Capitoline Gaul*. Musei Capitolini, Rome. Photo © Ghigo G. Roli/Art Resource, New York.

beside a large rock overlooking a waterfall seen on the \$10 note printed by Underwood, Bald, Spencer & Hufty (UBS&H) in the 1830s for the Bank of the State of Arkansas, Little Rock (Figure 122), is indebted to the horse tamer situated on the ensemble's left-hand side. His left hand, which would have held a bridle, now grasps the rock's surface. The statue's extended right arm ends in a clinched fist, whereas in the vignette, the Native grips a tomahawk. He is in control of the dangers that lurk in this wilderness but only because of his readiness to resort to violence.³²

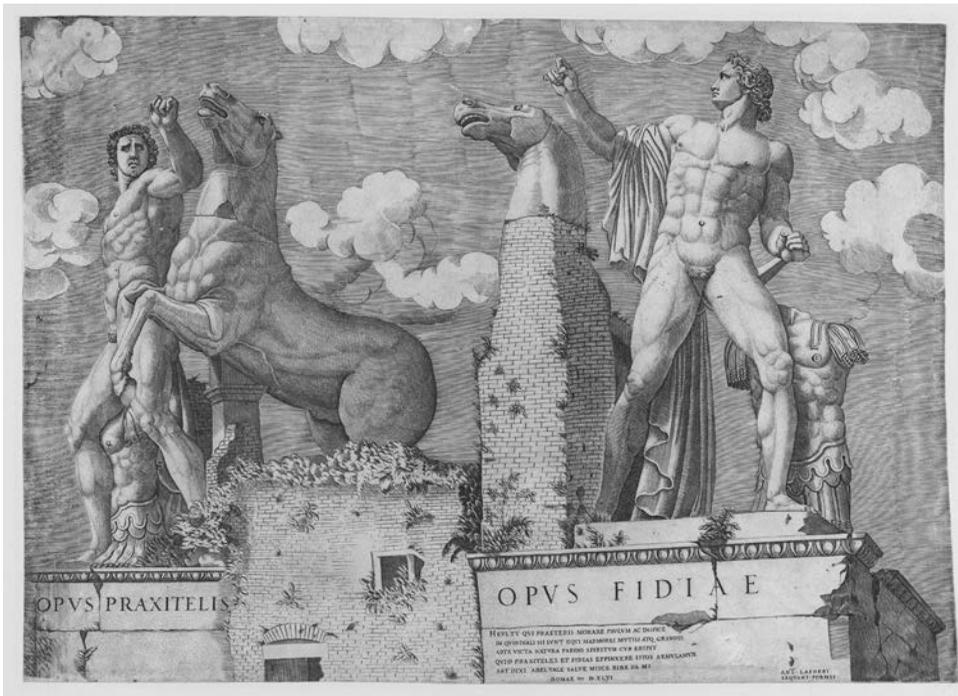


Figure 121. Engraving by Ambrogio Brambilla, *Statues of the Dioscuri* (or *The Horse Tamers*), published by Claudio Duchetti, Rome, 1584, 35.5 × 49 cm (sheet trimmed beyond plate mark). *Speculum Romanae Magnificentiae* (A117), Hanna Holborn Gray Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

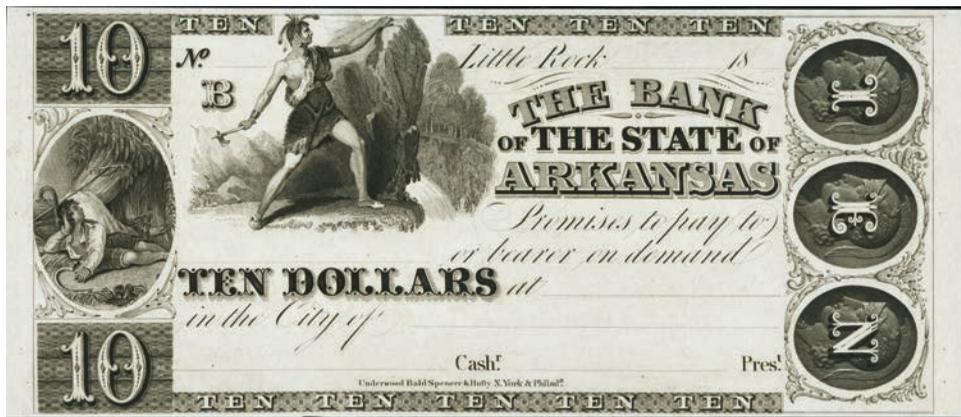


Figure 122. \$10 Note, Bank of the State of Arkansas, Little Rock, Ark., 1830s (proof). Image courtesy of Heritage Auctions.

Another vignette on the spurious \$10 note of the Hartford Bank, Hartford, Connecticut (Figure 123), hand-dated 1 June 1839 and bearing the false imprint of the Eastern Bank Note Company,³³ shows a majestic American Indian hunter poised beside a fallen stag, a composition that is indebted to the horse tamer on

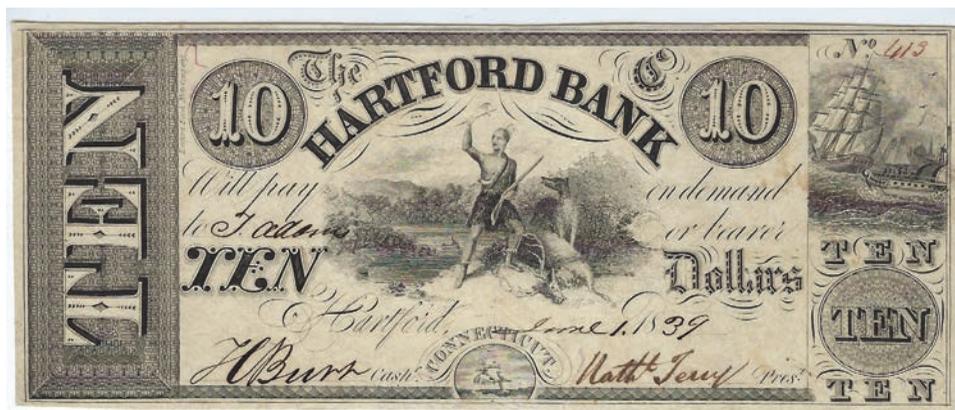


Figure 123. Spurious \$10 note, Hartford Bank, Hartford, Conn., 1 June 1839. Collection of C. John Ferreri.

the right-hand side. However, as Roger Durand has demonstrated, the source for this design is a print after a painting by Andrew Robertson (1777–1845), *Aeneas MacDonnell as a Highland Chief*.³⁴ Whereas MacDonnell, wearing a clan kilt, holds aloft his hunting horn, the engraver of the vignette shows the Native triumphantly raising his tomahawk. But, in turn, Robertson’s visual source for his protagonist’s pose is one of *The Horse Tamers*. In this instance, this dynamic, heroic, classical statue enters the bank-note vocabulary through a Scottish portrait. Whereas the pose is well suited for the triumphant American Native, it only invites ridicule when applied to an eighteenth-century Scotsman.

Greek classical sculpture as well as Roman art proved influential. The sculptures of the Parthenon, the temple of Athena built atop the Acropolis in Athens in the fifth century BC, enjoyed a high reputation. Engravings after these works were readily available in the late-eighteenth-century four-volume set *The Antiquities of Athens*—the product of two adventurous architects, James “Athenian” Stuart and Nicholas Revett. On the right-hand side just below the middle of the Burton & Gurley specimen sheet (see Figure 49), the vignette showing the Native American riding bareback is modeled on the Parthenon frieze. This accomplished rider is an American Indian by way of Athens. If he were to remove his feathers, he could easily be identified as one more member of the Parthenon’s cavalcade.

Both biblical and classical references inform the conception of the Native couple seen at the bottom of the RWH&E specimen sheet reproduced as Figure 66.³⁵ Whereas the poses are based on classical river gods,³⁶ one thinks immediately of Adam and Eve, who here are male and female archetypes of the Indigenous peoples. Michelangelo’s *Creation of Adam* in the Sistine Chapel ceiling is the source for the female’s extended left arm with its elegantly positioned fingers. In his fresco, Michelangelo shows Adam reaching out to God the Father, from whom he will receive the spark of life. In the specimen sheet, the couple reaches out to a soaring image of America, behind whose head is the national shield. But theirs is closer to a farewell gesture. Under the relentless advance of White “progress,” they will soon, like the river gods on which they are modeled, merge back into the landscape.³⁷



Figure 124. \$20 Note, Seneca County Bank, Waterloo, N.Y., ca. 1832 (punch-canceled proof). Image courtesy of Heritage Auctions.

Portraits of prominent Native Americans were treated on bank notes with the same dignity and gravitas accorded notable White subjects. A vignette that fills the center of the \$20 note of the Seneca County Bank, Waterloo, New York (Figure 124), the work of Rawdon, Clark & Co., Albany/Rawdon, Wright, Hatch & Co., New York, features an ennobling portrait of the Seneca chief Sagoyewatha, also called Red Jacket because of his propensity for wearing jackets gifted by the British military for his service during the American Revolution. Given the dual imprints, the note presumably dates to around the time of the New York firm's creation in 1832. The engraving modifies Robert W. Weir's portrait of Red Jacket painted in 1828 (Figure 125).³⁸ William Dunlap in his *History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States*, published in 1834, quotes a letter by Dr. John W. Francis that gives valuable information on the painting's creation: "When he [Red Jacket] came to New York, in 1828, with his interpreter, Jamieson, he very promptly repaired to the painting room of Mr. Weir. For this purpose, he dressed himself in the costume which he deemed most appropriate to his character, decorated with his brilliant overcovering and belt, his tomahawk and Washington medal."³⁹ Thus, Red Jacket was the one to choose the attire for his sitting, including the peace medal hanging around his neck and the tomahawk, both of which had been given to him by President Washington in 1792. Weir posed the sitter as a serious, majestic figure, his cocked-arm posture normally being reserved for assertive, authoritative males. With his close-cropped hair unadorned with feathers, he could easily be a Roman senator resting his right hand on a baton. Portrayed lost in intense concentration, Red Jacket is a thoughtful, rational leader who understands the difficult circumstances confronting his people.

The vignette makes substantive alterations to Weir's portrait.⁴⁰ In addition to adjusting the pose, the engraver supplies a voluminous, toga-like outer garment while discarding the Euro-American cravat and scarf in favor of a bare chest. He presents Red Jacket as an imposing authority figure in a sublimely rendered wilderness landscape, an image befitting the Romantic period. More than a match for the dignified full-length portrait of Lafayette at the right, he is part Roman senator, part noble savage, and part Byronic hero.



Figure 125. Robert Walter Weir, *Sagoyewatha (Red Jacket)*, 1828, oil on canvas, 77.5 × 51.4 cm. Gift of Winthrop Chanler. New-York Historical Society, 1893.1.

As we have seen, the American Indian as noble savage—a figure of virtue and courage, untouched by those decadent evils associated with more “civilized” societies—was a creation of White culture. This concept posited an affinity between Native Americans and the presumed virtues possessed by the Greeks and Romans drawn from an idealized classical past. Numerous other images, however, while not making a specific link with Greco-Roman sources, also treated Native Americans with respect.⁴¹ Beginning in the 1830s, distinguished Native American leaders appear on bank notes in oval portraits, their likenesses borrowed from

earlier engravings much in the same way that bank-note vignettes of American statesmen were derived from existing prints. Those honored in this way are as follows: the Mohawk chief Joseph Brant, who had been a staunch ally of the British;⁴² Tahcoliquot, a Sauk warrior;⁴³ the learned Cherokee Sequoyah, who devised an alphabet that allowed his previously unwritten native tongue to be transcribed;⁴⁴ the Seneca chief Red Jacket, who appears twice in this more modest oval format;⁴⁵ and the Seneca chief Cornplanter, who supported the United States in the War of 1812 after having fought on the side of the British during the American Revolution.⁴⁶ These Native American portraits usually appear on the notes of banks that are in regions of the country appropriate to the sitter, thereby becoming part of the national narrative. The portraits of Brant and Red Jacket adopt some elements of White dress, but the three others are rendered completely in Native attire. With his bear-claw necklace, two prominent feathers sprouting from his head like devilish horns, and fierce countenance, Cornplanter is the only one to appear formidable and menacing. Ironically, his father was White (as was Sequoyah's), and Red Jacket had replaced him as chief of the Seneca for not having been militant enough against the settlers' encroachment.

The warrior's prowess as a hunter is another facet of Native American life that is celebrated, albeit with some reservations. A vignette appearing on the \$1 note of the Canastota Bank, Canastota, New York (see Figure 214), shows a Native American stalking a deer, his task made easier by being equipped with a rifle rather than a bow and arrow. This image recalls such paintings as George Caleb Bingham's *The Concealed Enemy* of 1845 (Peabody Museum, Harvard University), in which an American Indian with a rifle stealthily approaches a dramatic overlook. In this rendering, the Native's target is not shown, but the identification of him in the title as the "enemy" establishes that he is not hunting deer and the viewer should be worried about his threatening presence. Even in idyllic hunting scenes, as in the bank-note vignette, the mortal combat between the Native Americans and encroaching pioneers and settlers is never entirely out of mind.

Influenced by painters of the Plains Indians, such as George Catlin, vignettes show dramatic scenes of braves on horseback hunting buffalo, armed with only bow and arrows or lances, as seen in the vignette by Darley reproduced as Figure 86.⁴⁷ Another vignette shows the ferocious combat between two mounted hunters and a bear protecting her cubs (Figure 126). This work is not only indebted to Catlin but looks back as well to the European paintings of Sir Peter Paul Rubens and Eugene Delacroix, in which horsemen are locked in mortal combat with lions (see, for examples, Rubens, *Lion Hunt*, 1621; Alte Pinakothek, Munich, and Delacroix, *Arab Horseman Attacked by a Lion*, 1849–1850, Art

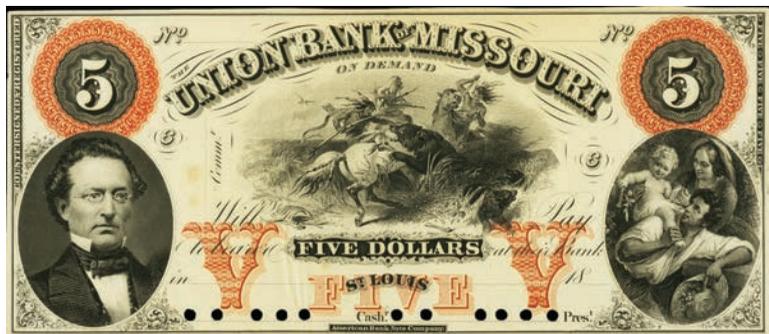


Figure 126. \$5 Note, Union Bank of Missouri, St. Louis, Mo., late 1850s (punch-cancelled proof). Eric P. Newman Numismatic Education Society.

Institute of Chicago, Chicago).⁴⁸ The noble savage of the Enlightenment, a figure of dignity and sagacity, has given way to a more dynamically engaged, heroic warrior, a more primitive and elemental figure in line with Romanticism's appeal to the emotions.

Contrasting the Two Cultures

As noted earlier, the idea that Native Americans were a vanishing race, doomed to pass into history, was very much part of the public discourse from the mid-1820s through the 1850s. By the late 1830s, bank-note vignettes began to reflect this focus. One popular trope contrasted the way of life of Native Americans with that of White settlers. Often presented as equals, these pairings suggest continuity, sympathetically acknowledging the Native Americans' role in the nation's past. Yet, always present is the knowledge that the progress of "civilization" could lead to the disappearance of the Native peoples. By the early 1850s, this popular theme was part of the repertoire of almost all major bank-note firms.

The \$5 note of the Bank of Charleston, South Carolina (Figure 127), the work of Draper, Toppan, Longacre & Co., conceived ca. 1837,⁴⁹ is an early example of the contrast of cultures. In the central vignette, the allegorical figure of Maritime Commerce sits on cotton bales while gripping a steering oar and pointing to the cornucopia at her feet. Across the water is the town of Charleston, which prospers from trading in the state's abundant resources.⁵⁰ The vignettes at either end bracket the scene: an Indian "prince" is seated on the left and an Indian "princess" emerges from dense vegetation to the right.⁵¹ The artist/engraver has employed stylistic cues to differentiate these two worlds. In contrast to the disciplined, detailed central scene, the Native Americans have liberating white space behind them. The drooping feathers atop their heads mimic the protective, leafy foliage. They are romanticized images at one with their surroundings, unburdened by arduous labor and bills of laden.

Toppan, Carpenter, Casilear & Co. staged an impressive panorama contrasting the two cultures across the \$5 note of the Northwestern Bank, Bloomfield,



Figure 127. \$5 Note, Bank of Charleston, Charleston, S.C., conceived ca. 1837 (punch-canceled proof). Eric P. Newman Numismatic Education Society.



Figure 128. \$5 Note, Northwestern Bank, Bloomfield, Ind., 1 July 1854. Image courtesy of Wendell Wolka.

Indiana, dated 1 July 1854 (Figure 128). As on a map, the left-hand side represents the West and the right-hand side the East, with these two contrasting worlds united by a foreground strip (in order to keep this dark strip from obscuring its imprint, the firm placed its name in a more elevated position than is customary). On its left, the vignette depicts two Natives engaged in a tumultuous and dangerous buffalo hunt. The trees along the margin symbolize America's untamed wilderness. On the right-hand side, a woodcutter chops down trees, making it possible for the land to be developed and, from his point of view, reach its potential. Two powerful, yoked oxen stand ready to pull the fallen trunks, their docility contrasting with the rampaging buffalo. In the background, a farmer plows his cleared field as the settlers put down roots of their own. The oval in the upper center showing a woodcutter clearing a forest and driving the buffalo away reproduces Indiana's state seal. The expansive vignette below it is an elaborate meditation on its significance.⁵²

When attempting to record the Plains Indians' way of life before it disappeared, artist George Catlin lamented the tragic consequences of this clash of civilizations: "Their rights invaded, their morals corrupted, their lands wrested from them, their customs changed, and therefore lost to the world; and they at last sunk into the earth, and the ploughshare turning the sod over their graves, and I have flown to their rescue—not of their lives or of their race (for they are "doomed" and must perish), but to the rescue of their looks and their modes."⁵³ In this narrative, the plow not only wins out but also becomes the means by which even the memory of an American Indian past is obliterated.

The \$1 note of the Nemaha Valley Bank, Brownville, Nebraska (Figure 129), the work of Wellstood, Hay & Whiting (WH&W), hand-dated to 1859, employs in each corner vignettes of a husband and wife accompanied by their faithful dog. On the right, a seated American Indian peacefully smokes a long pipe with his rifle by his side. His attentive wife sits beside him, their canoe and teepee alluding to a nomadic lifestyle. On the left, the White farmer pauses to eat the meal his wife has brought him. He also rests by a shoreline, which mirrors the one occupied by the Native family. The cliff in the distance is now dotted with houses and cultivated

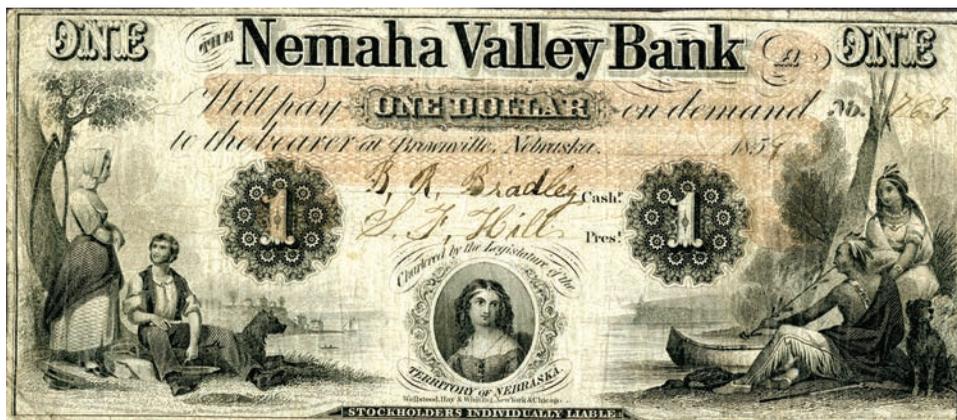


Figure 129. \$1 Note, Nemaha Valley Bank, Brownville, Neb., [1 October] 1859, 7.7 × 18.2 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.



Figure 130. \$5 Note, Bank of Delaware, Delaware, Ohio, 1858–early 1860s (proof). Image courtesy of Heritage Auctions.

trees, and there are boats in the water. Both cultures are organized around the same gender hierarchies, but the viewer is aware that the life of the nomadic hunter is rapidly disappearing, no longer sustainable in the “modern” world.

In the central vignette on the \$5 note of the Bank of Delaware, Delaware, Ohio, copyrighted in 1858 by RWH&E, Cincinnati and New York (Figure 130), a frontier settler on the left, addressing the American Indian couple, points to a large map of Ohio. Following European practices, he is instructing them on how the land can be measured and quantified so that it can be bought and sold. Beneath the map, the vignette bears the title “Civilization.” The possession and “civilization” of the land makes possible the republic that flourishes in terms of the allegorical figures occupying the area to the right (seated next to the American eagle, Liberty crowns America, who holds a cornucopia). It is also a reminder that many banks were closely tied to the land speculation following the opening of new territories. The Native Americans, who in this narrative have no claim to ownership, can only be passive witnesses rather than participants.

According to White settlers, they are the good stewards who are bringing out the land's fecund potential. In a history of townships in Rhode Island, published in 1878, Frederic Denison succinctly makes the case for the necessary and preordained supplanting of the Native Americans with a godly moral order: "Since the red men failed to fulfill the commission given to mankind to subdue and cultivate the earth, and make it a theatre of moral culture, Providence determined to supplant them, and give the vineyard to another people who should bring forth fruits thereof."⁵⁴ The subdivision of the land into private parcels is in accordance with God's will.

Ultimately, the Native Americans' way of life must give way to "progress." Flanking an oval portrait,⁵⁵ mothers with their children are paired on the \$1 note of the Dayton Bank, St. Paul, Minnesota (see Figure 65), which dates to the 1850s. On the left, the Native mother seated on the ground embraces her child. In minimal attire, they are both children of nature, living by a waterway in the forest. The anxious mother looks out at the encroaching viewer rather than at her child. On the right, the White mother, who has better heeded God's injunction, "Be fruitful, and multiply" (Genesis 1:28), is surrounded by three children on a hilltop overlooking a cultivated landscape. In contrast to the Indian's flowing black hair, her hair is tightly drawn into a bun. Sitting primly in a chair, she is committed to Western concepts of education. She holds an open book in her lap and a globe sits beside her, as she engages her family in learning about the world.

In the central vignette of the Hall & Brothers' Bank, Eau Claire, Wisconsin (Figure 131), printed by WH&W in the 1850s, a seated America points out to a Native maiden, who represents her people, the many benefits that Western civilization can offer. The maiden's arm crosses over America's lap, suggesting an easy familiarity between the two. Her subordinate position and attentiveness further suggest the possibility of a peaceful transition. A sterner viewpoint is seen in the vignette on the left-hand side of the \$1 note of the Brown County Bank, Depere, Wisconsin (Figure 132), printed by RWH&E in the 1850s, where a seated, supplicating Native maiden holds out a peace offering to an imperious, dominating America.

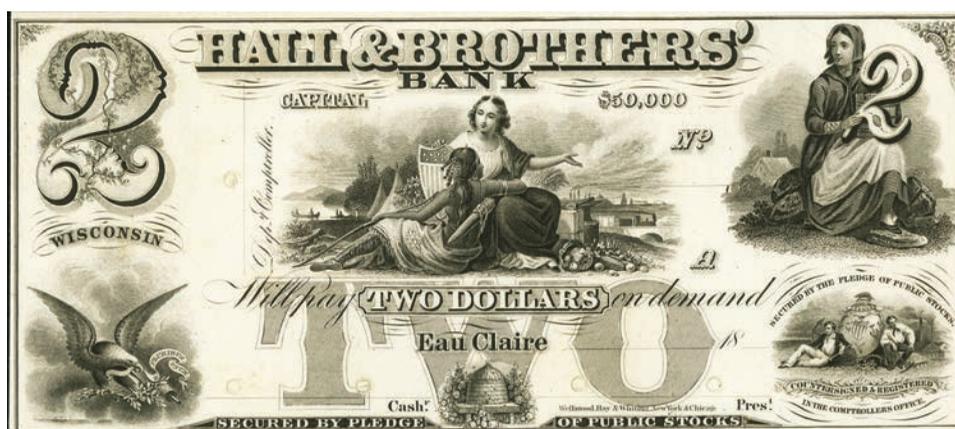


Figure 131. \$2 Note, Hall & Brothers' Bank, Eau Claire, Wis., 1850s (punch-canceled proof). Image courtesy of Heritage Auctions.



Figure 132. \$1 Note, Brown County Bank, Depere, Wis., 1850s, (punch-canceled proof). Image courtesy of Heritage Auctions.

Images of Loss and Transience: Romanticizing the Fate of the Vanishing Indian

Another popular Native American trope both in bank notes and in mainstream art reflects a darker and more melancholic mood of profound loss. The most frequent type depicts a melancholy, pensive warrior as the main protagonist, either alone in the wilderness or on a high bluff, sometimes with his family gathered around him, looking out at the advance of civilization and the loss of the Arcadian wilderness that was once his home. Even while embracing the inevitability of the country's westward expansion, the public felt regret as it watched this wilderness, so central to the early republic's identity, disappear along with its noble Native American inhabitants. In May 1847, in a review of the National Academy of Design exhibition, an anonymous critic in *The Literary World* implored landscape artists to capture what was left of the beautiful Arcadian wilderness: "the relics of our national infancy" and what "were once the wild and picturesque haunts of the Red Man . . . are becoming abodes of commerce and the seats of manufactures."⁵⁶ The fate of the "Red Man" and the wilderness are cojoined: the admirable Indigenous peoples inhabit a moral landscape, one that gives witness to God's sublime and beautiful handiwork.

Dating to ca. 1838, the pensive American Indian on UBS&H's \$50 note of the Bank of the State of Arkansas, Little Rock (Figure 133) is a descendant of Benjamin West's warrior in his *Death of General Wolfe*, a painting that he exhibited at the Royal Academy in London in 1771 and that subsequently enjoyed wide circulation due to William Woollett's 1776 engraving (Figure 134). At the left of West's picture sits a tattooed Indian, his head on hand, contemplating the scene before him as primarily an outsider in this battle between European forces.⁵⁷ This is the noble savage as a pensive, rational man, meditating on the passing of a great general and on the rise and fall of empires, his reaction underscoring life's transitory nature and the fleeting fame of earthly achievement. The Native American in the bank note's vignette also ponders life's fleeting existence as he looks out on rapids, where the flowing water refers to the quick passage of time.

Adaptations of Benjamin West's figure appear in a number of nineteenth-century vignettes.⁵⁸ One of the more unusual is seen in the \$5 note of the Republic of Texas by RWH&E, hand-dated 15 January 1840 (Figure 135).⁵⁹ Here, the protagonist has been inserted into John A. Rolph's engraving after John G.

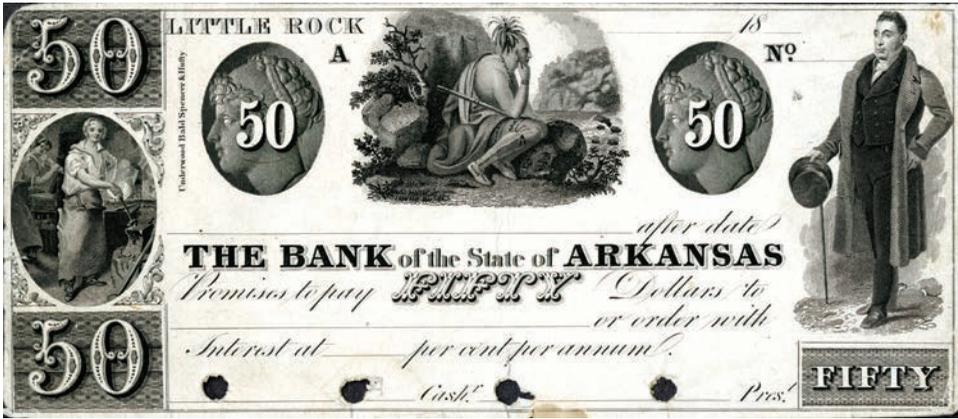


Figure 133. \$50 Note, Bank of the State of Arkansas, Little Rock, Ark., ca. 1838, 7.5 × 17.7 cm (punch-canceled proof). National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.



Figure 134. Engraving by William Woollett after Benjamin West, *The Death of General Wolfe*, 1776. Library of Congress, Prints and Photograph Division, Washington, D.C.



Figure 135. \$5 Note, Republic of Texas, 15 January 1840, 7.8×18.3 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.



Figure 136. \$20 Note, Bank of Washington, Washington, N.C., 7 December 1861, 7.5×18.6 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

Chapman's picture of the ruins of the church at Jamestown, Virginia, a conception that is indebted to the Romantic European conceit of the contemplation of medieval ruins. Jamestown represents the beginning of the colonization of Christian America by the English. That this first church has fallen into ruin is a testimony to the venerable age of America's White culture. Like West's Native American, the vignette's protagonist is an outsider contemplating life's inexorable and melancholy march to oblivion.

Another variation on West's contemplative Indian appears on the \$20 note of the Bank of Washington, Washington, North Carolina (Figure 136), where a brooding warrior with bow in hand sits next to a farmer's field, the farmer's plow and sickle appearing beside him. Despite the handwritten date of 1861, Danforth, Bald & Co. conceived this poetic composition ca. 1850–1853. The two protagonists, the plow and the Indian, face one another, and only one can be victorious.⁶⁰

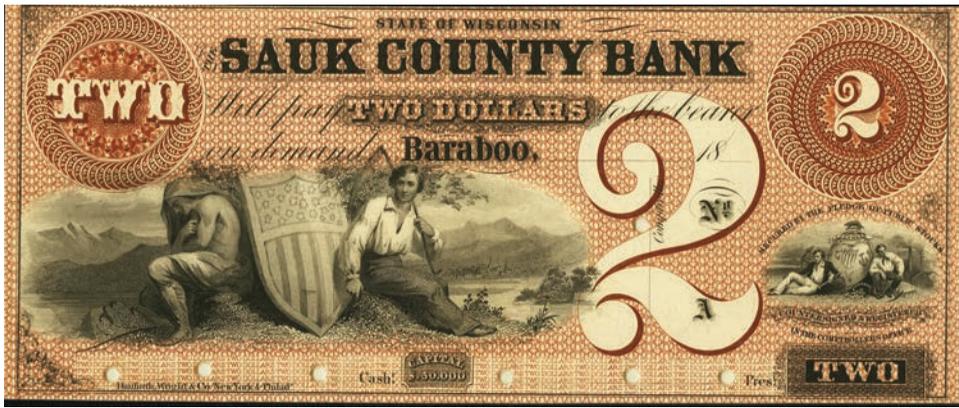


Figure 137. \$2 Note, Sauk County Bank, Baraboo, Wis., late 1850s (punch-canceled proof).
Eric P. Newman Numismatic Education Society.

Perhaps the most extreme example of a despairing American Indian is found on the \$2 note of the Sauk County Bank, Baraboo, Wisconsin (Figure 137), printed by Danforth, Wright & Co., ca. 1857–1860. Two allegorical figures, the Native American on the left and the farmer on the right, flank the shield of the United States. The Native is naked except for the cape draped over his head and leg and his buckskin boots with fringes. Alone and lost in thought, having no place in the new order, he fatalistically ponders his, and his people’s, sad fate. With his back to the shield and with his body contracted and locked in on itself, he awaits the end in abject misery. (This conception is presumably derived from a European allegory of Melancholy or Winter.) The shield tilts toward the farmer, who, grasping a scythe, points to the ground, the cultivation of which gives him the right to the American Indians’ “undeveloped” land. A town springs up on the other side of the river or lake, confirming that his way of life leads to greater permanence and dominance.

Another Chapman painting *The First Ship* (location unknown), exhibited in 1837 at the National Academy of Design in New York, also influenced bank-note design. An engraving by Rawdon, Wright, Hatch, and Smillie for the 1842 Boston publication *The Token and Atlantic Souvenir: A Christmas and New Year’s Present* records its appearance (Figure 138).⁶¹ Standing on a high promontory, an Indigenous maiden (or brave?),⁶² arm raised in a histrionic gesture, spies the first approach of a European ship, a poignant moment of wonder, hope, and anxiety, which the viewer knows foretells the eventual demise of the Indigenous peoples. The essay accompanying the 1842 engraving concludes with the dramatic sentiment, “There is no more saddening chapter in the world’s history than that which records the fate of the Indian race.”⁶³

Four years before the Chapman engraving was published in 1842, a version of the painting had already appeared on bank notes: a note of the Eire and Kalamazoo Rail Road Bank, Adrian, Michigan, printed by S. Stiles, Sherman & Smith (New York) and hand-dated 4 July 1838, and the \$10 note for the Mechanics and Traders Bank, Albany, N.Y., printed by W. Dane & Co. and hand-dated 3 December 1838.⁶⁴ This depiction would appear a few years later on a \$50 certificate, which bears the handwritten date 29 April 1841 and is printed by C. Lowe,

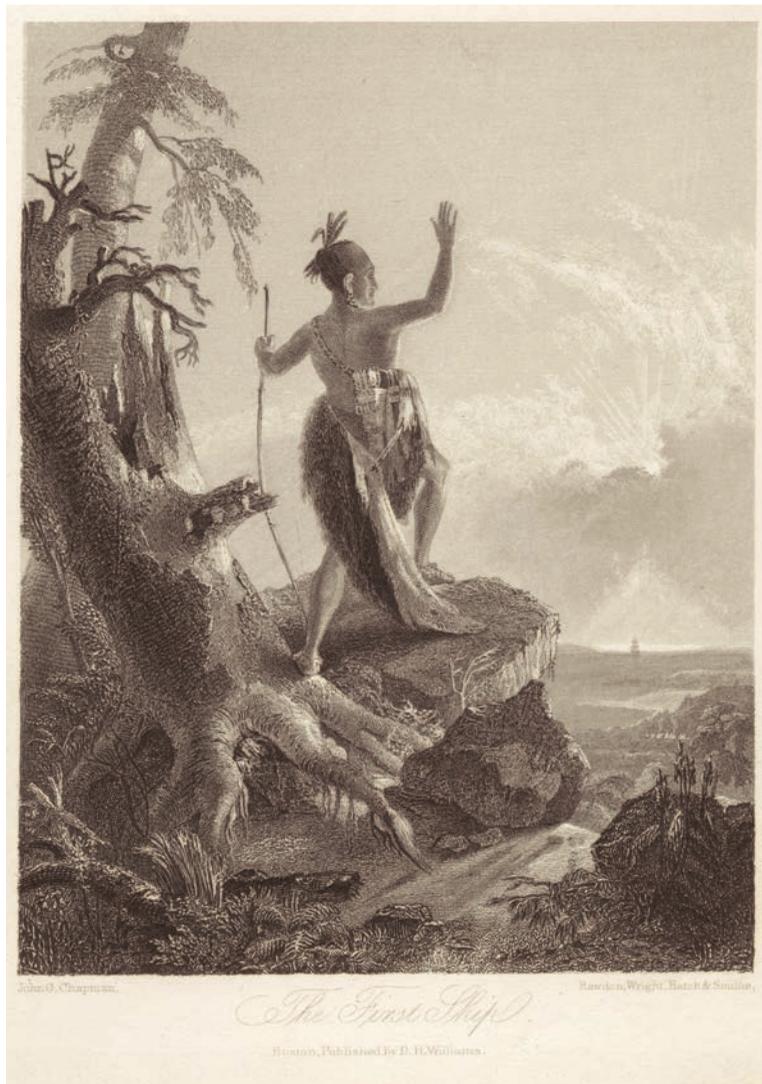


Figure 138. Engraving by Rawdon, Wright, Hatch & Smillie after John G. Chapman, *The First Ship*, in *The Token and Atlantic Souvenir*, 1842, 14 × 11 cm. Wallach Division Picture Collection, New York Public Library, Digital Collections.

Galveston, Texas, for the purchase of capital stock for 2,000 acres of land in Portland, Texas (Figure 139).⁶⁵ This early adaptation makes a major change, substituting a train for the ship at sea, thereby focusing on the American Indian's contemporary plight rather than on a distant ship, a mere speck on the horizon that would be hard to see in a vignette. In the vignette, the Native American addresses the setting sun rather than the train. Standing next to a blasted tree trunk, hers is a farewell gesture to the Great Spirit that will soon no longer shine on her vanishing people, a conception that is widespread in mainstream painting, recalling, for one example, Asher B. Durand's later ambitious picture *The Indian's Vespers*



Figure 139. \$50 Certificate for the purchase of capital stock for land in the city of Portland, Tex., 29 April 1841. Image courtesy of Heritage Auctions.

(the White House, Washington, D.C.) of 1847, where the protagonist stands in the wilderness with his arms outstretched and his palms upraised as he looks at the sun setting over the lake before him.⁶⁶

By the 1840s, vignettes depicting a Native American as a noble warrior on a high promontory, either alone or in a family grouping, became increasingly popular. Once the American Indian ceased to be a threat, either through assimilation, removal, or extinction, a nineteenth-century public could wax nostalgic over a culture they had done so much to extinguish. Believing that Native Americans were rapidly approaching their demise, the public could view their fate with a haunting, sweet sadness, indulging in sentimentality.⁶⁷ An 1848 note of the Eagle Bank, Bristol, Rhode Island (Figure 140), by Danforth & Hufty, depicts a dignified, stoic warrior standing beside his kneeling wife, with their child by her side, as she points down to the bustling harbor below. Heinz Tschachler interprets the woman's pointing gesture as the wife urging her husband to join the White man's culture, naming it "the error-of-their-way-of-life topos."⁶⁸ Instead, the gesture is a visual device connecting the enclosed, brooding male with the cause of his distress.⁶⁹

In the \$100 note of the Quassaick Bank, Newburgh, New York (Figure 141), dated 1 September 1854 and printed by Bald, Adams & Co., New York/Bald, Cousland & Co., Philadelphia, an American Indian family is posed atop a high, steep bluff. The warrior gestures toward the ominous view of White "progress" as his wife emerges from a small tent and the family's patriarch sits at his feet. The positioning of the bank's name coincides with the vignette's two foci. Appropriately, the Indian name "Quassaick" appears directly beneath the family (the Waraneck Indians lived on Quassaick creek). "Bank" appears beneath the view of the town, with its name, Newburgh, placed directly adjacent.⁷⁰ The patriarch, who holds a staff and wears a loose garment, could easily be mistaken for a Greek philosopher. An American Indian is again seen as the living embodiment of the ethos of the ancient Greeks and Romans.



Figure 140. \$1 Note, Eagle Bank, Bristol, R.I., 1 January 1848, 7.8×18.2 cm (punch-cancelled proof). National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

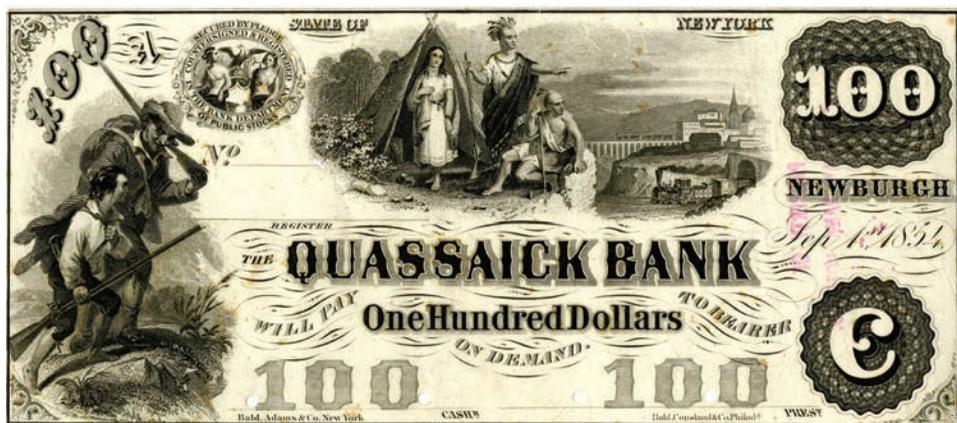


Figure 141. \$100 Note, Quassaick Bank, Newburgh, N.Y., 1 September 1854, 7.7×17.8 cm (punch-cancelled proof with bleed-through of ABNC stamp on the back). National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

Painting (and popular art) also found the Indian anguishing over his peoples' fate an engaging subject. In 1847, James H. Beard exhibited *The Last of the Red Men* at the Spring Exhibition of the National Academy of Design. Although the painting is unlocated, one press account describes it as showing “a family of Indians . . . on a rock on the extremist verge of the Pacific coast.”⁷¹ Accompanying the painting were lines from William Cullen Bryant's 1824 poem “An Indian at the Burial Place of his Father”:

They waste us—aye—like
 April snow
 In the warm noon we shrink away;
 And fast they follow, as we go
 Towards the setting day,—



Figure 142. Tompkins H. Matteson, *The Last of the Race*, 1847, oil on canvas, 101 × 127 cm. Gift of Edwin W. Orvis. New York Historical Society, 1931.1.

Till they shall fill the land, and we
Are driven into the western sea.

Perhaps challenged by Beard's work and inspired by Bryant's poetry, Tompkins Harrison Matteson exhibited at the American Art-Union in the fall of that same year his painting *The Last of the Race* (Figure 142), one of the pictures that the Art-Union engraved for subscribers. Here, a towering Native American stands with his back to the viewer, his family and his puzzled dog grouped in despair around him, as he stoically gazes out over the Pacific Ocean at sunset. Pushed to the shores of the Pacific, they will soon sink, like the sun, into its waters. (John Mix Stanley's *The Last of Their Race* of 1857 [Whitney Western Art Museum, Cody, Wyoming] offers another poignant view of a Native American family pushed to the Pacific's rocky edge.)⁷²

In 1848, the cover of *The Union Magazine of Literature & Art* featured a melancholy Native American seated on a rock in New York Harbor, looking back at the city (Figure 143). The journal's focus was on Anglo-American literary and artistic achievements, and the Native on the left and the stalk of corn on the right frame the vista, providing a gateway to this new, dynamic world. Exemplars of an earlier culture, Native Americans, exiles in their own land, can only look on in sad resignation.

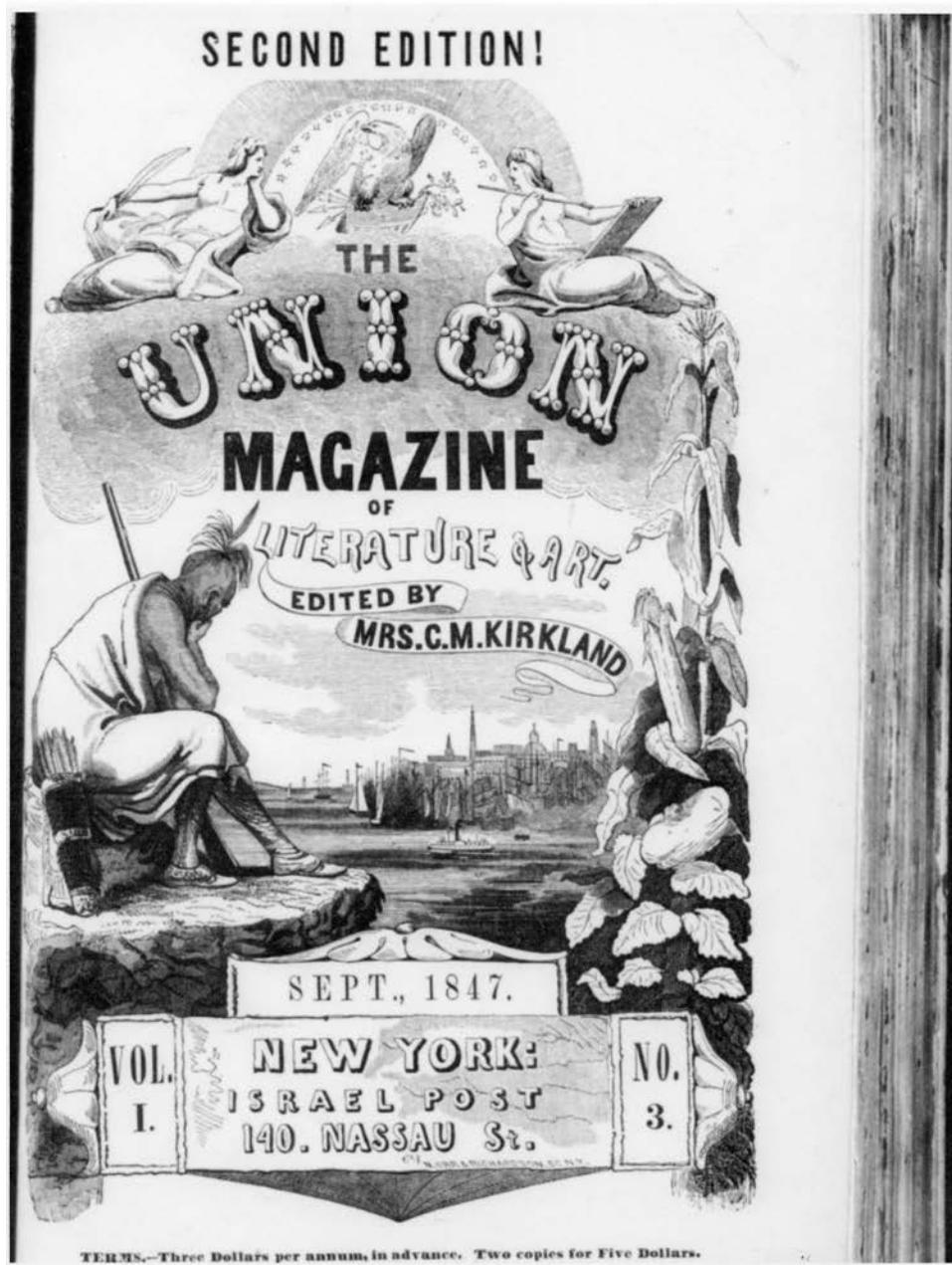


Figure 143. Cover of *The Union Magazine of Literature & Art*, vol. 1, no. 3 (September 1847). Image originally obtained online; source URL no longer found.

During this same time, DeWitt Clinton Boutelle exhibited at least three paintings of a lone Indian looking out over an expansive landscape showing what is being lost: *The Indian Hunter*, 1846 (Memorial Art Gallery of the University of Rochester); *Hudson River Landscape with Indian*, 1848 (Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, Virginia); and *Indian Surveying a Landscape*, 1855 (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston). To

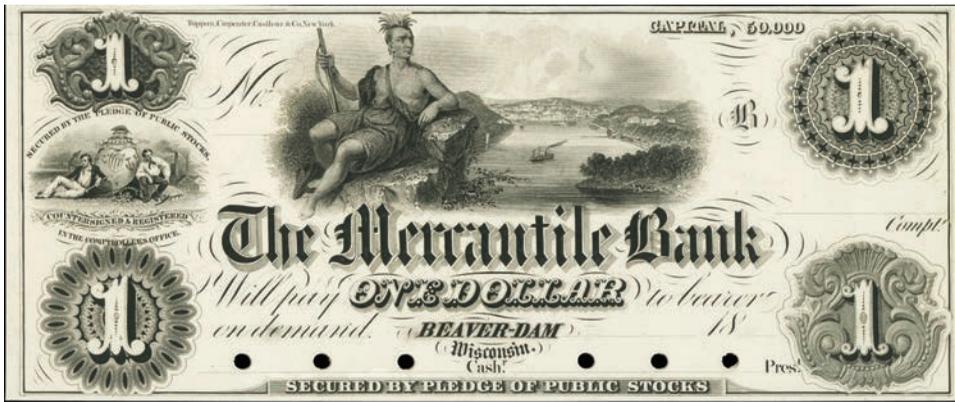


Figure 144. \$1 Note, Mercantile Bank, Beaver-Dam, Wis., ca. 1851–1855 (punch-canceled proof). Eric P. Newman Numismatic Education Society.

this popular theme, Asher B. Durand contributed, along with his *Evening Vespers*, his masterful Turner-esque painting *Progress: The Advance of Civilization*, 1853 (Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, Virginia), where Native Americans at the wilderness’s edge look down on a radiant, sun-drenched landscape populated by settlers.

In bank-note imagery, another example of the heroically posed Native American placed atop a precipice appears in the central vignette of the \$1 note of the Mercantile Bank, Beaver-Dam, Wisconsin (Figure 144), printed by Toppan, Carpenter, Casilear & Co. (TCC) ca. 1851–1855. This vignette shows the majestic solemnity of a noble warrior reclining on a natural rocky throne high above the scene of the advance of White civilization. Compared to the defeated, melancholy Native in Figure 137, his posture is one of openness and his demeanor one of dignity.⁷³ The landscape he surveys is remarkably atmospheric and sophisticated, a difficult achievement in a vignette’s small format. It is likely the creation of the talented John W. Casilear, who left the firm in 1855. At that time, Casilear, a close friend of Asher B. Durand and a full member of the National Academy of Design, devoted himself entirely to landscape painting, becoming a notable member of the group of artists now known as the Hudson River School. Again, the wellsprings of security printing and painting are closely interrelated.

Bank-note vignettes, as well as mainstream art, were attuned to the conflicting and ambivalent sentiments that preoccupied the young nation as Native Americans were driven from their homelands. The engravers’ approach to this subject matter is often highly original, as they make their own contributions to this larger discourse. The notes’ imagery invites the holders to admire Native Americans, to sympathize with their dire plight, and to bemoan the tragic cost of what is being lost. Yet, because the vignettes appear on America’s money, they also honor the accomplishments of the White settler (and the banks) in bringing “civilization” to this “untamed” land, thereby helping the nation to realize its God-given destiny.

W. L. Ormsby's Unit System

Toward a Unified Canvas

Waterman L. Ormsby was an imaginative innovator in developing bank-note imagery's potential. He reached a wide audience through his two books and the bank notes he generated. Before him, the high level of technical professionalism exhibited in the steel-engraved vignettes characteristic of security printing was a mainstay against counterfeiting, but Ormsby pioneered a different approach. Judged against his contemporaries, his drafting and engraving skills were deficient, but it was his bold rethinking of a note's overall appearance that captures the imagination. In line with what the market wanted, he constantly touted his conception as an improvement on safeguarding against counterfeiting, but this was only a means to a more important end: the conversion of each bank note into a unique picture of America's cultural life.

Ormsby, a cantankerous maverick, was born in Hampton, Wyndham, Connecticut, in 1809, and died in Brooklyn, New York, in 1883.¹ In 1829, he studied in New York City at the National Academy of Design, among whose founding members were Asher B. Durand and Samuel F. B. Morse. Upon graduation, he worked in several cities before settling in New York around 1835.² He exhibited remarkable mechanical abilities, making important contributions to the technology of bank-note engraving. He was a principal player in the formation of the Continental Bank Note Company, which he had to leave when the U.S. Treasury Department refused to deal with the firm if he was involved. Consequently, Ormsby maintained his own firm, the New York Bank Note Company. In contrast to so many other engravers, he directly addressed the public through his writings: *A Description of the Present System of Banknote Engraving* appeared in 1852, and *Cycloidal Configurations, or the Harvest of Counterfeiters* around a decade later. Although he was a vociferous critic of his profession's failure to do more to thwart counterfeiting, he may himself have engaged in criminal behavior.³

In bank-note engraving, the vignette is generally intended to "speak" to the viewer in a decorous and authoritative voice. Ormsby, on the other hand, had no qualms about shouting. His vignette of the heads of three horses on the \$5 note of the Drovers Bank, Leavenworth City, dated 1 November 1856, in what was then the Kansas Territory (Figure 145), calls attention to itself through its size and dramatic intensity. As was common with bank-note engraving, Ormsby adapted another artist's composition, in this instance a tondo by the English artist John Frederick Herring titled *Two Horses with a Foal, by a Fence*, a painting that Ormsby would have known from an engraving after it. Ormsby pushed his horses even closer to the picture plane than had Herrick, insisting on engaging the viewer's attention on intimate terms. This is a family grouping: the black stallion is at the



Figure 145. \$5 Note, Drovers Bank, Leavenworth City, Kansas Territory, 1 November 1856, 7.5 × 17.5 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

top, the white mare beneath him, with the colt, on the viewer's side of a fence, approaching what are presumably his sire and dam (outside the artist's fictional space, it would be surprising to find a stallion playing the role of a loving, docile paterfamilias). This kind of anthropomorphism was commonplace. Ormsby only made a few changes: he introduced a more solid fence than Herring's and cut off the composition at the bottom, no longer showing the forelegs of the rearing colt. The novelty in his adaptation of this painting is in letting the image dominate. The equine tableau takes over the center of the note with everything else vigorously pushed to the edges. The image becomes aggressively paramount.

Although Ormsby was far from the first to match the number of images or counters to the bill's denomination, no one else took it to his bold extremes. For the \$1, \$2, and \$3 notes of the City Bank of Leavenworth City, dated 1 November 1856, he employed a single vignette of a man cutting grain.⁴ The vignette is shown once on the \$1 bill, twice on the \$2 bill, and thrice on the \$3 bill (Figure 146). This is so literal-minded that it stands out from the more sophisticated multiplications employed by other firms, such as the inventive scenes built around putti or cherubs accompanied by coins on a sheet of bills produced for the West River Bank, Jamaica, Vermont (see Figure 33).⁵ By way of contrast, Ormsby's solution is prosaic indeed. In his \$3 note, all three renderings of the farmer with his scythe are on the same scale, but simply by placing them from left to right a little higher than the one that came before, he creates a sense of recession in depth. Instead of inserting an imprint along an edge, Ormsby "signs" this conception with his name printed just below the central figure's left foot. The literalness of these repetitions of a single theme proves disconcerting, but at the same time, its daring simplicity also proves intriguing. Ultimately, Ormsby's prose manages to shade into poetry.

Not only did Ormsby build on the seemingly mundane in creative ways, but he also executed vignettes depicting arresting and challenging subjects that stand apart from more conventional practices. In the central vignette for the \$100 note of the Carroll County Bank, Sandwich, New Hampshire (Figure 147), dated

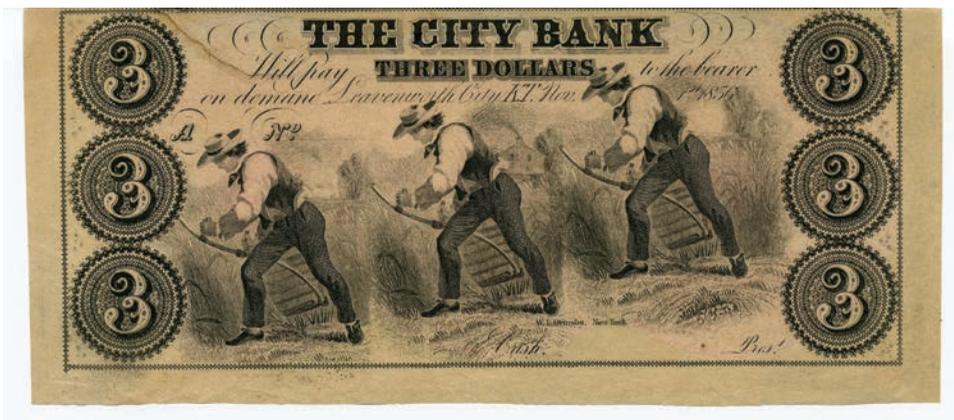


Figure 146. \$3 Note, City Bank, Leavenworth City, Kansas Territory, 1 November 1856, 7.6×17.7 cm (cut from a sheet of four notes: \$1, \$1, \$2, \$3). Collection of William L. Pressly.

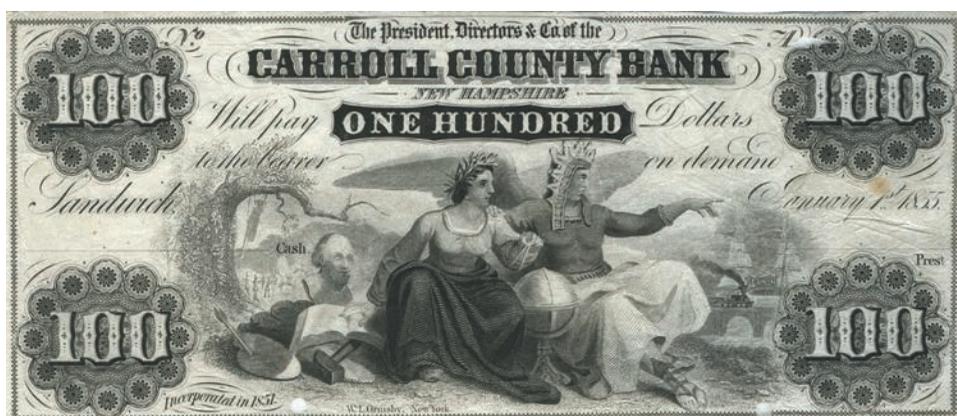


Figure 147. \$100 Note, Carroll County Bank, Sandwich, N.H., 1 January 1855 (proof). Used with permission from the *Whitman Encyclopedia of Obsolete Paper Money*, vol. 2 (Q. David Bowers). Photo © Whitman Publishing, LLC. All Rights Reserved.

1 January 1855, he created a highly imaginative and idiosyncratic image.⁶ Sitting side by side, an odd couple looks out to sea. The woman, crowned with a laurel wreath, reaches back with her right hand to touch an open book. Beneath the book is a sculptor's mallet, and next to it is a palette with brushes. Overlooking this ensemble is a bust of Shakespeare,⁷ establishing that the woman stands for the European arts that have been transplanted in America.

Shakespeare's presence is no casual choice. Throughout the nineteenth century, the Bard played a critical role in American life. In 1894, Willa Cather summed up his importance when she wrote, "Shakespeare belongs to two nations now."⁸ She even classified him as being more American than English: "Then one always fancies if he had been born just a few centuries later he would have been an American." She went on to evoke "the Anglo-Saxon races" and how Shakespeare "exalted their literature and letters above that of all people, and gave them their place among the nations of the earth." In Ormsby's conception, the Bard reigns supreme in an American setting (the Native Americans in the background,

who are hunting deer, firmly identify the locale as America, and a quiver even hangs from the limb of a nearby tree). In her left hand, the woman holds a compass poised above a globe, identifying her as well with the arts of navigation that have allowed Anglo-Saxon culture to reach America's shores.

In a memorandum to the publisher of a bank-note reporter magazine, Stephen Beede, the cashier of the Carroll County Bank, describes the figure seated beside the woman with his right hand on her shoulder as "an Egyptian with wings."⁹ This Egyptian god's extraordinary headdress associates him with the sun. Furthermore, his gesture directing their gaze to the right background is based on that of God the Father in Michelangelo's fresco *The Creation of Adam* in the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. The scene to which he points shows a train crossing a viaduct, a steamship, and two ships in full sail. In contrast to the woodland Natives on the left, this is the modern world of progress and technology. In this telling, the Egyptian sun god can be viewed as representing the cradle of Western civilization. Ormsby's point would seem to be that all that has been wrought in the Western world has now found a new abode and a new vitality on America's shores. Like the sun, civilization's progress has moved westward. The divine spark seen in Michelangelo's God the Father that had first been nurtured in ancient Egypt and had then matured in Europe will now transform America's present and future for the benefit of all humankind.

Beede, the bank's cashier, presumably spoke with some authority when he described the male as "an Egyptian with wings," but there is also the possibility that he was wrong, at least in terms of Ormsby's intentions. Is the winged figure an Egyptian god or a god-like personification of America? Is it more closely associated with an imagined headdress of the Indigenous peoples of the Americas than with the Egyptians? In this alternative interpretation, a majestic America points out to his companion, who represents Western civilization's new home, the optimistic promise of new growth and innovation. Where Beede saw an Egyptian god, some members of the public may have seen an exotic personification of America. Whichever reading one chooses, the note's essential message remains unchanged—by building on the foundations of the Old World, America will lead all nations to a more glorious future.

Ormsby's advertising sheet of 1855 (Figure 148) is unlike any other. Instead of featuring vignettes, he emphasizes mostly circular counters, punching up the design by using orange ink along with black. At the bottom, he identifies himself as "Inventor of the KALEIDOGRAPH," which helps explain his unusual selection of images. In his book *Cycloidal Configurations*, Ormsby praises this system, which is his own invention, as "the only new quality of Engraving that has been invented since the year 1818" and "as affording a substitute for Geometrical lathe work equally beautiful and more secure against counterfeiting."¹⁰ The only vignette appearing on the sheet is the repeated figure of Cupid, who is encircled by a floral wreath.



Figure 148. Specimen sheet, W. L. Ormsby, New York, 1855 (matted and trimmed at top). Image courtesy of Heritage Auctions.

With only slight changes to the vignette's orientation, the five figures appear to be rising on the left and descending on the right. Just as he had with the farmer with the scythe, Ormsby employed this vignette on the State Bank of Lecompton in the Kansas Territory according to the denomination—one on the \$1 note, two on the \$2 note, three in an inverted arc on the \$3 note, and five in an arc on the \$5 bill just as they appear on the advertising sheet. But looking again at the advertising sheet, one is struck by Ormsby's devilish underlying commentary. What he shows is the Wheel of Fortune, with the "innocent" Cupid rising to the top on the left and descending on the right. On this ever-turning wheel, sometimes you are up and sometimes you are down. Around the top of the center circle is the word "SECURITY," which is ostensibly about Ormsby's use of a new type of machinery that is able to produce elaborate patterns beyond the capabilities of counterfeiters to reproduce; at the same time, it can be read ironically in that in this world of ups and downs, the value of one's money is anything but secure.¹¹ No wonder his fellow security printers at times ostracized the combative and prickly Ormsby. He was all too willing to reveal the bank-note business's dirty little secret—the money it was printing was often unsound. The public accepted it at its peril, as the wheel is constantly spinning. The two circles that are cojoined at the bottom are like the two hemispheres seen on maps. The entire world is subject to the fluctuations of money and love (more particularly the love of money). Ormsby's message is somewhat disguised, but it would not have been lost on his colleagues. He dared to call into question the rickety financial structure of boom and bust that they went to such lengths to pretend was sound by adorning the money they produced with idealized images of harmonious prosperity and high-minded values.

In 1852, Ormsby published a book whose lengthy title reveals its contents: *A Description of the Present System of Bank Note Engraving, Showing Its Tendency to Facilitate Counterfeiting: To Which Is Added a New Method of Constructing Bank Notes to Prevent Forgery*. With both "counterfeiting" and "forgery" in his title, Ormsby reiterates what he claims is his primary motivation. At exhausting length, he describes what he calls the "patch-work system,"¹² which relies on machinery and transfer rolls to assemble and reassemble a note's various elements, creating bills that too closely resemble one another. Repetition is assured, given that only a few firms dominate the industry. He details as well how easy it is for counterfeiters to duplicate the various processes. Then in his last chapter, Ormsby proposes a new system that can counteract the flaws built into the patchwork method. He proposes to fill the entire face of the note with one design that would integrate all other features, such as lettering, into its composition: "The whole surface of the Bill should be covered with one unbroken and inseparable design, with the lettering so interwoven by the hand of the Artist, as to form an integral part of the design. . . . If the Artist designs and engraves the *whole Note* at once, on the whole surface of the plate, and never himself engraves another like it, it cannot be copied without the employment of talents, nearly equal to those by which it is first produced."¹³ The artist is again both designer and engraver, even taking on the tasks formerly assigned to those responsible for the lettering and numbering of the denominations and forgoing altogether the intricate designs produced by machinery. The face, an integrated whole, is now a work of art produced by a single individual: its artistic integrity is its defense against forgery. In order to counterfeit such a note, one would either have to start from scratch or procure the plate from which it was

made.¹⁴ The banks, rather than the engraving firms, would be responsible for their own plates. Furthermore, denominations could be produced in different sizes, with the smallest being the \$1 bill and the size increasing along with each increase in the value of the note, establishing yet another impediment to altering a note's denomination.

Readers have tended to take Ormsby's book at face value, arguing about the effectiveness of his measures in countering the problems inherent in the "American System" of piecemeal additions. But this is to miss the real purpose underlying his intention. What he is proposing is breathtaking in its audacity. His is not so much a system to frustrate counterfeiting as it is a grandiose, almost megalomaniacal, attempt to flood America with works of art. Engaging bankers by focusing on the problem of counterfeiting is merely a means to a greater end—an end that foresees no less than the radical transformation of the appearance of paper money in America and its role within the nation's fabric. As Ormsby states, "Every Bank would have an entire design, for each denomination, suitable to the name of the Bank, and its locality."¹⁵ Thus, the plate for each note would represent a unique work of art, equivalent to a fine-art etching, the result being that the entire country would be blanketed by original, imposing imagery. Earlier he had elaborated, "The designs for Bills, should observe some principle of indicating the locality of the Bank, or of the Town, or State, or at least, the section of Country, to which they belong. A view, for example, of the Falls of Niagara, might form a part of a design to designate an Institution created in that section of Country. The Bunker Hill Monument, for a Bank in Charlestown, or Boston."¹⁶ Ormsby felt that this emphasis on place could also have the happy benefit of removing the generating of paper money from the hands of a few professional firms, located primarily in New York, to putting it back into the hands of numerous individual artists located all over the country. According to him, in breaking this monopoly, "a hundred or more Artists would be employed in the business."¹⁷ As a result, bank-note engraving would no longer require soulless business intermediaries between the artist and the client.

Ormsby casts the Almighty Dollar in the service of something greater than itself, transforming the country into a society firmly grounded in art produced by Americans. He envisions pictures that express the nation's individuality with each region, each state, each town, each bank representing characteristics of its own history and locale. The subject matter would encompass sublime landscapes of untamed nature; rural landscapes of people working in harmony with the land; townscapes representing commerce, sociability, community, and a devotion to religion in the depiction of numerous churches; celebrations of transportation; the honoring of family values; allegories and symbols of a fledgling nation; portraits of those worthy of emulation; and historical scenes and monuments detailing the nation's glorious past. In Ormsby's scheme, such scenes would not be made in piecemeal and repetitious fashion. Rather, each note—"ONE and INDIVISIBLE"¹⁸—would consist of a unique picture taking up the entire face. The integration of multiple vignettes in the patchwork system may well have been in response to an unspoken desire for national unity, but in Ormsby's plan, the call for political unity is palpable. Currency would knit the nation together, the sum of its parts providing a grand tapestry of the whole. In this way, the medium of bank notes would weave together a national narrative, articulating America itself as a work of art.

Given the entrenched position of the bank-note firms and the incredible grandiosity of the proposal, Ormsby's argument unsurprisingly failed to alter how money was produced in America. However, a decade later, he was aroused again to publish a book on this same subject. The argument was as before, but his articulation is even more incisive and cutting. The villain in his narrative is still the bank-note firms that enable counterfeiting, but it is their new client, the federal government rather than the banks, that he hoped to reach. Much to his dismay, when the U.S. government approached firms in 1861 to produce its Treasury notes, it at first only contracted with the two largest incorporated businesses—the American Bank Note Company (ABNC) and the National Bank Note Company (NBNC)—declining to even negotiate with his small firm, the New York Bank Note Company. An infuriated and frustrated Ormsby published a diatribe ca. 1862, which bears the cumbersome title *Cycloidal Configurations or the Harvest of Counterfeiters: Containing Matter of the Highest Importance Concerning Paper Money: Also Explaining the Unit System of Bank Note Engraving*. In the first page of this pamphlet, he raises the alarm that the government's securities will be irredeemably devalued by ominously prophesying that “a grand jubilee of counterfeiting is near its advent.”¹⁹ His colorfully written last paragraph outlines from his perspective the dire consequences arising from the government's folly:

One hundred and fifty millions of United States Treasury Notes—engraved in “ten days,” by patching together material previously used for inferior purposes, and printed in three colors, one on the top of another, making confusion worse confounded, at as much expense as possible—signatures engraved—a legal tender in payment of all debts—as good as gold in thirty-two States, and almost as good throughout the world—One hundred and fifty millions—*all alike*—each one of which is destined to wander, without a military escort, through Camps—Cottages—Farms—Banks—Tents—Ranches and Wigwams, until it becomes as ragged, torn, defaced, and soiled as a “*three years*” traveller in the Artic Regions without supplies [a reference to Elisha Kent Kane, an Arctic explorer discussed in the context of Figure 87] . . . One hundred and fifty millions of them, destined to be counterfeited in the North, all the way to Kamskatke [Kamchatka Peninsula, Russia]; in the South, to Patagonia [the southern end of South America]; in the West, to China; and in the East, to Jerusalem.²⁰

Tellingly, Ormsby ends his pamphlet with the word “Jerusalem,” thereby concluding with the spiritual center of Christendom. The government's decision about its choice of a firm to print its currency was not just a mistake—it promises, in Ormsby's account, to have truly apocalyptic consequences.

When not indulging in hyperbolic alarms, Ormsby offers some more reflective reservations. For him, one of the faults of the big firms' approach is in the means of production, an argument he had already made at length in his earlier book of 1852. When notes were first constructed, the use of vignettes on steel dies seemed to be a big step forward in frustrating counterfeiters, but Ormsby, with typical exaggeration, argues that time had proved that this initial optimism was grossly unwarranted: “These dies never wear out—are never destroyed—accumulate from one generation

to another, and, in the vicissitudes of business, often pass into counterfeiters' hands, making the system of constructing Bank Notes by combining and recombining small, detached vignettes, a thousand fold more dangerous and objectionable than it was in Vaughan's time [Richard Vaughan was apprehended in 1758 for counterfeiting a note of the Bank of England, using a similar method of targeting its individual parts]."²¹ To make matters worse, the large firms have added security features that, in reality, do nothing to frustrate counterfeiters but are extremely effective in allowing the firms to inflate the price of their "flawed" product. Among these extras is the much ballyhooed "Patent Green Tint" that led to U.S. currency being referred to as greenbacks, and "Cycloidal Configurations," a product of the geometrical lathe, with which the author began his pamphlet's title. Ormsby feels that the firms' posturing is all smoke and mirrors meant to confound those who seek their services: "The business of engraving, which is exceedingly simple, is purposely rendered mysterious and incomprehensible, by technical rodomontade, in order to give it an air of scientific dignity; and a simple proposition is overspread with cant, which would be better understood by using more common sense, and less pedantry."²² The new "security" features also give the counterfeiters opportunities to serve up their "old frauds in new dresses, cheat'ng the people over and over again, in cycloidal progression."²³ From Ormsby's point of view, these cycloidal configurations are the spinning of a continuous web that entraps the public in an unholy alliance between the bank-note firms and the counterfeiters they help foster.

A further problem is the transformation of the bank-note business from one run by the artists/engravers themselves to one taken over by "mere capitalists,"²⁴ who are only interested in profits. The artists no longer even have contact with the clientele, who too are at the mercy of the capitalist owners.²⁵ In addition, when approached by the Confederate States of America (see chapter 11), the firms chose to engage in treasonous conduct, greedily producing currency for the country's enemy.

Ormsby presents himself as a welcome alternative: he is an honest businessman and artist who is dedicated to producing secure notes at fair prices without the extraneous bells and whistles promoted by what he insists are his unscrupulous competitors. For him, images are the keystone for frustrating counterfeiting, but, as we have already seen, he feels that in this regard steel-die vignettes have lost their effectiveness. Furthermore, "combining vignettes so as to cover the Note" is nothing more than "an artful dodge" that does not get to the root of the problem.²⁶ Instead, reaffirming his 1852 pronouncements, he maintains that "a Bank Note, whatever may be its denomination, should be one indivisible picture, or, in brief, a UNIT."²⁷ Even if an overall design is not impossible to forge, an all-encompassing picture adds a formidable degree of difficulty. Ormsby is eloquent in his defense of employing such a design: "The highest order of protection against counterfeiting Bank Notes is a historical vignette, because the greatest variety of talent is required in its execution. It bears the same relation to geometrical lathe work that fresco painting does to wall-paper, or Mozart music to that of the hand-organ."²⁸ In using the phrase "historical vignette," he is talking about the academic tradition of history painting, an exalted genre that includes not only scenes, heavily idealized, drawn from the past (and present) but also mythological and allegorical subjects. This is the grand-manner tradition applied to a note's entire surface. By turning the bill's face into a "canvas" for an artist's personal

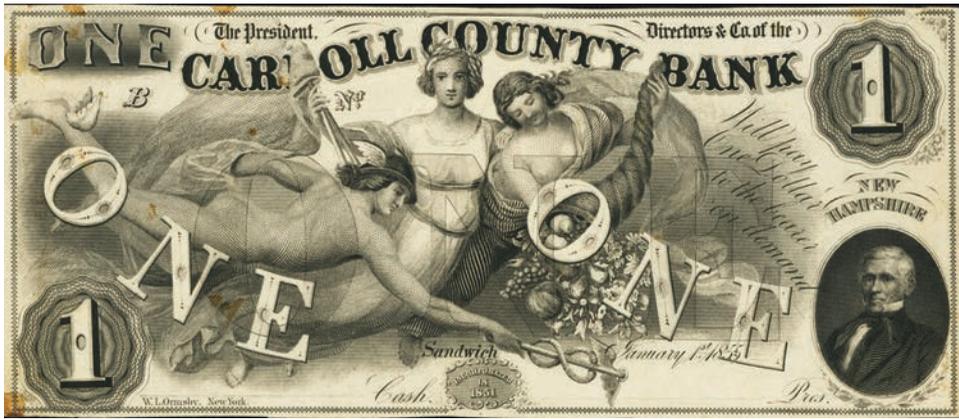


Figure 149. \$1 Note, Carroll County Bank, Sandwich, N.H., 1 January 1855 (proof). Image courtesy of Heritage Auctions.

expression, Ormsby sweeps away the elaborate technologies involved in the patchwork system. The note has indeed become a canvas for a painting or a wall for a fresco. In addition, such a design, at least in theory, would make a note as difficult to copy as a painting or a fresco by Michelangelo or Raphael or a print by Rembrandt.

In his pamphlet, Ormsby offers an earlier example of his unit system—his \$1 note executed in 1854 (although dated 1 January 1855), for the Carroll County Bank, Sandwich, New Hampshire (Figure 149).²⁹ It is the only note to qualify fully as representing the unit system in that the lettering is interwoven into the image. With this work, he creates a bizarre, imaginative dreamscape, consisting of large, effortlessly floating figures accompanied by a host of ONEs (all these carefully positioned ONEs make it virtually impossible to raise fraudulently this note’s denomination). Two ONEs act in tandem, curving across the face as if blown by an unseen wind. In two additional printings of the note, Ormsby adds a bold red ONE protector that runs across the bottom of the image.³⁰ His difficult-to-see, large phantom ONE arrayed across the figures adds the most unexpected dimension. Other textual elements are equally dramatic in their being deemphasized: “Sandwich” and the date “January 1st 1855” are rendered in unusually small typeface along the bill’s lower edge.

In terms of the three figures, Mercury swoops in from the left, the toes of his right foot disappearing behind the border. His extended right hand, holding his caduceus, is poised to bless the bank president’s signature. Plenty or Abundance spills out fruits from her cornucopia onto the bank’s commercial endeavors. The central figure, America as Liberty, holds a rod supporting her liberty cap, as she stares directly out at the viewer. The second rod in her hand is the staff of a long banner that swirls over Mercury’s left hand (the portion of the staff seen above the liberty cap is only a thin line, its bulk being covered by the banner). The laurel wreath in her hair establishes her honorific status. Her entire body forms another abstract, graceful curve, ending in her right foot and the flutter of her drapery. The placement of Mercury’s extended right arm, which crosses her body, at first glance resembles a diminutive horse’s leg, as if America were part centaur. This misreading of the image is presumably unintentional, but it adds to the sense of being transfixed by a

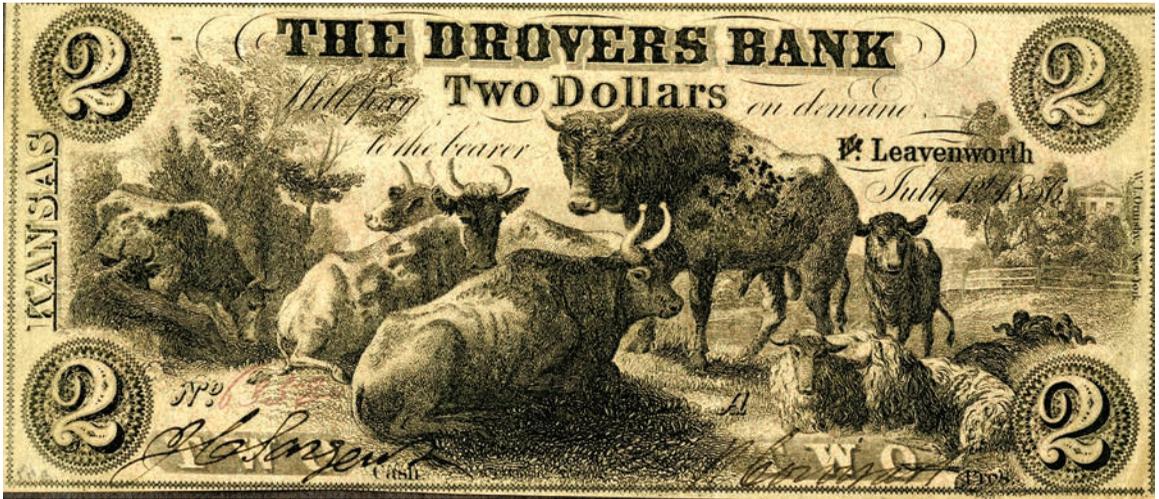


Figure 150. \$2 Note, Drovers Bank, Leavenworth, Kans., 1 July 1856, 6.8×17.1 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

wondrous, hallucinatory apparition. The small, conventional oval portrait of Daniel Hoit, the bank's president, at the lower right looks totally overmatched, providing a foil to this imaginative, disorienting world promoting American values. Not only would it be difficult to replicate this large, complex design, but more to the point, it would be difficult to capture its distinctive essence.³¹

What Ormsby describes as his “unit system,” the covering of the face of the bill with a single design, is again alluded to (although not entirely achieved because of the lack of integration of the lettering into the design itself) in his notes for the Drovers Bank of Leavenworth City, Kansas. As seen in the \$2 note (Figure 150), dated 1 July 1856, the factual elements are pushed to the borders, allowing a bucolic scene to expand to fill the entire face. In a rolling landscape, one sees a bull among cows. On the right, four sheep have joined them. Behind a fence in the distant right is a stand of trees sheltering a substantial two-story house. Several of the animals gaze out to welcome the viewer into this placid paradise, an Edenic corner of the American countryside. Ormsby transforms the bank note into a canvas, whose landscape becomes the note's real *raison d'être*, the monetary information having been subordinated. To create a unified field, one has to have a unified message—in this instance, Ormsby's note is an invitation to experience a Virgilian pastoral in America's heartland.

Ormsby's approach to paper money attends not just to commercial concerns but also, as a canvas for an emerging nation, to the country's artistic and cultural core. His vision, however, that every denomination of every bank should feature a different “picture” was too impractical. The production of thousands of unique designs was never a tenable proposition. Yet his idea was to leave a lasting impression on the federal currency that was to follow the bank-note era. What was a pipe dream in terms of the vast number of different types of notes that were needed in the antebellum era became entirely plausible in federal money, where the number of types of notes was drastically reduced. Even then, as we shall see, the old formulas stubbornly resisted this dramatic innovation.

❧ PART III ❧

The Civil War's Seismic Changes

*The Simultaneous Creation of Two
National Paper Currencies*

The United States of America's First Paper Money

Instituting a Monopoly

During the American Revolution, the Continental Congress authorized the printing of vast quantities of paper money, which soon devalued. Subsequently, when Congress ratified the Constitution in 1789, establishing the United States of America, it was distrustful of paper money, preferring coinage as a medium of exchange. In the nineteenth century, however, the federal government did issue Treasury notes during times of financial crisis, the vast majority of which were interest bearing: the War of 1812, the financial panic and depression of 1837, the Mexican–American War beginning in 1846, the Panic of 1857, and finally the Civil War, the magnitude of this last crisis requiring an additional and far more radical response to unprecedented financial pressures.¹ The antebellum Treasury notes, more frequently than not, were adorned with vignettes, but these designs were derivative, having been drawn from the stock of the private bank-note engraving firms that were printing them. Because these notes enjoyed only limited circulation, were never legal tender, and employed recycled vignettes, they are excluded from this book's analysis.

Demand Notes from 1861 and Legal Tender Notes from 1862

To alleviate the financial strains imposed by the Civil War, the U.S. government authorized the issuance of paper money in an Act of 17 July 1861. Only three denominations were printed (\$5, \$10, and \$20 notes), all of which bear the date 10 August 1861. On 23 August, the American Bank Note Company (ABNC) delivered the notes to the Treasury Department, and after they had been signed and cut, the first were released three days later. These bills became known as “Demand Notes” because they were initially redeemable in coin on demand. The vignettes used on these Demand Notes were taken from the ABNC's archives. The ABNC also held a patent on a particular green tint that was thought to be longer lasting and harder to counterfeit than other inks. The term *greenbacks* came into use as a response to the intricate geometric designs, printed in this green ink, which covered the backs of the Demand Notes and the subsequent issue of Legal Tender Notes employing the same feature.

The face of the \$5 note (Figure 151) acts as a wall in which there is a dark niche housing a magnificent sculpture of an armed and imperious symbol of the nation; it fills the entire left-hand side, from top to bottom. This sculpture was the work of Thomas Crawford, an American whose studio was in Rome, and it was destined to crown the dome of the U.S. Capitol. Although the full-size clay model

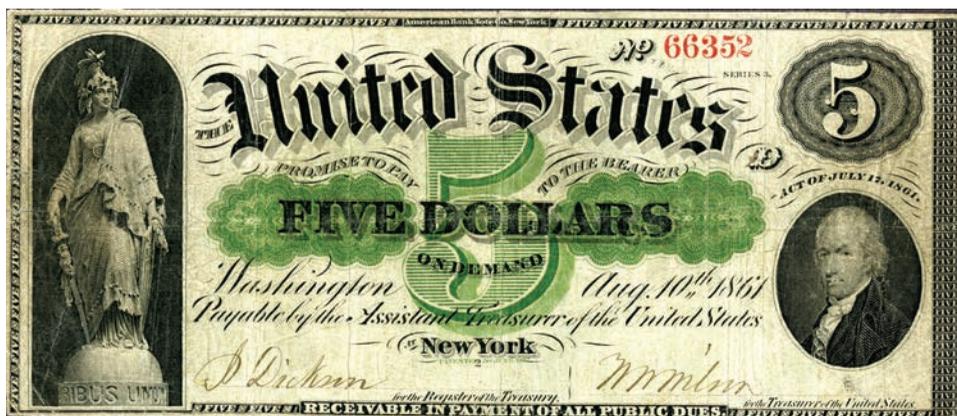


Figure 151. \$5 Demand note, United States, Washington, D.C. (payable at New York), 10 August 1861, 7.7 × 18.4 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

for the statue was in Washington by spring 1859, it was not cast in bronze until 1862 and was not fully assembled and dedicated atop the dome until 2 December 1863. One suspects that as important as this sculpture was in projecting a national iconography, the vignette, in choosing to frame it within this intensely somber niche, may also intend to pay tribute to the artist. Crawford had died from cancer in London on 10 October 1857, at age forty-three, and the engraving may pay homage to him (and to the progress of American art in general) as well as to his characterization of American values.

The history of the sculpture's evolution reveals the tensions underlying the causes of the Civil War. Crawford's first conception, titled *Freedom Triumphant in Peace and War*, shows Freedom wearing on her head a wreath of wheat and laurel.² Her right hand is propped on a sword, from which hangs the national shield, and her left hand and arm cradle a large olive branch. Even before Crawford had been offered the commission, the U.S. Capitol's architect Thomas Walton had envisioned a large statue of Liberty holding, as was traditional, a long rod supporting a liberty cap, based on the manumission ceremonies of ancient Rome. In his second version, Crawford reverted to this familiar type by showing his female allegory wearing a liberty cap encircled with stars. Jefferson Davis, the future president of the Confederate States of America, was then U.S. secretary of war, and any design involving the capitol's construction required his approval. In a letter of 15 January 1856, Davis objected to this second version, maintaining that the symbol of the liberty cap, an image derived from the freeing of the enslaved, was "inappropriate to a people who were born free."³ More to the point, what went unstated was that any suggestion that those who were born enslaved might at some point be freed was unthinkable. Before the intensification of the sectional strife that erupted in the Civil War, the liberty cap had been ubiquitous as a symbol of constitutional liberty rather than of any one individual's emancipation, but by the late 1850s, Davis took care that so important a sculpture could not be misconstrued. In his final design, Crawford replaced the liberty cap with a Roman helmet, also encircled by stars, an indication of "her [American Freedom's] Heavenly origin."⁴ He also wrote of the helmet, "the crest [of] which is composed of

an Eagles head and a bold arrangement of feathers suggested by the costume of our Indian tribes.”⁵ Thus, this is an American version of Freedom, in which Native American and classical motifs are familiarly intermingled.

Of the three versions, the final figure, with its bulky, aggrandizing classical dress, is the most imposing and magisterial, being able to hold its own when seen from a distance. Freedom’s accoutrements give her a martial air. In addition to wearing a helmet, she, as in the version that preceded her, lightly clasps a sheathed and beribboned sword at her right side. Her left hand rests atop the shield of the United States while grasping a laurel wreath that symbolizes honor and victory to those on whom it is bestowed. Although she stands on a tall pedestal, the vignette only shows the top portion, where she stands atop the globe with its encircling, familiar inscription, “[E PLU]RIBUS UNUM” (out of many, one), a welcomed reminder of national unity at a time of sectional strife.⁶ According to Crawford, Freedom’s standing on the globe signifies “her protection of the *America[n]* world.”⁷ But by standing atop the building housing the nation’s legislators and then atop the globe itself, *American Freedom* forms a crowning aspirational achievement for all humankind. At the note’s lower, far-right corner, acting as a minor counterweight to the imposing statue, is an oval portrait of Alexander Hamilton, who was not only the United States’ first secretary of the Treasury but also the person most responsible for constructing the nation’s financial system.

The face of the \$10 bill (Figure 152) features an oval portrait of Abraham Lincoln, the nation’s wartime president, which was engraved by Frederick Girsch from a photo by C. S. German. In the upper center is a vignette of the ubiquitous American eagle, a design originally created by Toppan, Carpenter, & Co., which now formed part of the ABNC’s holdings. The defiant eagle stands atop olive branches and arrows while clutching in its talon a ribbon inscribed “E PLURIBUS UNUM.” Combined with the American shield with its reference to the original thirteen colonies, its imagery, in this new context, offers a reminder of a united country. An allegorical design, *Painting*, closes off the right-hand side. The figure of *Painting*



Figure 152. \$10 Demand note, United States, Washington, D.C. (payable at Philadelphia), 10 August 1861, 7.9×18.4 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

supports a palette and brushes with her left hand and props a tablet or canvas against her hip with her right. Her classical attire and the column behind her indicate her origins in the values embodied in Greco-Roman civilization. Yet, when employed in this new context, she also suggests that a peaceful and successful conclusion to the war will again permit the arts to flourish. The choice of this soon-to-be widely circulated image may also be self-referential, alluding to how art and artists will play a crucial role in the nation's cultural and political discourse during a time of war.

The face of the \$20 note (Figure 153) shows the figure of America as a variation on Crawford's Freedom (Alfred Jones was the artist/engraver).⁸ Considerably enlarged in terms of the space she occupies on the bill, she has stepped out of her confining niche in the \$5 note to take center stage, splitting the note in two—"United States" and "Twenty Dollars" have been separated, as has, in one instance, the "2" and "0" of "20." She still has a beribboned sword on her right side and a shield on her left, albeit at a more intrusive angle, but she is less martial in spirit, her helmet having been discarded for a laurel wreath, and she wears a more inviting expression. Standing on the capitol's grounds, abundant fruits are on the ground to her right, behind which can be seen the east front of the capitol, where the building's light-colored columns alternating with the porch's dark shadows harmonize with the alternating light and dark stripes of the shield. The absence of any portraits on the bill's face allows her to share her space with no one, offering up an unadulterated vision of the potential of a united country.

The three denominations of Demand Notes employ vignettes in new, imposing contexts. Except for the figure of Painting, the allegories and symbols promote overtly patriotic themes, and as already pointed out, even Painting takes on a patriotic aura when seen as dedicated to the nation's service. But these bills were soon supplanted by Legal Tender Notes, also called United States Notes, which contain no obligation for redemption in specie. With only minor alterations to the text and the addition of the Treasury seal, the designs of the face of the Demand Notes were carried over into the Legal Tender Notes. The greenbacks remained,



Figure 153. \$20 Demand note, United States, Washington, D.C. (payable at Philadelphia), 10 August 1861, 7.7×18.5 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

although with different, more elegant geometric patterns. An Act of 25 February 1862 authorized the first issue of the \$5, \$10, \$20, \$50, \$100, \$500, and \$1000 Legal Tender Notes, which are dated 10 March 1862. Shortly thereafter, an Act of 11 July 1862, authorized the production of \$1 and \$2 notes, dated 1 August 1862. The imagery of the six entirely new notes shows a decided shift toward a more conservative and formal presentation. In producing the new denominations, the National Bank Note Company (NBNC) and the ABNC worked together. Gone are the ambitious allegorical females, as male portraits become the norm, their choice emphasizing the soundness of the government's financial administration. Salmon P. Chase, then the secretary of the Treasury, adorns the \$1 note; Alexander Hamilton appears on the \$2 note, as he had on the \$5 note, but he is now given a larger oval portrait; Hamilton appears again in the same vignette but in a more elevated position in the \$50 note; Albert Gallatin, the secretary of the Treasury from 1801 to 1813, occupies the center of the \$500 note; and Robert Morris, sometimes called the financier of the American Revolution, is on the \$1000 bill. Morris's situation is more dramatic than most, as there is a great deal of white space between his portrait bust and the encircling green surround. This emphasis on the country's financial leaders, past and present, testifies to the government's desire to present a solid, responsible economic pedigree. Their bureaucratic formality is part of an appeal to the public for its trust in the proclaimed value of what, after all, was only printed pieces of paper.

Looking at the \$1 note (Figure 154), one can see how imposing these enlarged portraits can be. Rather than turning to its archive, the NBNC (the imprint of the ABNC also appears on some notes) created a new vignette of Chase. The engraver Joseph P. Ourdan employed as his model one of the photographs of Chase taken by the professional Washington photographer Henry Ulke. It is the only portrait on U.S. currency to show the sitter with an arm crossed in front (in the photograph of Chase, both arms are crossed, but in the vignette only the right arm is shown). The arm acts as a barrier between Chase and the viewer as well as



Figure 154. \$1 Legal Tender Note, United States, Washington, D.C. (payable at New York), 1 August 1862, 7.8 × 18.8 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.



Figure 155. \$100 Legal Tender Note, United States, Washington, D.C., 10 March 1863, 7.9×18.8 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

a plinth, making his presence even more austere and imposing. The overall design is somewhat retrograde, recalling the rigid geometries of the rectangular blocks that compose Jacob Perkins’s early bank notes, which slotted in the individual textual components (see Figure 15). All the additional notes contain a single image, permitting the designs to be enlarged. The \$100 note (Figure 155) is the only one of the new denominations to forgo a portrait in favor of a symbol, in this instance the dramatic vignette *Spread Eagle*, which was also engraved by Ourdan for the NBNC. With its expansive wingspan, its open beak emitting a curdling cry, and its sharp talons clutching the high peak of a rocky promontory, this symbol of America conveys the same message as the “Don’t Tread on Me” flags of the American Revolution. These flags, showing a coiled serpent, exude fierce defiance, but the eagle additionally conveys a sublime, forceful splendor. It dominates the left-hand side and looks out to the left as well, vigilantly guarding against the approach of any danger.

In addition to Legal Tender Notes, the government authorized in an Act of 3 March 1863 other types of paper currency, such as compound-interest Treasury notes and interest-bearing notes,⁹ but the Legal Tender Notes remained by far the most widely circulated of the various types. Also excluded from this discussion is the production of Fractional currency (denominations of less than \$1), which offered a less satisfactory vehicle for imagery because of their smaller sizes. They, too, focused heavily on male portraits with images of George Washington, lifted from postage stamps, adorning all the notes of the first issue. But even a cursory overview requires that attention be paid to one type of bill that stands apart—National Bank Notes.

National Bank Notes from 1863: A National Picture Currency

Initially, the Demand Notes and Legal Tender Notes circulated alongside the state bank notes, which have been this book’s primary subject. Soon, however, the federal government used a carrot-and-stick approach to drive this unregulated currency from circulation. By requiring institutions to pay increasingly higher taxes on any nonfederal notes they circulated, the government made the cost of doing

this kind of business prohibitive. But the government also allowed individual banks to issue paper money that originated from, and was controlled by, the Treasury. National banks chartered by the government had their names prominently displayed on these National Bank Notes, and by 1935, when the practice was discontinued, over 14,000 banks had participated.¹⁰ The National Bank Note series grew out of the National Currency Act of 25 February 1863, which, when supplemented in 1864, was renamed the National Bank Act. Yet, well before Congress's legislation, the Treasury Department was working on designs that would influence the 1863 series' appearance.

The First Seven Notes: An Overview of America's History

As early as the winter of 1861–1862, before the National Bank Note series had been conceived, Spencer M. Clark, the chief clerk of the Treasury, had laid a foundation for a currency series that would “adopt for designs the national pictures in the Capitol [i.e., the eight paintings that hang in the Rotunda], using them in their chronological order, the earliest events pictured for the smaller denominations, and the later events for the larger notes.”¹¹ According to Clark, after Treasury Secretary Chase had submitted his plan “to leading members of Congress” and “to eminent bankers and financiers,” the secretary “adopted it, so far as the one, two, and five dollar notes were concerned, directing John Vanderlyn's painting of the ‘Landing of Columbus’ to be used for the ones, Robert W. Weir's painting of the ‘Embarkation of the Pilgrims’ to be used for the twos, and William H. Powell's painting of the ‘Discovery of the Mississippi by De Soto’ for the fives.”¹² But work on this proposal fizzled, only to be revived by Clark for the currency for the National Bank Note series.¹³

Although Clark did not acknowledge W. L. Ormsby's unit system, he had presumably drawn inspiration from his 1852 book.¹⁴ Just as in Ormsby's proposal, the image was to appear on the face, covering the note's full dimensions. The note's denomination, date of issue, the Treasury seal, and the coat of arms for the state in which the bank was located would also appear on the face in gold characters.¹⁵ Security against counterfeiting formed an essential part of the justification: the gold characters would frustrate photographic reproduction, and altering bills to a higher denomination would prove futile—every consumer could be expected to quickly learn which picture went with which denomination. Furthermore, this “National Picture Currency” would help educate even the most poorly informed of the citizenry about their national past.¹⁶ Clark was less specific about the design of the backs of the notes, saying only that “it is ‘national in its character’” and “there are intended to be as many circular counters as the note represents dollars—one counter on a one-dollar, two on a two-dollar, five on a five-dollar, &c.” (the “&c” is an impossibility for the high denominations).¹⁷

Clark, like Ormsby, saw currency's imagery in grandiose terms. In addition to proposing that the capitol paintings with their national narrative be reproduced, he envisioned other series with even more original progressions:

Thus a series of pictures of full note size might be selected, beginning with the earliest scenes of savage life, and terminating in the advanced stages of civilization, which would be an illuminated history of the country's progress; or a series beginning at bow and arrow warfare, and

terminating in a perfected iron-clad; or a series beginning in the birch-bark canoe, and terminating in the present perfection of steam craft; or a series illustrating methods of payment, beginning at exchanges of values by shells and wampum in uncivilized tribes, and terminating in Coupon and Registered Bonds and Treasury Notes, as dealt from a modern banking-house.¹⁸

Although, on one level, the history of money illustrated on money possesses a satisfying internal logic, it does sound like a subject that, in terms of its pictorial potential, would be dreadfully dull. Yet there is no faulting the other concepts. The progress of civilization told from an American perspective and the American history of weaponry or waterborne transport all make for bold and imaginative possibilities, trumpeting the achievements of Native and White Americans.

For the National Bank Note series, rather than follow through on Clark's earlier proposal, Chase chose to sponsor a competition for the new notes' conception, instructing Clark to write a proposal for the submission of designs. The announcement called for designs that were "national in their character," that were original, not having been previously used in any other context, and that measured three by seven inches, making them comparable in size to the Demand and Legal Tender Notes.¹⁹ They also had to accommodate specified texts, seals, and signatures. Compensation for the acceptance of a design was not to exceed \$200 per note.

Although the competition was open to all, New York's two most prominent security-engraving firms, the ABNC and the NBNC, created the winning concepts and were awarded the contract for their production (the Continental Bank Note Company [CBNC] received a contract for the \$5 note). Again, as had Ormsby, Clark saw these two firms as forming "a powerful monopoly," stating, "They were practically but one . . . as they have acted in concert in making proposals and in executing contracts."²⁰ The firms had to have been aware of Clark's idea about reproducing the Rotunda pictures, since the idea had been circulated and the Treasury had already printed specimens. Their own plan called for two minor adjustments: the reproductions of the Rotunda pictures were to appear on the back rather than the face and would stop short of filling the entire field. Bitter about the outcome, Clark wrote in astonished disbelief, "Payment was made to another person on a proposal to *use historic pictures upon the National Currency*."²¹ As a Treasury Department employee, Clark may never have been eligible for this prize, but it was the lack of recognition and respect that must have stung him the most.



The series' first seven denominations—\$5, \$10, \$20, \$50, \$100, \$500, and \$1000—were released in December 1863. The ABNC had the primary responsibility for the \$10, \$20, \$50, and \$100 notes; the NBNC was responsible for the \$500 and \$1000 notes; and the CNBC was contracted for the \$5 note. On 3 June 1864, smaller denominations were also authorized, but the \$1 (ABNC) and \$2 (NBNC) notes did not appear until the Civil War was almost over. This larger series of nine notes came to be called "the Original Series." It was followed by the little-changed Series of 1875, which, continuing for some time, gave these designs a long life and great visibility.

On the back of each of the first seven notes is a large reproduction within an oval frame on a horizontal axis drawn from the paintings hanging in the Rotunda of the U.S. Capitol (the frame of the \$5 note produced by the CBNC differs slightly from the others). Each of the historical pictures in the Rotunda measures 12 × 18 feet (3.6576 × 5.4864 meters), and they were commissioned over several decades. The Rotunda paintings as a summation of American history have their deficiencies. Under any circumstance it would be difficult to squeeze so large a topic into just eight pictures (and, in the case of the currency, into only seven), and in the absence of a detailed masterplan, it is unsurprising that the results were somewhat arbitrary.²²

Between 1819 and 1824, John Trumbull executed four paintings illustrating important moments in the American Revolution: *The Declaration of Independence* (1776),²³ *The Surrender of General Burgoyne to General Gates at Saratoga* (1777), *The Surrender of Lord Cornwallis at Yorktown* (1781), and *Washington Resigning His Commission* (1783). The remaining four spaces were filled by John Chapman's *The Baptism of Pocahontas* (1614), which was installed in 1840; Robert W. Weir's *The Embarkation of the Pilgrims* (1620), installed in 1843; John Vanderlyn's *The Landing of Columbus* (1492) in 1847; and William H. Powell's *The Discovery of the Mississippi by De Soto* (1541), which completed the series in 1855.²⁴ On the paper money, the Rotunda's narrative of American history appears in chronological order, beginning with the \$5 note, which was then the lowest denomination. Since there were only seven bills in the series as first issued, one Rotunda painting had to be left out, and the excluded picture was *The Surrender at Yorktown* (1781). One reason presumably was that its subject was too close to that of the painting depicting the surrender at Saratoga, and this last painting was pictorially the more engaging of the two. It also probably did not help that the Battle of Yorktown had taken place in Virginia.

Despite the somewhat-haphazard choice of subjects in the Rotunda paintings, it was urgent that, in a time of national crisis, when the Union itself was threatening to break apart, the country's paper money should pay homage to a common heritage, thereby fostering a national identity. But the pictures do more than offer an idiosyncratic, thumbnail sketch of America's past—in reproducing these specific paintings, the currency celebrates and enshrines the Rotunda itself. From the creation of the new federal city that was to bear his last name, George Washington envisioned a majestic metropolis that could compete with European capitals. The most important building was the capitol, which was to sit atop one of the city's commanding hills. In 1818, under the direction of the architect Charles Bulfinch, the Rotunda was opened to the public. At 70,000 square feet and with walls that are 48-feet high, it was at that time the largest room in America. In the early 1850s, a vigorous building program called for the addition of two major wings and a new dome, the towering size of which would be commiserate with the building's greatly expanded size. Turning the capitol into an impressive statement of the nation's power and potential was one of the few things on which a divided Congress could agree. Even after the war began, President Lincoln insisted that the construction continue as a symbol that the Union itself was pressing forward.

Modeled on Rome's Pantheon, the Rotunda stands at the center of the capitol building, an imposing symbol for the nation. During the Civil War, its role as

ground zero for the Union became ever more pronounced. Although the National Bank Note series' recounting of the nation's historical narrative through the Rotunda paintings was crucial, just as important was honoring the Rotunda itself as the nation's sacrosanct core. One recalls that, while President Lincoln is featured on the \$10 Demand Note, the capitol is featured on two bills, the \$5 note displaying Crawford's figure of Freedom, destined to appear atop the dome that completed the Rotunda, and the \$20 note showing a version of this statue with the capitol in the background. In addition, a view of the capitol crowned by its magnificent dome, engraved by James Smillie, also concludes the National Bank Note series, appearing on the right of the face of the \$1000 bill.

The smaller historical vignettes on the notes' faces fill in the story told by the large vignettes of the Rotunda paintings, and they too appear in chronological order. Other images of Columbus (1492) appear on the \$5 note; Benjamin Franklin's demonstration that lightning is a form of electricity (1752) on the \$10 note; the Battle of Lexington (1775) on the \$20 note; Washington crossing the Delaware (1776) on the \$50 note; a scene from the War of 1812 on the \$100; the arrival of the *SS Sirius* in New York Harbor (1838) on the \$500; and a scene from the Mexican-American War (1847) on the \$1000. The two series of historical scenes, the one contained in the Rotunda pictures and the one composed by the smaller vignettes, run on parallel tracks, but these tracks are largely independent of one another. The fact that they are not always in sync can make for some odd bedfellows. For example, Franklin's inclusion on the face of the \$10 note appears with *The Discovery of the Mississippi by De Soto* on the back. But taking the series of seven bills, without being overly concerned about each note forming a tight, coherent unit on its own, a larger panorama of American history emerges. Thus, the following account examines the series' subject matter in chronological order rather than discuss all the vignettes on each bill before moving on to the next: in terms of the series' imagery, the sum is greater than the parts.



The \$5 note, which was the lowest denomination in the series as originally proposed, begins the chronological history. Its subject matter is well-integrated: all its vignettes, front and back, are devoted to Christopher Columbus. On the face (Figure 156), we see a resolute Columbus on his flagship *Santa Maria*, standing and pointing to the New World (*Columbus in Sight of Land* is after a design by Charles Fenton). The figure wearing a sword and kneeling on the coiled rope reinforces Columbus's gesture of discovery, while looking up at his captain, who is the scene's undisputed hero. A calm, commanding, bareheaded Columbus holds his hat in his right hand, allowing an unobstructed view of his ennobling features while also demonstrating his humility on this momentous occasion. A priest stands behind him, and a common sailor, holding a cross in his hands, worshipfully kneels in the left foreground.

On the note's back is a reproduction of Vanderlyn's *Landing of Columbus* (Figure 157), an epic rendering of the explorer piously claiming this land for Spain. (Many hands were involved in the reproduction of such complex images, which had to endure multiple printings. In this instance, five separate vignettes were produced, and there are, as well, variations within these five basic types.)²⁵ Columbus's first landfall was in the Bahamas, but despite his having made three more



Figure 156. \$5 National bank note, United States, 15 March 1871, 7.7 × 17.7 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.



Figure 157. Back of Figure 156.

voyages, he never did set foot on land that was to become the continental United States. Yet any other beginning to the nation’s Eurocentric story seems unthinkable. The sun is just coming up at the left, as the picture shows the dawning of a new era in human affairs. Columbus forms part of an impressive, quiet center as the figures at the fringes are less comprehending of this moment’s solemn importance. The Native Americans at the right are shy and fearful, whereas many of the sailors at the left engage in boisterous celebrations or frantically search the sands for traces of gold.²⁶

Carlson Chambliss and Gene Hessler identify Theodore A. Liebler as the designer of the vignette on the right of the face and W. W. Rice as its engraver.²⁷ The Treasury Department titled this scene *Introduction of the Old World to the New*, but to complicate matters, it also gave the same title to a different vignette (see the \$10 Legal Tender Note, Series of 1869–1880). Many have chosen to christen this second vignette with an additional title, *Pocahontas Presented at Court*. Some have reasoned that the cast of characters in the \$10 note’s secondary title also applies to the vignette on the \$5 note, thereby identifying it as showing Columbus introducing

Pocahontas to Old World figures.²⁸ But Pocahontas does not appear in either scene.²⁹ In the \$5 note, the Native maiden at the left is the standard, oft-repeated allegorical representation of America. Gently taking her by the hand, Columbus introduces America to a seated Asia, a half-reclining Europe in the foreground, and a standing Africa. This is the old topos of the Four Continents, which was inaugurated by Columbus's discovery, as he is the first to have united (at least permanently) the four corners of the world.³⁰ The Treasury's title *Introduction of the Old World to the New* (i.e., Europe, Asia, and Africa to America) is perfectly apt. As in Brumidi's fresco on the ceiling of the U.S. Capitol dome, a historical figure, Columbus, moves easily among allegorical companions. Modern viewers have difficulty in "reading" such a mixture, but this format follows traditional models.

On the note's face, there is also a fluid linking of the vignettes, providing a seamless transition between historical and allegorical genres. On the left, Columbus points into the middle distance, where the newly discovered continent awaits, and on the right, he emerges from this same locale to introduce America to the wider world. In a letter of 29 March 1867 to Secretary Chase, Ormsby writes concerning the \$5 bill: "I have carried the Continental [Bank Note Co.] through their contract for fives, on the Unit System—my invention."³¹ Yet in terms of the note's face, it would be hard to make the case that the design reflects the unit system, in which there is one image covering the entire surface. Even the back falls short of displaying one scene across the entire note. But taking the note as a whole, one moves from the discovery of land, on the left of the face, to the landing, on the center of the back, to the announcement of the discovery on the right of the face. Ormsby would seem to be imaginatively envisioning a fully integrated note with the interconnected two sides working in unison.

The back of the \$10 note, which shows the vignette reproducing Powell's *The Discovery of the Mississippi by De Soto*, appropriately follows in the chronology the scenes showing Columbus on the \$5 note. De Soto, another important Spanish explorer and adventurer, undertook a remarkable trek through what was to become the southern United States. He and his men reached the banks of the Mississippi River on 8 May 1541, thereby documenting the territory that was later to be claimed by the colonies. With the large crucifix being erected in the lower right corner, Powell, unlike Vanderlyn, emphasizes the Catholic nature of the New World's initial exposure to Christianity.³²

Chapman's Rotunda picture *The Baptism of Pocahontas*, which was engraved by Charles Burt, adorns the back of the \$20 bill (Figure 158). The story of Pocahontas having interceded in 1608 on behalf of Captain John Smith, who was about to be killed on her father's orders, is better known, but it had already appeared on the walls of the Rotunda in an 1825 relief by the sculptor Antonio Capellano. Chapman's painting, on the other hand, shows the grand spectacle of the Rev. Alexander Whitaker baptizing a kneeling Pocahontas in the interior of a newly built Anglican church at Jamestown in 1614. Although the painting shows the colonists as having formed a well-ordered, devout society, its primary message is about the Native Americans' relationship to the settlers. Pocahontas's father, sister, and uncles are present at the ceremony, but they exhibit differing degrees of acceptance. Some turn away in obvious disgust, foreshadowing that more troubles with these resistant Natives are still to come. Those Native Americans who, like Pocahontas, adopt European values and religion will be brought within the blessed

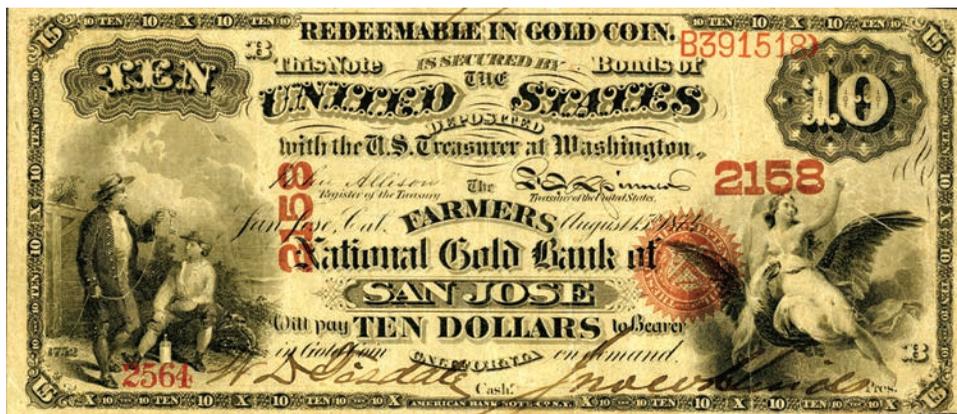


Figure 159. \$10 National bank note, United States, 15 August 1874, 7.5×17.6 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.



Figure 160. Benjamin West, *Benjamin Franklin Drawing Electricity from the Sky*, ca. 1816–1817, oil on slate, 34×25.6 cm. Philadelphia Museum of Art, Gift of Mr. & Mrs. Wharton Sinkler, 1958 (1958-132-1).

painter Benjamin West. West's oil sketch for a never-realized portrait intended for the Pennsylvania Hospital in Philadelphia (Figure 160) takes a heroic, grand-manner approach with Franklin as a demigod seated in the clouds. His pose recalls the famous classical sculpture *Laocoön* (see Durand's vignette in Figure 25), and he is surrounded by assisting putti who are extensions of his mental powers. Buffeted by the winds of an intense thunderstorm, West's Franklin recalls the artist's King Lear in *Lear in the Storm* (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston), but unlike Lear and *Laocoön*, Franklin remains preternaturally calm, as lightning jumps from the key to his hand (Franklin had mentioned in his 1752 account that a charge will ensue when one approaches the key with a knuckle). Alfred Jones and Louis Delnoce would not have known this sketch, but such an approach in any case was too untethered to reality for a vignette on U.S. currency. It is one thing to associate Columbus with the Four Continents and quite another to turn Franklin into a deity on a par with Jupiter.

In the 1820s, in contrast to Jones and Delnoce, Asher B. Durand had executed a vignette (see the centered vignette beneath "NEW-YORK" in Figure 25), which demonstrates just how imposing a bank-note vignette of Franklin could be. Durand shows Franklin pausing from writing in a moment of inspiration. His head is sil-

enters just how imposing a bank-note vignette of Franklin could be. Durand shows Franklin pausing from writing in a moment of inspiration. His head is sil-

houetted by light, as it emerges above the dark thunderclouds with their flashes of lightning occupying the background. At his feet are two books. The bottom one is inscribed “MIND YOUR BUSINESS.” Here, Durand cleverly references one of Franklin’s designs for Continental currency, where this admonishment appears at the bottom of the note (see Figure 5). Durand translates his emblematic assertion into a heroic image of inspired genius, in which Franklin, living in the sun’s full light, can unravel nature’s mysteries, such as lightning’s electrical composition. Although Durand’s conception is impressively aggrandizing, it too avoids West’s extreme hagiography.³⁶

Considering the full face of the \$10 bill, the note has it both ways, engaging in poetry as well as prose. On the right, the grandiose, emotionally charged allegory *America Seizing the Lightning*, engraved by Charles Burt from artwork by Liebler, counterbalances the more prosaic, descriptive image of Franklin flying a kite in a thunderstorm. This allegory shows a bare-breasted America with a star on her forehead lifted skyward by the American eagle. Like Jupiter, she holds thunderbolts in her hand, her status, thanks to Franklin’s efforts, having risen to the level of a classical goddess. Underlying this representation are such myths as the pairing of Hebe and Jupiter’s eagle as well as the Rape of Ganymede, in which the youth is also borne skyward by the eagle. From such sources, the vignette creates a new myth that is entirely American, expressing the awesome grandeur of Franklin’s peculiarly American genius.

All but one of the remaining historical scenes are devoted to America’s military prowess. As we have seen, three of Trumbull’s Rotunda pictures devoted to the American Revolution are prominently featured. Liebler designed two smaller historical vignettes: *The Battle of Lexington* appears on the \$20 note (see Figure 165),³⁷ and *Washington Crossing the Delaware* on the \$50 note (Figure 161). In this last design, Liebler has been inspired by Emanuel Leutze’s iconic painting (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York) of the general’s daring attack carried out on Christmas Day, 1776, but instead of showing the boat in profile, he opts for a dramatic, receding diagonal that energizes the bill’s lower left-hand corner.



Figure 161. \$50 National bank note, United States, series of 1882, 7.5 × 17.7 cm (specimen). National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

Prayer for Victory balances the vignette of Washington crossing the Delaware. Drawn by Christian Schussele and engraved by Louis Delnoce, it depicts a Revolutionary War soldier reverently kneeling with hands clasped in front. This image is another example of Washington’s influence in the envisioning of the past. Its conception is heavily indebted to the story of the commander in chief seeking out a quiet bower in which he knelt in prayer during the arduous winter of 1777–1778 at Valley Forge. This narrative first appeared in print in 1809,³⁸ and Schussele would have looked to Peter Kramer’s 1854 lithograph of this scene, which is after a painting of the same year by Lambert Sachs (the Valley Forge Historical Society, Valley Forge, Pennsylvania).³⁹ In the vignette, the soldier’s hat and rifle lying beside him have replaced the general’s hat and sword, the last an accoutrement restricted to officers and gentlemen. Symbols of civil religion hover above the soldier in the vignette, thereby offering another expression of the nation’s divinely sanctioned mission. Washington’s iconography also influences the inclusion of the allegorical figures. In 1857, Currier & Ives published the lithograph *Washington’s Dream*, showing the general in full military attire having fallen asleep while sitting at his desk in his campaign headquarters with soldiers and tents seen outside his door. His dream appears above his head in the form of three allegorical females: Ceres with a cornucopia, American Liberty holding a flag with a wreath in one hand and an avenging weapon in the other, and Justice with her sword and scales.⁴⁰ The vignette depicts a more dynamic overlapping arrangement. Justice is to the left. Liberty in the center holds out, in her right hand, her pole surmounted by a liberty cap decorated with laurel around its base. With her left hand, she reaches out to touch the staff of the flag fluttering behind her, above which is inscribed “VICTORY.” At the right, America looks heavenward, as does the soldier, and supports the flag’s staff with one hand while supporting the American shield with the other. The inspiring presence of the commander in chief, who is the hero of the note’s left-hand vignette, also animates *Prayer for Victory*.

A vignette from the War of 1812 titled *Commodore Perry’s Victory* (Figure 162) appears on the face of the \$100 note. The designer, Sherman (whose first name is



Figure 162. \$100 National bank note, United States, 8 March 1892, 7.5 × 17.7 cm (specimen). National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

still undetermined), adapted his image from a painting by William H. Powell. He shows Matthew C. Perry, after having abandoned his crippled ship in the middle of a naval engagement on Lake Erie, being rowed by his crew to a new flagship, from which he will lead his fleet to victory.

The vignette on the right of the \$500 note shows *Sirius*, the first ship to cross the Atlantic solely on steam power, arriving in New York Harbor on 23 April 1838, having just beat a rival ship by only a few hours (see Figure 167). Its achievement created a sensation because it greatly shortened the time needed for a transatlantic voyage, accomplishing in eighteen days, four hours, and twenty-two minutes, a trip that normally took forty days, thereby bringing the United States that much closer to Europe. Although this sidewheel steamship was built in Scotland, Americans would have appreciated the role Robert Fulton had played in the development of steam navigation, his early pioneering successes having helped make this milestone possible. Thus, this vignette is also a reminder that Fulton belongs with Franklin in the pantheon of America's inventive heroes.

The military triumphs conclude with a vignette engraved by Alfred Jones and James Smillie on the face of the \$1000 note showing the victorious General Winfield Scott taking possession of Mexico City during the Mexican–American War. This scene is about more than the defeat of another combatant. The war ended with the United States expanding to its present continental borders (excluding the small strip obtained in the Gadsden Purchase of 1853). This America, which extends from sea to shining sea, must not now be dismembered.

Adding the \$1 and \$2 Notes and Foregrounding Patriotic Allegories

In 1865, two lower-denomination notes—the \$1 and \$2 bills—joined the initial seven. The narratives they introduce—the landing of the Pilgrims on the \$1 note (Figure 163) and Sir Walter Raleigh on the \$2 note (Figure 164)—help supplement the depictions devoted to America's early history. Both vignettes are large ovals, the first vertical, the second horizontal, which appear in the center of the backs, as had the larger engravings after the Rotunda pictures. In terms of the English-speaking



Figure 163. Back of \$1 National bank note, United States, 11 January 1865, 7.5 × 17.5 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

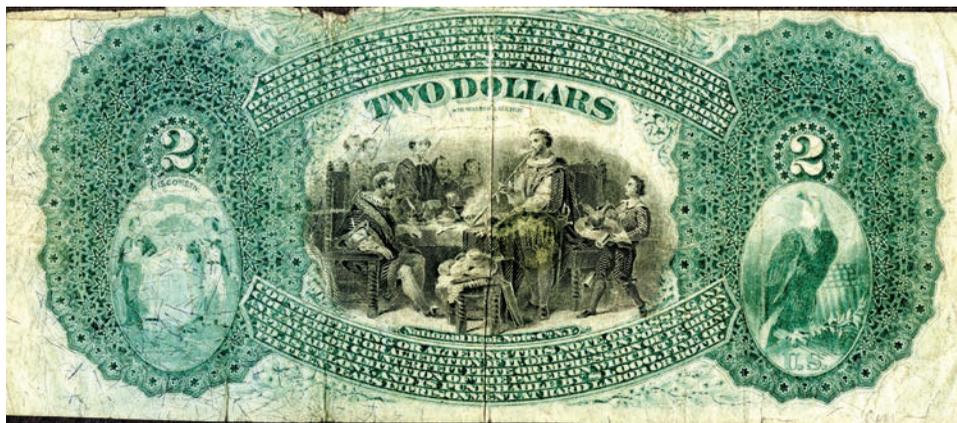


Figure 164. Back of Figure 166, National bank note, United States, 15 December 1876.

settlement of the land that was to become the United States, there are multiple narratives, but the two earliest permanent settlements are Virginia’s Jamestown of 1607 and the Pilgrims settling in Massachusetts in 1620. Elements of each origin story had already been depicted in the Rotunda paintings—Chapman’s *The Baptism of Pocahontas* and Weir’s *The Embarkation of the Pilgrims*—but in terms of importance, the Pilgrims, well before the Civil War, had enjoyed a formidable public-relations edge. President Lincoln was only confirming their cultural supremacy over the South when he proclaimed Thanksgiving Day a national holiday in 1863.

In his treatment of the Pilgrims, Weir depicts a scene of pious resolve imbued with dignified gravitas. In contrast, *The Landing of the Pilgrims* is compressed and dynamic (engraved by Charles Burt from artwork by Edwin White).⁴¹ As the wind blows and the waves crash on Plymouth Rock, two men try to stabilize the long-boat transporting the settlers from the *Mayflower* to the shore. The diagonal created by the placement of the figures as well as the diagonal of the dead tree limb at the right leads up to the main protagonist, a Pilgrim father, who looks to the new land as his cape billows dramatically in the wind. With his family sheltering around him, he bravely confronts the unknown. As is often the case, because the design for the vignette is specifically intended for a bank note, it produces a more exciting and concentrated image than the reproduction of a painting, which had been conceived for a different context.⁴²

Engraved by Louis Delnoce, the vignette titled “SIR WALTER RALEIGH/1585” appears on the back of the \$2 note. Although he never visited what was to become the United States, Raleigh, a colorful courtier and adventurer, sponsored expeditions to settle lands on the east coast that had been christened “Virginia” in honor of Elizabeth, the Virgin Queen. The first settlement on Roanoke Island, in what is now North Carolina, was attempted in 1585 but failed. A ship returning with a few of the colonists and American produce arrived in Plymouth, England, on 27 July 1585. The vignette shows Raleigh introducing to London dignitaries America’s treasures in the form of tobacco, which he is smoking with a Native American pipe, and ears of corn, to which he points. Such enticements were eventually to lead to the settlement of Jamestown. The young servant on the right is so astonished at the sight of smoke coming from Raleigh’s

mouth he loses control of his tray, overturning a flask and cups. This droll detail was surely inspired by the story of how Raleigh's servant, on entering his master's study, where he saw him reading a book while leisurely smoking, threw a tankard of ale and nutmeg in his face thinking he was on fire.⁴³ In this vignette devoted to secular concerns, humor is allowed to intrude in contrast to those scenes showing the country's Puritan forefathers.

The Landing of the Pilgrims is about facing the dangerous unknown. Raleigh's promotion of America's economic potential could not as easily compete with the Pilgrims' fortitude and piety, and it is relevant as well that this lesser-known story needed to be accompanied by a title and a date. The Pilgrims' uncompromising sanctity and bravery worked better as a national founding myth than did Raleigh's entrepreneurship. This explains why, in this instance, the chronology is scrambled with the scene transpiring in 1620 preceding that of 1585. Because the \$1 note was to be produced in much greater numbers than the \$2, the preeminent subject needed to appear on it regardless of its later date.



In the series of seven notes, every note except for the last, the \$1000 bill, displays an allegory on its face, and in the case of the later \$1 and \$2 notes, the allegories stand alone on the face. Three allegories that closely correspond to the narratives presented in the other vignettes have already been discussed—the \$5 note's *The Introduction of the Old World to the New*, the \$10 note's *America Seizing the Lightning*, and the \$50 note's *Prayer for Victory*. The allegory *America*, engraved by Alfred Jones, appears on the face of the \$20 note (Figure 165), where America, holding the staff of the country's flag and wearing a liberty cap adorned with stars, confidently rallies a host of citizens from various walks of life. Among the group behind her are a farmer and sailor holding hands on the left, whereas a mechanic stands on the far right. The engraver, however, is careful to distinguish between the two realms of reality: occupying a different plane from that of her earthbound followers, the barefoot allegorical figure stands on a cloud. A familiar pattern emerges when this vignette is seen in conjunction with the left-hand vignette of the Battle of Lexington, where the



Figure 165. \$20 National bank note, United States, 3 February 1865, 7.5×17.7 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

pointed rifle leads one's eye into the body of the note, whereas the figure of America, having internalized the patriotic principles fought for and established in the first vignette, advances outward toward the viewer on the note's far side.

The \$100 note's allegorical vignette *The Union*, engraved by Alfred Sealey after Johannes Oertel's design, suggests a benediction (see Figure 162). The personification of the Union with a star on her breast and sporting large wings looks to heaven as she gestures with her right hand toward the large republican fasces before her, which is labeled "THE UNION." At the same time, she holds her left hand in a protective gesture of blessing above a radiating light containing the phrase "MAINTAIN IT." Given the light's divine source and the figure's large, angelic wings, the vignette affirms that this imperious command comes from on high.

On the face of the \$1 note, the vignette *Concordia*, engraved by Charles Burt after T. A. Liebler, shows the female personification of the Union clasping hands with the female figure representing Peace in front of a classical altar adorned with the American eagle and shield. A fire with its offering burns atop the altar, and Union points with her left hand heavenward at the same time her eyes are lifted up to the Almighty. Peace, who for the duration of the war has been sadly absent, is returning to reestablish concord and harmony. On one level, this alludes to the North welcoming back into the Union the South once it has laid down its arms.

The \$2 note displays on its face the vignette *Stars and Stripes*, in which a dramatically windswept allegorical female holds the American flag with a laurel wreath hanging from the top of its staff (Figure 166). Stars, representing the thirteen original states, encircle her head. She sits on a stone parapet decorated with laurel wreaths, each of which encircles a star. The Potomac River is behind her, a suggestion of the reintegration of the land beyond within the federal system. The vignette shares the face with a "Lazy Deuce," the horizontal "2" becoming itself a strong design element in which the vitality of its curling, organic forms provide a dominating, regenerating force.

On the left-hand side of the \$500 note, the allegory *Civilization* is the most elaborate of all, either within the series of seven or in the expanded series of nine



Figure 166. \$2 National bank note, United States, 15 December 1876, 7.5 × 17.3 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.



Figure 167. \$500 National bank note, United States, 10 May 1865, 7.5 × 17.6 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

(Figure 167). It has not found favor with some modern viewers, with the authors of *100 Greatest American Currency Notes* describing it as “a seemingly satirical illustration.”⁴⁴ The vignette does indeed indulge in hyperbolic details, but no satire is intended. With a portion of a flag swirling up behind her, America, her head encircled by stars, is seated on a naval cannon, as she peers into the future. The large anchor, on which she rests her right hand, not only testifies to the country’s naval prowess, as reinforced by the warship on the left, but also evokes the time-honored association of the anchor as a symbol of hope. Although the sword is unsheathed, the cannon’s downward tilt suggests the possibility of the end of hostilities. The eagle flying overhead with its long wingspan is another imposing patriotic symbol of America’s soaring and indomitable spirit. The scales of justice lie in the center foreground. The bale and barrel at the right are ready to revive the nation’s commerce, whereas the anvil behind them symbolizes the country’s industrial potential. The bivouacked soldiers in the middle distance at the right have stacked their rifles. Above them can be seen a radiant rainbow appearing from storm clouds that gives witness to God’s covenant with humans for a hopeful future. Such imagery on American paper money is older than the nation itself, having appeared on shilling notes dated 1 October 1773, printed for Pennsylvania, where a rainbow appears in conjunction with a passing storm above an inviting rural landscape.⁴⁵ In the 1863 note, the storm has also been weathered, and America, as civilization’s best hope, is now peering out into a future promising peace and prosperity. The vignette’s optimistic lack of restraint may seem satirical to modern eyes, but the nineteenth-century public, more conditioned to the exaggerations of allegorical discourse and living in a war-ravaged age that indulged in heavy doses of sentimentality, would have found this image patriotic and inspiring.



The imagery on National Bank Notes is the most ambitious and engaging of any nine-note series of U.S. currency. Avoiding stand-alone portraits, the notes are filled only with high-minded and dynamic historical and allegorical subjects. At least in terms of the smaller denominations, citizens would have frequently encountered these inspiring messages in daily life. Infused with a sense of national

pride and purpose in a common heritage, the currency promotes nation building in a moment of crisis. Its unifying story is uplifting at a time of intense conflict, in which the country's continued existence in its present form was in doubt. Yet, in choosing the Rotunda paintings as a chief organizing principle, the designers of the National Bank Note series created for themselves a major problem: these paintings provide a less-than-satisfactory framework on which to hang a survey of American history. Not all these pictures would make a list of the most significant moments in America's development from the time of Columbus, and no one would recommend devoting half of such a restricted number of scenes to the American Revolution. As we have seen, the smaller vignettes created for the notes' faces remedy this deficiency by supplying supplementary subject matter. Yet, given the Rotunda paintings' idiosyncratic and limited focus, coordinating the images on the face with those on the back proved an impossibility. Thus, a note-by-note examination leads only to confusion compounded. Although each bill presents important patriotic information to its beholder, in the final analysis, the series requires that all nine notes be viewed as a single entity, an unprecedented and original response to creating a National Picture Currency.

In keeping with the age in which it was created, the country's narrative is told primarily through the deeds of Great White Men: Columbus, De Soto, Raleigh, the patriarchal families of the Puritans, Franklin, the Minutemen, the Founding Fathers, General Gates, General Washington, Commodore Perry, Fulton, General Scott, and government officials in the form of frequent representations of the U.S. Capitol. Women's starring roles are few and far between. Pocahontas is the main protagonist in the scene of her baptism, but hers is a passive performance, a testimony to the good accrued from Native submissiveness to White rule. In *The Battle of Lexington*, the woman coming to the aid of the fallen man, who is presumably her husband, is as brave as any soldier, but her role is that of nurturer and caregiver rather than combatant. Women only vigorously step forward as the main protagonists in the character of allegorical figures, where they are allowed to take center stage within a symbolic realm.

One surprise in this telling of the national narrative is the short shrift given to the usual imagery of commerce, agriculture, and industry. The vignette showing Sir Walter Raleigh introducing tobacco and corn to England is the only one that fully inhabits this sphere. More concerned with humankind's material, rather than spiritual, needs, it stands apart from the tenor of the other designs. Of course, the value of banks and banking is already writ large within the structure of the currency itself, with each note proudly declaring the name of the bank that issued it.

Finally, one is impressed by the series' incessant appeals to patriotism and piety. There is no need to issue this currency with the motto "In God We Trust." Religious sentiments, which often are overtly Christian, are already abundantly expressed throughout, and both historical and allegorical figures look to heaven for support and guidance. During the Civil War, both the North and the South claimed God was on its side, but the imagery in this series forcibly argues that the United States, whether compared to the Confederacy or to any other country, is the more devoutly religious.

Prelude to the Confederacy

African Americans in Bank-Note Imagery, 1820s–1860s

By 1860, there were thirty-two million people in the United States, of which four million were enslaved peoples.¹ At that time, America was the largest slaveholding country in the world, but slavery flourished only in its southern half, where it formed the backbone of the South's economy by making possible the labor-intensive cultivation of such crops as cotton, rice, and tobacco. In a push westward, new land was constantly being sought for the establishment of yet more cotton plantations. In each decade after 1800, the yield of cotton doubled.² By the time of the Civil War, the South's slave economy produced three-fourths of the world's supply of cotton and three-fifths of all American exports.³

Unlike Native Americans, who stood apart from White culture, African Americans played a crucial role in the nation's economy, albeit one of brutal exploitation. Yet, until the 1850s, slavery rarely appeared in bank-note vignettes.⁴ A remarkable early exception is the panoramic design, from the Philadelphia firm of Murray, Draper, Fairman & Co. (MDF), that spans the upper portion on notes produced ca. 1820 for the Farmers & Mechanics Bank, Augusta, Georgia (Figure 168).⁵ Overall, this scene along the Savannah River is one of progress and prosperity. On the far left-hand side, the enslaved workers empty bolls of cotton into a large basket, while in the distance a horse trudges in circles powering a millstone. A wagon, loaded with cargo, heads toward the river. The town, with its elongated church spire, anchors the composition's upper center. In the left foreground, two Black children sit beside a basket filled high with cotton. To the right, a White boy leans on a filled, sewn sack. In the right foreground, two White laborers of heroic stature are engaged in construction, a large building being worked on behind them. On the river, men pole a loaded barge into position, and on the river's far bank are more structures and men who look to be engaged in boatbuilding.

A curious detail stands out. The White boy leaning on the sack in the foreground is nude. He holds a set of scales that are too small to be used for weighing cotton. His nudity establishes him as an allegorical figure holding the scales of Justice. What is being enshrined is the "rule of law," which establishes the "legitimacy" of the ideological structure on which slavery was based. The scene we see before us declares itself to be both fair and right, because the law decrees it so.⁶

In another note, this one from the late 1830s, Draper, Toppan, Longacre & Co., a successor to MDF, created in the central vignette on the \$10 note of the Madisonville & Pearl River Turnpike Co., Madisonville, Mississippi (Figure 169), a strange and unsettling image of a barefoot African American family picking cotton.⁷ The mother is on the left, the stooped father on the right, with their two sons

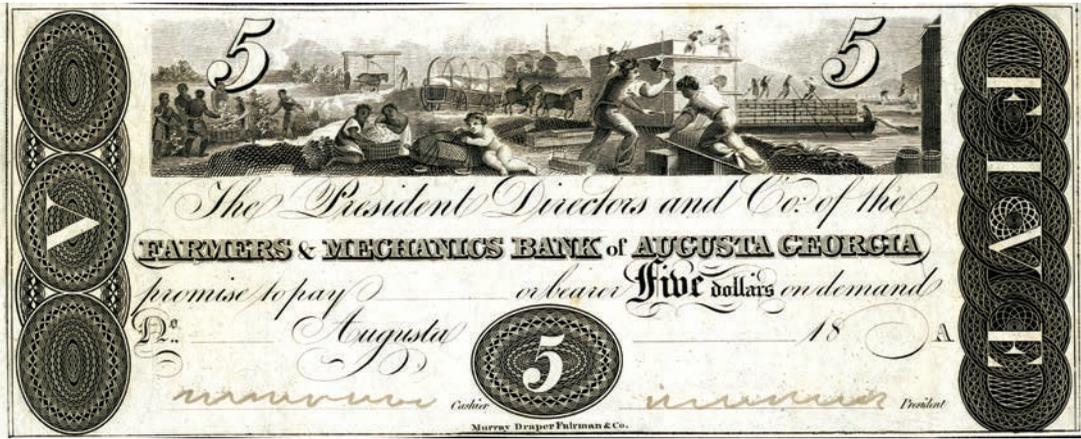


Figure 168. \$5 Note, Farmers & Mechanics Bank, Augusta, Ga., ca. 1811–1818, 7.2×17.6 cm (proof). National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.



Figure 169. \$10 Note, Madisonville & Pearl River Turnpike Co., Madisonville, Miss., 1 March 1839. Eric P. Newman Numismatic Education Society.

between them. They are at work on a single large plant, above which is the word “Mississippi,” as if performing an iconic, solemn ritual. The vignettes to left and right are standard representations of an attractive woman and a majestic animal, but their presence here makes for disconcerting contrasts with the central vignette. Even if the uncomfortable nature of the juxtapositions was unintentional, it is difficult not to see a relationship between the woman’s pampered refinement and the backbreaking labor of the enslaved family that makes it possible. The stag that freely roams the forest offers another discomfiting contrast to the Black family’s bondage.

By the early 1850s, sectional strife had become acute. Under the increasing pressure of calls for slavery’s abolition, Southern elites insisted slavery was not so much a necessary evil as a positive good, in that it brought civilization and salvation to a “savage” people, thereby guaranteeing them a lifetime of security and enlightenment. At the same time, slave labor made it possible in theory for the



Figure 170. \$1 Note, Farmers Bank of Onondaga, Onondaga Valley, N.Y., 1 July 1852, 7 × 16.9 cm (punch-cancelled proof). National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.



Figure 171. \$50 Note, Bank of Howardsville, Howardsville, Va., 8 July 1861, 7.5 × 17.6 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

White elites to concentrate on more rarefied and intellectual goals in a system that, from their warped point of view, benefited both sides of the equation. In defiant defense of the South's infamous social structure, vignettes of enslaved people began to appear with greater frequency on Southern bank notes—imagery that, for the most part, glossed over slavery's brutal reality.

To meet the new demand, security-printing firms had to create new images of slavery, presumably in close consultation with their clients. One solution was to repurpose earlier images. The \$1 note of the Farmers Bank of Onondaga, New York (Figure 170), dated 1 July 1852 and printed by Wellstood, Hanks, Hay & Whiting, New York (WHH&W), shows a White farmer carrying a basket of corn. Nine years later, Wellstood, Hay & Whiting (WH&W) transformed this vignette into an African American holding the same basket in the \$50 note of the Bank of Howardsville, Howardsville, Virginia (Figure 171), hand-dated 8 July 1861. The firm needed to make only a few small changes: the man's skin has been darkened

and his hair made frizzy, but his facial features remain unaltered. In addition, a patch has been added to his shirt's elbow and a tear appears in his sleeve near his shoulder.⁸ (As seen in Figure 95, this vignette had already undergone another permutation, when the number "1" replaced the basket.)

Given the polarizing conditions that existed in the 1850s, we do not know the degree of enthusiasm with which Northern firms greeted these new commissions, but Bald, Cousland & Bald is the one that produced the majority of the antebellum vignettes depicting slavery. A great many of these scenes show African Americans engaged in labor centered around cotton: its planting, hoeing, picking, baling, then the transporting, the weighing of bales at market, and the loading onto ships. Scenes of the harvesting of grain, sugarcane, and tobacco or the tapping of trees are also included, but cotton is king. Its choice as the main protagonist underlines not only the South's defiance in the face of abolitionists but also its pride in this profitable staple, which dominated the world's markets.

In the lower-left vignette of the \$1 note for the Timber Cutter's Bank, Savannah, Georgia (Figure 172), an African American picks cotton while his companion carries forward an already full basket on his shoulder.⁹ In the central vignette, the note, which bears the patent date of 30 June 1857, depicts enslaved workers gathering sap from pine trees, while an overseer on horseback looks on. In the \$10 note, dated 1 October 1857, for the Central Bank of Alabama in Montgomery (Figure 173), also by Baldwin, Bald & Cousland, New York/Bald, Cousland & Co., Philadelphia (BB&C/BC), the same two figures gathering cotton in the previous note now introduce a central panorama, showing the city of Montgomery spread out in the distance. The central feature dominating the landscape is, rather than a church, the state capitol: the government is the capstone making possible this prosperous society. By juxtaposing two dies, this asymmetrical design creatively combines near and far into a cohesive worldview in which the portrait of George Washington, a symbol of unity and patriotism, also implies his endorsement of this system.

The harvesting and transporting of cotton were popular subjects. The \$5 note for the Farmers & Exchange Bank, Charleston, South Carolina (Figure 174), the

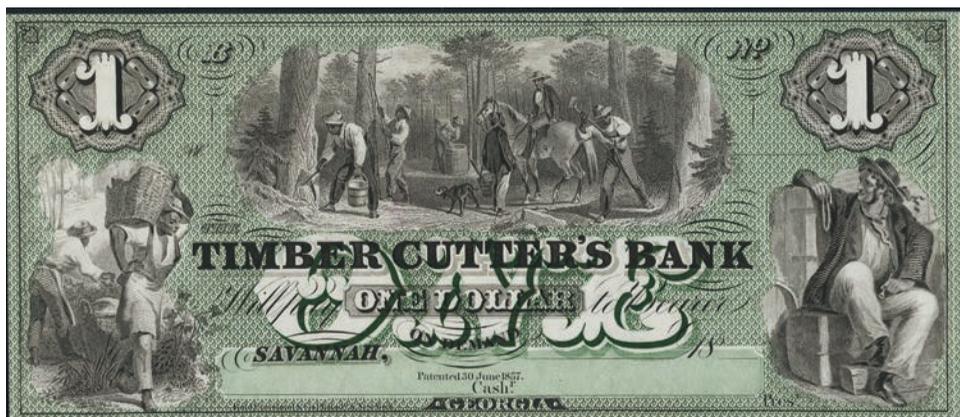


Figure 172. \$1 Note, Timber Cutter's Bank, Savannah, Ga., patented 30 June 1857 (proprietary proof). Image courtesy of Heritage Auctions.

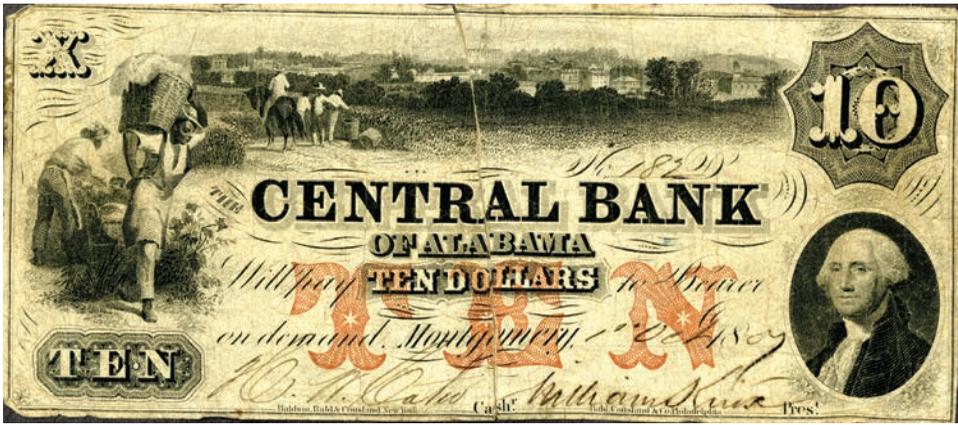


Figure 173. \$10 Note, Central Bank of Alabama, Montgomery, Ala., 1 October 1857, 7.6 × 17.6 cm (with repair down middle). National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.



Figure 174. \$5 Note, Farmers & Exchange Bank, Charleston, S.C., 8 September 1853. Image courtesy of Heritage Auctions.

work of Toppan, Carpenter, Casilear & Co. (TCC) and hand-dated 8 September 1853, depicts an enslaved man with whip in hand walking beside a loaded wagon drawn by oxen on a dirt road running through cotton fields. In the lower corners are portraits of two South Carolina senators who provide a philosophical foundation for the institution of slavery. On the right is John C. Calhoun, one of the South's most influential spokesmen. When Calhoun died in office in 1850, Franklin H. Elmore, who is on the note's left, took his seat, only to die himself just a few weeks later.

The central vignette for the \$5 note of the Eastern Bank of Alabama in Eufaula (Figure 175), with a patent date of 30 June 1857 and the dual imprint of Rawdon, Wright, Hatch & Edson (RWH&E) and the American Bank Note Company (ABNC), combines the growing and transporting of cotton, with a Black man driving a wagon pulled by mules bowed down by the weight of their load. In the middle ground, enslaved people work in the cotton fields, their uplifted arms

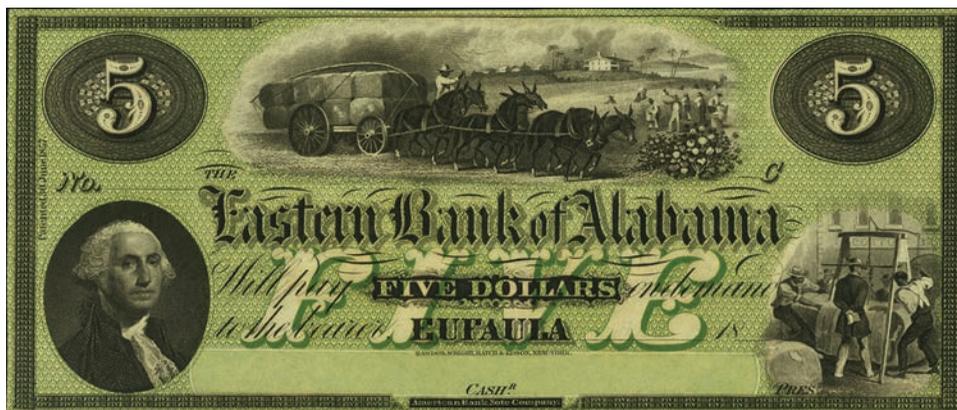


Figure 175. \$5 Note, Eastern Bank of Alabama, Eufaula, Ala., ca. 1858 (remainder). Eric P. Newman Numismatic Education Society.

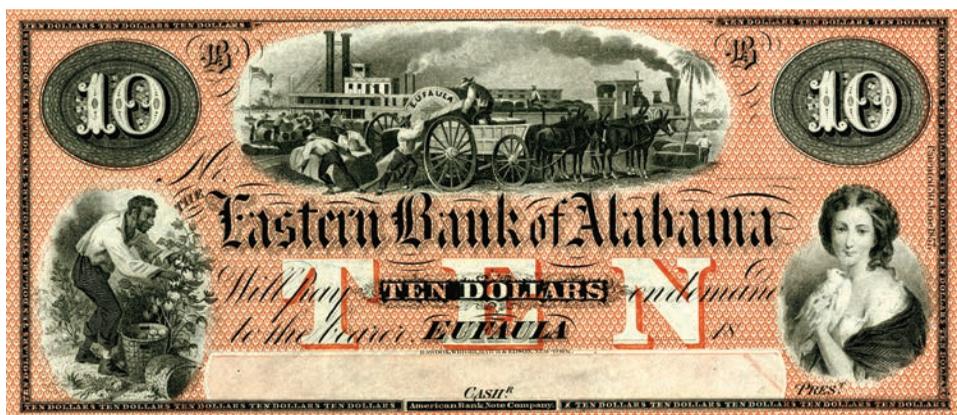


Figure 176. \$10 Note, Eastern Bank of Alabama, Eufaula, Ala., ca. 1859, 7.6 × 18 cm (part of uncut sheet of four notes). National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

leading one back to the plantation house in the distance. In the vignette in the lower right, supervised African Americans weigh bales of cotton in front of a building on which is painted “COTTON [EXCHANGE].” Another ABNC note (Figure 176) for the same bank in Eufaula completes the narrative with the central vignette depicting the plantation’s bales of cotton being readied for transport on the steamboat *Eufaula*. Two vignettes in the lower corners present a jarring contrast between the Black and White worlds. On the left, an enslaved man is shown painfully stooped over as he picks cotton with two hands to maximize efficiency. The depiction of his awkward pose, shabby, ill-fitting clothes, and dull features is less than flattering and helps support the South’s belief that slavery was a necessary condition for an “inferior” people. (The Confederate vignette based on this image [see Figure 198] further dehumanizes this figure.) In dramatic contrast, in the right corner is the ultimate fancy head, a White woman, her dress seductively



Figure 177. \$20 Note, Peoples Bank, Louisville, Ky., ca. 1860, 7.7 × 18.3 cm (proof). Collection of William L. Pressly.

revealing an elegant bare shoulder, holding a white dove, a bird associated with Venus, the goddess of love, a conception that harks back to the French Rococo artist Jean Baptiste Greuze.

The ABNC's \$20 note for the People's Bank of Kentucky, Louisville (Figure 177), also presents a demeaning, albeit humorous, characterization. On the left, an artist imagines an oafish slave, accompanied by sleepy companions, resting in a cornfield as he grins at the erotically charged upright ear of corn he is holding. The tilted wheelbarrow, the animated stalks in the near background, and the coarse vulgarity of the protagonist add a dynamism to this portrayal. In the bank-note repertoire, no White or Native American would be caricatured in such a fashion. The vignette on the right again offers a demeaning contrast between the Black and White worlds. The White woman, demure, upright, and fully clothed, pensively touches the harvested sheaves piled on the embankment. In contrast to the buffoonery of the lollygagging enslaved man, she exudes a quiet dignity as she steps into the cooling stream.

Some vignettes show African Americans participating in routine, daily activities alongside White people, suggesting a more collegial and comforting relationship. A vignette in the lower left-hand corner of the \$1 note for the Bank of Greensborough, Georgia (Figure 178), shows the relaxed exchange of pleasantries on a planked road between a White farmer driving his cart and an unsupervised enslaved couple, who carry their goods in baskets. Their easy familiarity seems natural and unforced. Although the seated enslaved man in Figure 90 is excluded from the two Whites' conversation, he too shares in their moment of leisure. A vignette on the \$10 note for the Mechanics Savings Bank of Savannah, which was later adopted by the Confederacy (see Figure 207), depicts an enslaved person driving a wagon filled with cotton bales through town, while another African American carrying two loaded baskets of cotton walks beside him. Unlike the well-dressed, casual White spectator with his hands in his pockets (on the left by the horse's heads), the two Black men are at work, but they are all part of the same urban fabric.

Although vignettes deliberately gloss over slavery's harsh realities, some go so far as to suggest that life for Black people in the South was, in fact, enjoyable. On

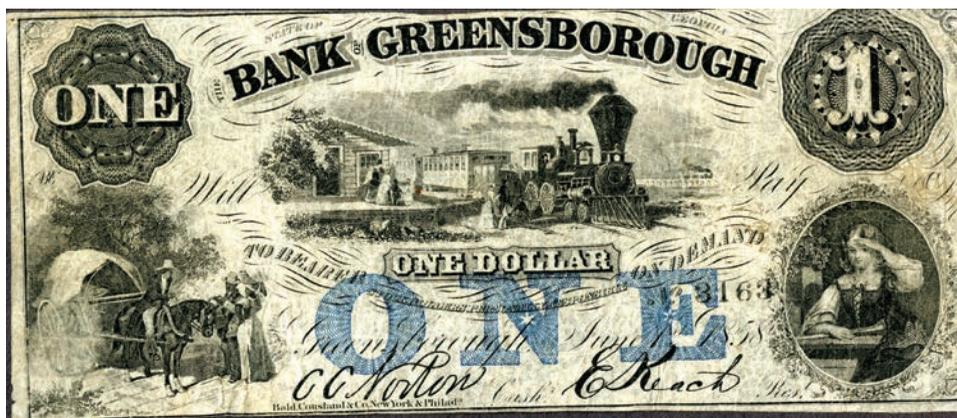


Figure 178. \$1 Note, Bank of Greensborough, Greensborough, Ga., 1 June 1858, 7.6×17.8 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.



Figure 179. \$2 Note, Timber Cutter's Bank, Savannah, Ga., 24 April 1858, 7.3×17.4 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

the \$2 note of the Timber Cutter's Bank, Savannah, Georgia, patented 30 June 1857 by BC (Figure 179), the central vignette of a joyous mother and child promotes the South's commercial fertility in more ways than one—she holds a basket of tobacco leaves while supporting her son, whose birth represents the creation of new capital. These figures resemble those of participants in a classical bacchanal. Instead of a grapevine, the boy holds the branch of a cotton plant. Rather than being inebriated with wine, they are responding to the abundance and pleasures offered by plantation life. The vignette's celebration of motherhood is painfully at odds with reality, since there were no guarantees that this elemental pairing of mother and child could not be rent asunder at any moment. Even the most uninformed viewer must have been aware of this scene's dark side, which so cynically mocks the exuberance of its portrayal. As before, the other images show a prospering White supporting cast: on the left, a wife, dinner horn in hand, looks

out for her returning husband, and on the right, a sailor boy expresses his exuberance over his happy station in life.

Although the institution of slavery was largely confined to the South, it was the basis for a national economy, helping to fuel the North's textile industry, maritime trade, merchants, financiers, brokers, bankers, and insurance companies.¹⁰ The Massachusetts senator Charles Sumner eloquently and forcibly identified how slavery's influence was felt on a national level. In a speech delivered on 28 June 1848, at a mass political convention in Worcester, Massachusetts, he bemoaned how the machinations of "secret influence" in New England had helped secure the Whig nomination for the presidency of General Zachary Taylor, who was presumed to be a proslavery candidate: "Yes! It was brought about by an unhallowed union—conspiracy let it be called—between two remote sections: between the politicians of the Southwest and the politicians of the Northeast,—between the cotton-planters and flesh-mongers of Louisiana and Mississippi and the cotton-spinners and traffickers of New England,—between the lords of the lash and the lords of the loom."¹¹ Sumner's vivid phrase, "the lords of the lash and the lords of the loom," effectively captures just how grotesque was this "unhallowed union."

One Northern bank unapologetically acknowledged the connection between Southern slavery and Northern textile manufacture. The \$5 note of the Conway Bank, Conway, Massachusetts (Figure 180), bearing the date 12 September 1854 and printed by Bald, Adams & Co., New York/Bald, Cousland & Co., Philadelphia (BA/BC), shows in its lower-left corner a smiling Black boy holding a basket of cotton. His appearance may be shabby, but he is happy and carefree, unburdened by responsibilities. This mendacious characterization of the enslaved person's life unsurprisingly appears frequently on Southern currency. In the case of the Massachusetts \$1 note, the boy accompanies women working looms in the central vignette. The portrait in the lower-right corner is of James Scollay Whitney (1811–1878), who was on the bank's board of directors and was also manager of the Conway Manufacturing Company, which processed cotton. By combining



Figure 180. \$5 Note, Conway Bank, Conway, Mass., 12 September 1854 (punch-canceled proof). Image courtesy of Heritage Auctions.

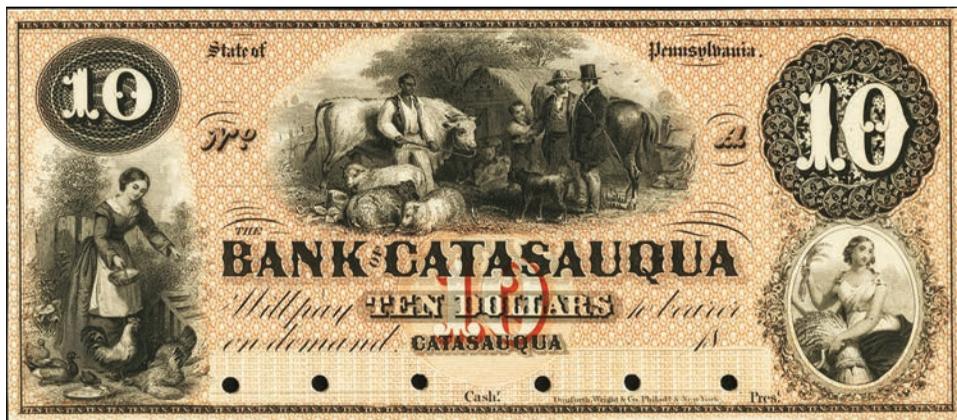


Figure 181. \$10 Note, Bank of Catasauqua, Catasauqua, Pa., ca. 1857, 7.5×18.1 cm (punch-canceled proof). Image courtesy of Heritage Auctions.

elements of the economies of North and South, the note expressed his endorsement of this situation.¹² Given the North’s complicity, it could be said that slavery was an American institution. In his Second Inaugural Address, delivered on 4 March 1865, Abraham Lincoln adopted this perspective. After referring to “American slavery,” he spoke of God’s will behind the punishment endured by both combatants: “He [God] gives to both North and South this terrible war as the woe due to those by whom the offense came.”

Whether one perceives an African American as enslaved or free can depend on a note’s context. Although appearing on a Massachusetts note (see Figure 180), the boy holding a basket of cotton is enslaved, given the frequency with which this vignette appears on Southern currency and given that cotton does not grow in Massachusetts. Another vignette is more ambiguous. The central scene of the \$10 note of the Bank of Catasauqua, Pennsylvania (Figure 181), shows a Black man holding a rod attached to a bull’s nose, while patiently awaiting the conclusion of the bull’s White owner’s negotiations with a well-dressed buyer. However, when this same vignette, also printed by Danforth, Wright & Co., appears on the \$50 note of the Bank of Commerce, Savannah, Georgia, the Black man is to be seen as an enslaved person rather than a hired hand, with the designation of free or enslaved in this case being entirely dependent on the bank’s geography. Two of the Savannah notes have written dates of 1856,¹³ whereas one of the circulated Pennsylvania notes has a written date of 1857.¹⁴ The Black man may well have been enslaved before the scene was switched to a free state, and the engraving firm may have deliberately built in ambiguity to appeal to banks in both regions of the country.¹⁵

The line between a Black figure being free or enslaved also arises in the work of Francis W. Edmonds (1806–1863). Edmonds’s career profile is unparalleled in terms of this book’s interests: he was a banker, artist, and bank-note engraver, a trifecta achieved by no one else. Even while living the life of a prosperous banker, he pursued a parallel, alternative life as an artist, maintaining friendships with such men as William Sydney Mount and Asher B. Durand and being elected in 1837 an associate of the National Academy of Design and in 1840 becoming a full academician. In 1855, after having been accused of embezzlement, he resigned from banking to

devote himself entirely to art. In 1857, he joined with two other engravers, Edward Jones and James Smillie, to form the Bank Note Engraving Co., which merged with the ABNC shortly after its formation. Serving as the ABNC's director from 1860 and as its secretary from 1861, Edmonds would appear to have flourished in this environment, where he was both a man of business and a valued artist. In addition, he is an example of how the American School of Genre Painting, of which he was an important representative, influenced the development of anecdotal character and a more realistic close-up focus in the approach to bank-note engravings.

Edmonds's painting *Grinding the Scythe* (Figure 182) is dated 1856, and just a short time later the artist converted this subject into a composi-

tion for a bank-note vignette engraved by Alfred Jones (Figure 183); the bank-note version, however, differs in small but significant details.¹⁶ In the painting, a farmer sharpens his scythe on the grindstone cranked by a young Black boy. The scene takes place in an open annex to a large barn complex. Another part of the barn is seen in the right background, where a laborer pitchforks hay piled high on an ox-drawn wagon (the top of the barn's doorway abruptly cuts him off at the chest, a compositional element that shows the influence of photography).

The vignette as seen on the \$5 note of the Bank of Hamburg in South Carolina expands the scene on a horizontal axis, placing the grindstone outdoors under a tree with the hay wagon now on the left. In the painting, the Black boy, given the task he is performing, in effect bows before the dominating farmer in acknowledgment of social hierarchies. Modern interpretations of the painting have focused on the positive,¹⁷ but once again an image's context can influence how we interpret its meaning. Whereas it is possible to read the 1856 painting as characterizing the relationship between a farmer and a young farmhand, in the case of



Figure 182. Francis W. Edmonds, *Grinding the Scythe*, 1856, oil on canvas, 61.3 × 50.8 cm. Gift of Charles E. Dunlap, New York Historical Society, 1947.493.



Figure 183. \$5 Note, Bank of Hamburg, Hamburg, S.C., 18 July 1860, 7.3 × 18.4 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.



Figure 184. \$1 Note, Planters Bank, Cairo, Ill., ca. 1860 (from sheet of two notes: \$1 and \$2). Image courtesy of Heritage Auctions.

the vignette, because of the note’s South Carolina locale, one can only interpret the interaction as being between master and slave.¹⁸ On the vignette’s right, two men cut the grain in rhythmic unison. In this instance, the presumption is that the White farmer or overseer is sharpening blades not to be used by him but by the anonymous enslaved people who provide the hard labor. The unspoken bond between the man and boy remains—such familiarity would have appealed to Southerners’ fantasies about the kindly, paternal nature of their “benign” system.

Another painting by Edmonds, *All Talk and No Work*, dating to 1855–1856 (Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, New York), depicts a White farmer in a barn leaning on a pitchfork listening to a gesticulating Black man holding a wicker basket.¹⁹ Edmonds presents the African American as a mildly comical figure. Short in stature, he wears a top hat and an ill-fitting, oversized coat, presumably a hand-me-down. In the early 1860s, the ABNC produced a vignette based on this painting as seen on the \$1 note of the Planters Bank, Cairo, Illinois (Figure 184). The vignette places the protagonist out-of-doors, where he holds a milk pail and his hand rests



Figure 185. \$1 Note, Bank of the State of Georgia, Savannah, Ga., 27 December 1861, 7.2 × 16.8 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

on a cow's flank. His conversation is now with the cow and her calf, as he still procrastinates in performing his chores.

Yet not all slave imagery was coolly indifferent, dishonestly optimistic, or grotesquely condescending. A vignette produced by the ABNC in the early 1860s (Figure 185) offers a more sympathetic juxtaposition, even if it is still a misleading portrayal. Two women sit on a small knoll overlooking enslaved peoples working in a cotton field with a train passing in the distance. The well-dressed woman on the left is White, and next to her in a subordinate position is a Black woman. A modern observer has seen this as a mistress accompanied by her enslaved house servant,²⁰ but given the nineteenth-century love of allegory, these large figures transcend so literal an interpretation. The Black woman points out the economic system that sustains the South's way of life, as these two figures, one White, one Black, participate in a symbiotic relationship that generates, at least in this portrayal, a peaceful and productive hierarchical society.

One vignette stands out in its offering of a sympathetic portrayal of the complexity of the social, political, economic, and sexual issues surrounding slavery. On a proof \$50 note, dated 1 September 1856, of the Farmers Bank of Washington County, Fort Edwards, New York (Figure 186), the vignette on the left-hand side, the copyright for which is also dated to 1856, is titled in micro lettering "Zoe," identifying it with Elizabeth D. Livermore's antislavery novel *Zoë; or The Quadroon's Triumph. A Tale for the Times*, published in 1855 in Cincinnati. The heroine Zoë was born in Santa Cruz (now Saint Croix) in the Danish West Indies (now the U.S. Virgin Islands). Her father, George Carlan, after having been born enslaved, gained his freedom at age twenty-eight. Two generations on his father's side had been White, whereas Zoë's mother Sophia is identified only as "a young colored woman."²¹ The novel's title characterizes Zoë as a quadroon, but in 1855 this word was imprecise, only indicating a mixed-race background rather than the later, more precise definition of one-quarter Black (today this term is no longer in use). In the novel, Carlan, an island merchant, sends his daughter to Copenhagen to be educated. After twelve years in Denmark, she returns at age eighteen to her

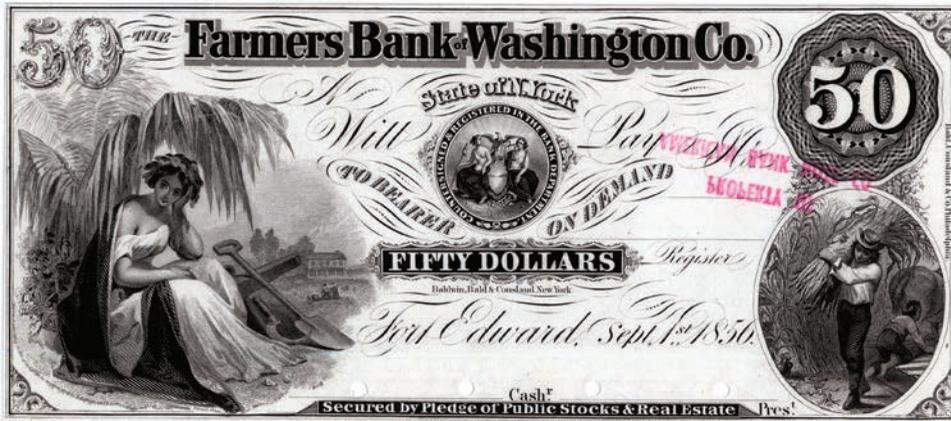


Figure 186. \$50 Note, Farmers Bank of Washington County, Fort Edward, N.Y., 1 September 1856 7.7 × 17.8 cm (proof). National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

homeland. Caught between the two worlds of Whites and Blacks, she fits into neither. Slowly wasting away, she dies two years later.²²

By setting the novel outside the United States and making her protagonist a free woman, Livermore attempted to avoid the vitriol generated by America's sectional strife in order to better explore the frustrations and anxieties caused by the grotesquely unbalanced juxtaposition of the races. Through the example of Zoë's life, the novel makes a plea for a morally superior and more tolerant world, in which all are free to realize their potential. The narrator's abolitionist sympathies deplore "the want of a clear conception of absolute Christian truth"²³ and decry a world that has not yet mastered "the pure religion of Jesus."²⁴ Zoë's triumph, as presaged in the title, is to die to journey to a better place, one more appreciative of her gifts of imagination and spirituality. She also triumphs in that her example, along with Livermore's relentless moralizing, teaches us how better to achieve true enlightenment.

The novel is abundantly illustrated with wood engravings by Henri Lovie and Charles Bauerle, but the vignette produced by Bald, Cousland & Co., Philadelphia/Baldwin, Bald & Cousland, New York (BC/BB&C) is far superior to these book illustrations. It envisions Zoë as a young, beautiful, light-skinned Black woman in deep melancholic reflection. Seated with head on hand and her face cast in shadow, she broods beneath the fronds of a palmetto palm. Beside her are a shovel, sickle, and plow, and in the background are enslaved people picking cotton in a field overlooked by a plantation home. Her crowning wreath indicates that she represents something more than a resting laborer, as does her elegant white gown and long shawl. The palmetto itself is rendered as a mournful shrub, its fronds drooping in the manner of a weeping willow. This image, when appearing on a note for a bank in upstate New York, transports the viewer to an exotic subtropical land that could as easily be Louisiana as St. Croix.²⁵

Zoë's melancholy pose contrasts with that of the many vignettes showing the melancholy Native American in deep thought, usually from a high vantage point, looking out on the encroaching wider world of "progress." Zoë looks only within. Unlike the Native Americans, she is integrated into the landscape of the White

world—in fact, she is almost suffocated by it. In addition, unlike the Natives, who are usually male, Zoë is female, and as someone who is of mixed race, she raises for nineteenth-century observers uncomfortable questions about miscegenation. Native American maidens are often eroticized in an appeal to White male fantasies, and while the begetting of children from such unions was not encouraged, it was also not a major concern.²⁶ Native Americans, after all, stood apart, whereas Black people, who formed a cornerstone of the South's social structure, were relegated to an ironclad, subservient status. The presence of any amount of Black ancestry was sufficient to condemn one to servitude.²⁷ Although Zoë was free, this perverse and depraved system refused to acknowledge her place in the world.

Zoë also appears on notes from three different banks in Georgia.²⁸ In this context, one doubts that the holders of this money were aware of the figure's identity as a light-skinned Black woman. Presumably, this clientele interpreted the vignette as the rendering of a sensitive, melancholy White female in deep shadow. Even so, Zoë is the only free Black to appear on notes of both the North and South, even if each region may have interpreted her differently. When it comes to Confederate currency, however, there is no ambiguity about whether a Black person is free or enslaved.

The Currency of the Confederate States of America, 1861–1864

Creating a National Identity

The red-hot tensions between the North and the South over the issue of slavery erupted into war soon after Abraham Lincoln, who opposed slavery's expansion into new territories, won the presidential election in November 1860. On December 20, South Carolina voted to secede, followed in January and February by Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas. Meeting at a convention in Montgomery, Alabama, which began on February 4, delegates from these states created a new government—the Confederate States of America. In the act of March 9, 1861, this government authorized its first issue of paper currency, an important step in claiming its sovereignty and funding its ability to exist. War with the United States began on April 12, when Confederate forces fired on Fort Sumter in Charleston harbor, which was occupied by a federal garrison. Soon thereafter, four more states—Virginia, Arkansas, Tennessee, and North Carolina—joined the rebellious states. At the end of May 1861, the Confederacy moved its capital from Montgomery to Richmond, Virginia. Although it numbered eleven states, it could also count on significant support from the border states of Missouri, Kentucky, and Maryland. Following the example of other Confederate states, the secessionist government in Missouri even issued its own state currency.

When one talks about Confederate currency, one is discussing paper money. The government made a few attempts at producing models for coins, but these efforts were never put into production. Precious metals could not be spared for specie, and paper money, and ultimately lots of it, kept the Southern economy afloat. The Confederate government issued Treasury notes, which were interest bearing, but at first the bills could not be redeemed until six months, and then two years, after the ratification of a treaty of peace. The money performed the function of Legal Tender Notes, with the Confederacy relying on its citizenry to accept the currency, despite rampant inflation, as part of its patriotic commitment to the war effort.¹

Because of a bewildering variety of types and their multiple variants, the cataloging of Confederate currency has a convoluted history. Grover Criswell, the numismatist, collector, and dealer, helped remedy the situation with the introduction in 1957 of his influential system, and his numbering, which is employed by the Smithsonian Institution's Museum of American History, is the one used in the following account.² (Criswell records Types 1–72, a model that has subsequently been followed by other authors.) The government authorized seven series in all, and Criswell groups the notes by these dates.³ The following account, however,

groups the bills by the various firms that produced them regardless of the series in which they fall. In addition, although the traditional format is to list each cluster of notes in descending order of their denominations, for consistency's sake, the smaller denominations come first, as was the case with the United States of America notes. Because this new government asserted the principle of states' rights, each state was allowed to print its own currency, providing each with the opportunity to forge its own identity.⁴ The focus of this analysis, however, is the national currency, state notes being referenced only when they are relevant to this context.

C. G. Memminger, the secretary of the Treasury of the Confederacy, was confronted with a monumental task in finding a steady and reliable supply of notes for the new government. A lawyer from Charleston, he distinguished himself as treasurer by propping up the new nation's financial system, a daunting and formidable task. There was a dearth of resources in the South to accomplish what he needed. For security printing, the Confederacy lacked the expertise of skilled artists and artisans, the requisite type of paper, the proper inks, the steel plates and lithography stones, and the presses to print them. Not surprisingly, he first turned to the American Bank Note Company and the National Bank Note Company, the two major firms based in New York. The establishment in Richmond of the firms of Hoyer & Ludwig, B. Duncan, and Keatinge & Ball soon followed.

Each of the firms designing Confederate currency had its own distinctive character. But in terms of subject matter, all the firms carried over antebellum bank-note imagery that encapsulated the Southern way of life: scenes of peaceful agrarian pursuits; commerce in terms of trains, ships, and wagons loaded with cotton; enslaved peoples; portraits of earlier famous Southerners, sailors, blacksmiths, fancy heads of children, Native American antecedents; even a historical scene of Francis Marion's Sweet Potato Dinner, as well as a multitude of allegorical personifications. Then, too, portraits of Confederate officials soon formed an integral part of the notes' subject matter.

How did the vignettes on Confederate currency support the South's struggle for independence? The money papered over the government's divisions and weaknesses, instead presenting a compelling argument for a belief in Confederate nationalism and its ultimate success. One of the major obstacles that confronted the South was a lack of adequate economic resources. By choosing early in the war antebellum imagery that celebrated the Confederacy's agricultural, industrial, and commercial prowess, the currency bolstered faith in the nation's ability to sustain the war effort despite the North's economic superiority, while, at the same time, offering subject matter that was reassuringly familiar.

The currency's prewar imagery also reinforced the primary reason for secession: the Confederacy was fighting for its independence to preserve the institution of slavery. Enslaved peoples are the protagonists in several early vignettes, but, in time, this subject matter was to disappear.

The Confederacy was conflicted over states' rights versus the need of the central government to assert its control in marshaling resources. With the appearance of vignettes of a few state capitols, Confederate money bolstered the belief in the power and commitment awarded to each state. Yet, in the main, the currency's imagery came down on the side of a strong central authority. The constant presence of portraits of central government officials unequivocally endorsed

the national leadership. In addition, the firm of B. Duncan unhesitatingly transgressed accepted standards of decorum when it showed the South overwhelming and dispatching the North. In turn, Keatinge & Ball's vignettes fostered pride in the nation and its leadership, along with a fierce resolve to achieve independence, thereby doing its part in articulating the Confederacy's nationalistic aspirations. Even so, the Confederacy never did match the North's deep-felt, patriotic commitment to its central government. For the North, phrases such as "the Union" and "out of many, one" were far more than hollow rhetoric. Those U.S. soldiers who enlisted at the beginning of the war did so to preserve the Union, not to abolish slavery.

The South's currency also affirmed that the Confederate States of America was no upstart. Looking closely at its content, one can see that the Confederacy claimed it was the true representative of the Founding Fathers' vision, the North over time having lost its way. Thus, from the South's perspective, it, and not the United States, continued the values and principles of the old order, which had unfortunately encompassed the institution of slavery. In 1861, the agrarian South could make the argument that it was closer to the country's roots than was the North, even if one of those roots was rotten to the core. From this point of view, Confederate currency presented the promise of a nation that was new in name only.

Enlisting the Professionals: Turning to New York Engraving Firms

Memminger lost little time in approaching the National Bank Note Company (NBNC) in New York through an intermediary, Gazaway Bugg Lamar, founder and president of the Bank of the Republic in New York. Sheets containing the four bills of the Montgomery issue were in the secretary's possession by 2 April 1861.⁵ After war was declared on April 15, agents of the U.S. Treasury Department seized the plates, thereby ending the NBNC's business arrangement with the Confederacy. At this time, the Confederate capital shifted to Richmond, and the four NBNC bills are the only ones to have Montgomery, Alabama, as their place of issue.

Memminger also turned to the American Bank Note Company (ABNC), working with its New Orleans branch office instead of its New York headquarters. Despite Tracy Edson, the head of the ABNC, having written to Samuel Schmidt, the New Orleans general manager, on 2 May 1861 with instructions not to undertake work for the Confederacy, Schmidt signed his first contract with the Confederate Treasury on 13 May for two notes.⁶ However, he changed the imprint to read "Southern Bank Note Company" to sidestep direct responsibility falling on the ABNC.⁷ After New Orleans fell to Union forces, General Benjamin Butler, the Union commander, proudly mailed four of the engraved steel plates to Salmon P. Chase, the secretary of the Treasury in Washington, as trophies of war.⁸

Why did these New York firms so readily agree to assist the Confederacy? They had considerable ties to the production of notes for Southern institutions before the war, and they obviously hoped for continued success in this regard however the war turned out. Some of the members of the boards of these institutions too had proslavery sympathies. Certainly, Tracy Edson, who earlier had served as the manager of the New Orleans branch, was more than comfortable

with Southern mores. Then, too, business was business, but not everyone was willing to let these firms so easily avoid responsibility for their choices. In his book *Cycloidal Configurations*, published ca. 1862, W. L. Ormsby describes “an infuriated mob” rushing “wildly through the streets of New York City, crying ‘Hang out the American flag’—‘Death to all Traitors.’”⁹ At this time, the officers of the ABNC and the NBNC “were pale and blanched with fear,” afraid the “mob” would discover that behind their barred doors they were printing Secession bonds and Treasury notes. Ormsby was only too happy to imply that this cooperation amounted to treason. Perhaps just as bad, it resulted in a product that lacked originality and worked against the best interests of security printing: “This mighty contract for engraving, that, under a true system, would have called into employment every man who could wield the burin, was patched together in a few days by mere mechanical labor, and the use of old dies—while the most talented engravers were enlisting in the army at thirteen dollars a month, leaving for the South for want of employment here, or suffering in idleness in our midst.”¹⁰

By working with the New York firms, Memminger ensured a high-quality product in terms of the engraving, paper, ink, and printing. Of course, the speed of production that was necessary meant existing vignettes had to be repurposed, but although the images had already appeared on bank notes, their subject matter was easily appropriated for the Confederacy. The vignettes incorporate the old personages (Washington, Jackson, Calhoun) and the old symbols (liberty, justice, agriculture, industry, and commerce, etc.), but such recycling allowed the Confederacy to emphasize its connection with the past. Even its Constitution was largely a reiteration of that of the United States. In its eyes, the country from which it had succeeded was a corrupt version of the spirit of 1776. Using stereotypical imagery on its currency that had been generated by New York establishments was a convenience born of necessity, but it could also be viewed as an acknowledgment that the new country was the true continuer of the old agrarian values that tolerated slavery. After claiming Missouri and Kentucky as part of its territory, the Confederacy placed thirteen stars on its flag, thereby creating a fortuitous association with the original thirteen colonies. It also proudly displayed for its own a vignette of the sculpture *America*, which occupies the center of a pediment on the U.S. Capitol. One of the few symbols that it did not embrace wholeheartedly was the eagle, which remained, for the most part, identified with the Union, where, as we have seen, it fiercely watches over the country on the U.S. \$100 bill (see Figure 155).

The National Bank Note Company: The Montgomery Issue

In all four of its notes, the NBNC boldly proclaims the name of the new nation. On the \$50 note (Figure 187), preceded by a tiny “THE,” an imposing “CONFEDERATE” prominently overarches the central vignette. “CONFEDERATE” is much lighter in tone than the accompanying “STATES of” and “AMERICA,” which are lower down and pushed to the sides, thereby allowing “CONFEDERATE” to provide a protective sky under which the nation can flourish. The prewar vignette shows two enslaved Black men hoeing in a cotton field with a third holding a basket overflowing with the discarded weeds. A two-story house in the right background testifies to the wealth that the cotton economy is generating. As is



Figure 187. \$50 Note, Confederate States of America, Montgomery, Ala., 16 May 1861, 7.7 × 18.2 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.



Figure 188. \$100 Note, Confederate States of America, Montgomery, Ala., 16 May 1861, 7.7 × 18.3 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

customary, the pastoral scene avoids any hint of the horrors associated with forced labor. One should recall as well that the enslaved individuals themselves represent capital—they are a commodity even more valuable than the cotton they are growing. They were the South’s most valuable economic asset, the capital they represented even exceeding “the combined value of all the nation’s railroads and factories.”¹¹

The allegorical figure at the left of the \$100 note (Figure 188) is based on Thomas Crawford’s *America*, a sculpture that appears in the center of the pediment on the east front of the Senate wing of the U.S. Capitol building, where it forms the apex of an ensemble titled *The Progress of Civilization*.¹² Having received the commission in 1853, Crawford completed his designs in 1854; the figures were carved on the Capitol grounds from 1855 to 1859; and the sculptures were

erected in 1863. *America* looks heavenward and, as described by Crawford, reaches out her left arm to ask “the protection of the Almighty.”¹³ In the other hand she holds both a laurel and an oak wreath, signifying “the rewards of civic and military merit.”¹⁴ She wears a liberty cap with stars in the front, and the rising sun symbolizes “the light accompanying the march of liberty.”¹⁵ To Crawford’s powerful figure, the bank-note engraver has added a national shield and at her feet fasces with a protruding axe head representing the government’s authority to enforce capital punishment. In employing the statue *America* to represent the Confederacy, the NBNC was acknowledging just how closely the new nation was aligned with its old identity.¹⁶

On the \$500 note, the central vignette, titled *The Crossing*,¹⁷ depicts a locomotive crossing a bridge at the same time cattle are herded through a ford in the center foreground: here, pastoral serenity coexists with rapid transportation.¹⁸ The \$1000 note employs in its lower corners oval portraits of John C. Calhoun (1782–1850), the staunchly proslavery senator from South Carolina, and Andrew Jackson (1767–1845), the Tennessean who, a lifelong fervent and implacable proponent of White supremacy, had served as America’s seventh president. Images of George Washington were soon to join those of Calhoun and Jackson on the nation’s currency, solidifying the Confederacy’s claim to an old and distinguished pedigree.¹⁹

*The American Bank Note Company’s New Orleans Branch,
aka the Southern Bank Note Company*

Memminger’s employment of the Southern Bank Note Company (SBNC) ensured the release of more engraved notes of high quality, with the vignettes again having been repurposed for this new endeavor. The bills divide into two groups: the \$50 note (Figure 189) and the \$100 note (Type 5) have written dates and a green tint; a series of four notes (\$5, \$10, \$20, and \$50) have the printed date 2 September 1861 and a red tint.²⁰



Figure 189. \$50 Note, Confederate States of America, Richmond, Va., 5 September 1861, 7.8×18.3 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

In the central vignette on the \$50 note (Figure 189), the figure to the right is associated with Commerce because she holds a caduceus in her hand, but it is Commerce built on the cotton trade.²¹ A cotton plant grows beside her, while men operate a cotton press in the right background. In addition, she is cast in shadow, and this darkening of a good portion of her face again alludes to the Black labor that makes the harvesting of cotton so profitable. She places her right arm around Industry, who is specifically identified with the processing of cotton because she holds a shuttle in her right hand and a spool of thread in her left. Both women sit on a cotton bale, underscoring this staple's importance, which was then the South's (and the United States') number-one crop.²² The processing of cotton largely took place outside the South. New England's mills thrived on spinning it into cloth, thereby binding North and South together in a common purpose. But, when seen on the Confederate note, it now serves the purposes of a new order. If threads of cotton could bind together North and South in the vignette's first iteration, it now could be seen to bind together the South with England's mills. Given this staple's global reach, King Cotton diplomacy argued that Great Britain would, out of necessity, recognize and aid the new nation.

The other five notes printed by the SBNC also reemploy standard iconography, such as Justice (Types 5 and 15), Minerva (Types 5 and 19),²³ a blacksmith (Type 19), Hope (Type 15), and trains (Types 5 and 15).²⁴ On its left side, the \$5 note (Figure 190) depicts Navigation,²⁵ with a statue of Washington on the right. The central vignette shows five allegorical figures (the same number as the denomination), which from left to right are Commerce, Ceres pointing to a cornucopia overflowing with produce, Justice, Liberty with a cornucopia spilling out coins, and Industry holding a distaff.

On the left of the \$10 note (Figure 191) appears the classical figure of Thetis, holding Neptune's triton with a conch shell resting at the base of her underwater rocky throne, and on the right stands a Native maiden holding an ear of corn.²⁶ Again, classical antiquity and an American Indian are paired. In this instance, the



Figure 190. \$5 Note, Confederate States of America, Richmond, Va., 2 September 1861, 7.8 × 17.9 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

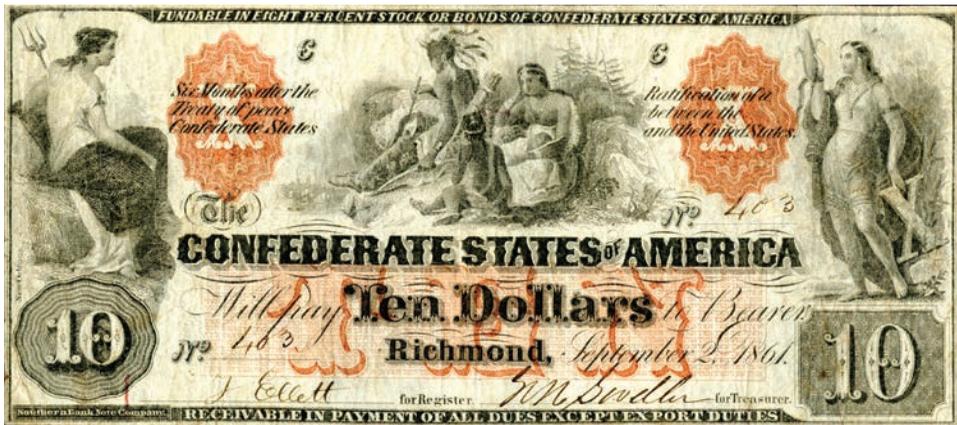


Figure 191. \$10 Note, Confederate States of America, Richmond, Va., 2 September 1861, 7.7 × 17.8 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

sea nymph Thetis, who is intended to represent trade on the high seas, balances the maiden representing the South’s fruitful bounty. The American Indian, who sports ornate decoration around her neck and along the border of her skirt, looks intently at the ear of corn while nonchalantly touching an “X” counter that rests on the slanted surface of a stone. Four Native Americans in a canoe appear in the distance beyond her right foot. The Indian family in the central vignette refers to the common trope of the “noble savage” pondering the advance of European civilization, as it pushes them increasingly into the margins.²⁷

Two Richmond Lithography Firms

After the occupation of New Orleans, Richmond became the undisputed center for paper-money production. Three contractors were responsible for designing most of the currency. Two firms, Hoyer & Ludwig and B. Duncan, turned out lithographed notes that were of poor quality. Keatinge & Ball, on the other hand, produced a more professional product. Then, in May 1862, very shortly after the seizure of the New Orleans manufacturing facility, Memminger, concerned about the encroaching army under the command of General George McClellan in the Peninsula Campaign, required the Richmond firms to move to Columbia, South Carolina. Here, they began anew, but the secretary chose not to take the major step of consolidating the firms within one government bureau, allowing the system of competing private contractors to continue.²⁸ He also kept the latter stages of the process of money-making—the numbering, cutting, and signing of the notes—in Richmond until April 1864, an inefficient division of labor.

In employing lithography, the firms of Hoyer & Ludwig and B. Duncan were relying on a more expedient method in comparison to steel engraving. Whereas engraving is a time-intensive process requiring well-honed skills in the cutting into metal plates, lithography is a far simpler, faster, and cheaper method, in which the image is drawn on a prepared stone. The result is not as sharp and refined as that of the engraved vignettes they copy, but speed and convenience help make up for such deficiencies.

Hoyer & Ludwig: A Firm's Expansion into Paper Currency

Hoyer & Ludwig, a small lithography firm, was established in Richmond in 1858,²⁹ with Louis Hoyer as its financial backer and the lithographer Charles Ludwig, a European-trained artist who claimed a connection with Oscar I, the King of Sweden, as its source of inspiration. Responding to Memminger's efforts to secure more paper currency, the firm became an important supplier. With only one exception, all of Hoyer & Ludwig's scenic vignettes were copied from earlier bank-note engravings, and one suspects that the exception (see the lower left-hand corner of Figure 193) was taken from an illustration in a book or journal. In addition to George Washington, the firm introduced only one other portrait, that of R. M. T. Hunter, the Confederacy's secretary of state (Type 46), and on one occasion introduced a Confederate flag into a borrowed design (Type 10). Instead, its bills emphasize commerce, particularly maritime trade, as well as such related subjects as agriculture, liberty, and the generation of wealth. Unfortunately, the poor quality of its execution made its notes a ripe target for counterfeiting, and Memminger recalled the notes in the fall of 1862, further undermining the public's confidence in Confederate currency.³⁰

For its series dated 25 July 1861, Hoyer & Ludwig printed five denominations (\$5, \$10, \$20, \$50, and \$100).³¹ All five boast the bold, overarching lettering "CONFEDERATE." At the lower left of the \$5 note, a sailor leans on a capstan (vignettes of a sailor or sailors appear in the same position on four other Hoyer & Ludwig notes);³² Hope leans on her anchor on the \$10 note; and on the \$50 note, a seated Tellus, who represents the earth, holds a spear in one hand and the globe, atop which is a bird, in the other.³³ For the central vignettes, Types 11 and 10 show the same image of Liberty and a bald eagle, this last an example of the rare use for the Confederacy of what was primarily seen as a symbol of the United States. Perhaps to counteract such an association, the firm introduced an ornate escutcheon bearing the Confederate flag, the Stars and Bars, at the lower center of the Type 10 vignette (Type 27 shows the same design without the flag).³⁴

The central vignette of the \$100 note (Figure 192), which is derived from a design by Underwood, Bald, Spencer & Hufty, Philadelphia/Danforth, Underwood & Co., New York (UBS&H/DU), shows Ceres and Proserpine flying above the earth.³⁵ The two women, who are mother and daughter, look to be the same age, but the goddess on the left, holding a pitchfork, rake, spade, and sickle, is presumably Proserpine, who represents Cultivation and Harvesting. Ceres, cradling a cornucopia, demonstrates that such seasonal labor will produce Abundance. The Confederate note's appropriation of this design is most memorable for its abysmal quality, which is unusually bad even by Hoyer & Ludwig's lax standards. Its execution is muddy and crude, and the contrast in light-and-dark shading on Abundance's flowing garment is grotesquely harsh and jarring. No better argument could be made on behalf of the government's efforts to recruit better qualified lithographers.

Hoyer & Ludwig produced eight bills dated 2 September 1861, often repeating denominations (\$5, \$5, \$10, \$10, \$20, \$20, \$50, and \$100).³⁶ To generate new types of notes, the firm used the resources at hand. On 5 September 1861, following up on Memminger's suggestion, C. H. Stevens, the cashier of the Planters and Mechanics Bank of Charleston, had sent several steel bank-note plates to



Figure 192. \$100 Note, Confederate States of America, Richmond, Va., 25 July 1861, 8.1 × 18.4 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

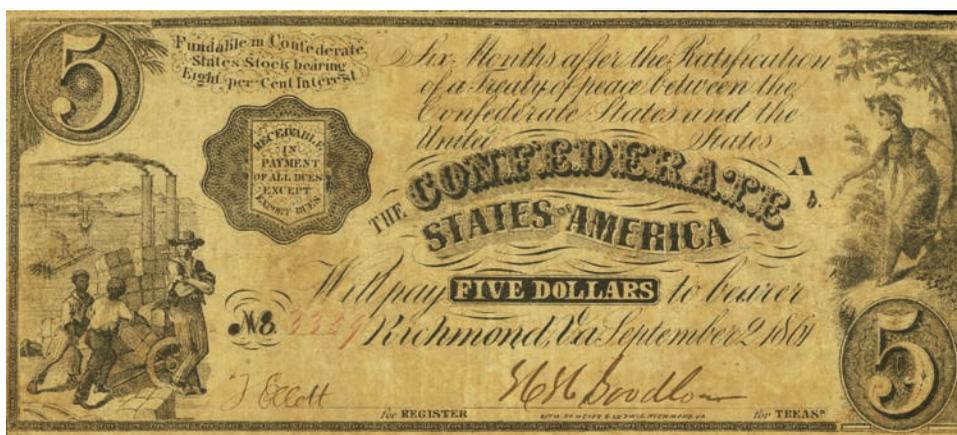


Figure 193. \$5 “Indian princess” note, Confederate States of America, Richmond, Va., 2 September 1861, 7.5 × 17.9 cm. Eric P. Newman Numismatic Education Society.

Richmond, including plates of notes created for the Bank of Charleston.³⁷ Unable to adapt to the printing of plates in this medium, Hoyer & Ludwig borrowed some of the designs by printing an impression on transfer paper, which was then rendered on a lithography stone. One of the resulting bills is the \$5 “Indian Princess” note (Figure 193), which transfers elements, including the counters, from the plate for the Bank of Charleston’s \$5 note (see Figure 127). The vignette on the right, the work of Draper, Toppin & Co., Philadelphia/Draper, Toppin, Longacre & Co. (DT/DTL), first conceived around 1837, depicts a Native American maiden emerging from the woods to approach the edge of a high overhang.³⁸ In the bank note, the “princess” looks across the face of the bill to a seated Native brave or “prince” on the lower left-hand side. In the Confederate note, she looks across to a bustling river scene, but although the Native “prince” seated next to a



Figure 194. \$5 Note, Confederate States of America, Richmond, Va., 2 September 1861, 7.6×17.7 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

palmetto tree has vanished, the fronds from the tree still appear emerging from behind the counter at the upper left.

Hoyer & Ludwig employ at the lower left a scene of two enslaved boys loading or offloading cotton from a steamboat, a singular departure in that no bank-note prototype is known. The dynamic framing crops the composition at the bottom, showing only the handles of a trolley and a portion of a bale of cotton, thereby suggesting that the image was derived from a larger illustration in a book or journal. The waterway may be the Mississippi River, a vital artery for the Confederacy. Although the two vignettes on the Confederate note are executed on different scales, together they compose the same theme that appears on the SBNC's \$10 bill (see Figure 191), where, in the central vignette, a Native American from a high perch looks down on a well-established town built on a river or within a harbor.

The other \$5 note (Figure 194) again stresses maritime commerce. At the lower left, a sailor leans against a capstan, and the lettering "The Confederate States of America," after encroaching on the sailor, continues on to form a graceful, undulating wave beneath the vignette of Commerce seated on a bale and turning to look out to the oceangoing ship beyond. The counter at lower right is particularly ingenious. The circular "bulb" encases foliage and a germinating "5." It too sprouts the top of a "5" that turns the entire design into this number, cleverly underscoring the nation's fertility.

In terms of some of the other major vignettes Hoyer & Ludwig borrowed, the \$10 note (Figure 195) employs at the upper left two allegorical women taken from an image dating to the 1830s by Underwood, Bald, Spencer & Hufty.³⁹ In the literature, these figures are traditionally defined as Commerce, seated on the left with the sea beyond, and Ceres, clasping an urn, kneeling before her. The object Ceres holds, however, is a pitcher, presumably made of silver, with a pouring lip and curling, ornate handle in the neoclassical style. It could hold either purifying, life-giving water, which is so essential to agriculture, or wine, which could be used as a celebratory libation. Neither figure is given much in the way of identifying attributes. The kneeling figure wears a wreath in her hair, possibly

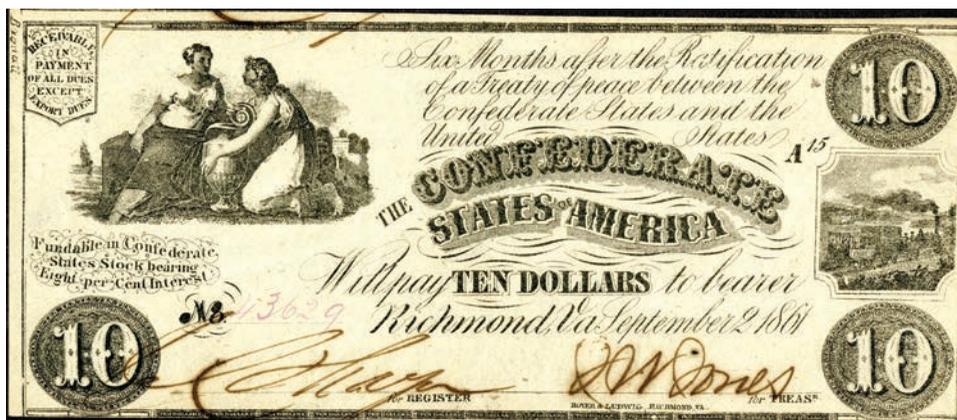


Figure 195. \$10 Note, Confederate States of America, Richmond, Va., 2 September 1861, 7.5 × 17.9 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.



Figure 196. \$20 Note, Confederate States of America, Richmond, Va., 2 September 1861, 7.5 × 18.5 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

consisting of grape vines, which would suggest she is a bacchante helping to celebrate the land's bounty. With the ship seen at the left, this antebellum design again honors the trope of a fruitful land that leads to trade and profits on the high seas.

The central vignette of the \$20 note (Figure 196) shows a seated Ceres, flanked by Industry and Maritime Navigation. Ceres' head bursts through the lettering to almost touch the bill's upper edge. To the viewer's left is a figure traditionally identified as Commerce.⁴⁰ She rests her left arm on Ceres's knee, and the compass she holds in her right hand is next to the grapes overflowing the cornucopia, to which Ceres points with her sickle. She represents Industry, particularly in terms of the production of textiles because beside her is a spinning wheel backed by a large factory. On the viewer's right is a figure representing Maritime Navigation, who looks back up to Ceres while gesturing toward the beckoning sea

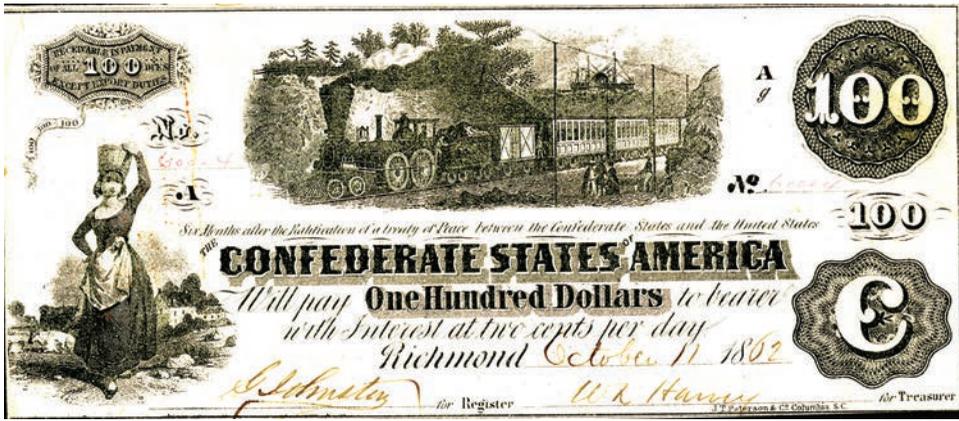


Figure 197. \$100 Milkmaid note, Confederate States of America, Richmond, Va., 11 October 1862, 8.1 × 19 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

beyond as the anchor of Hope protrudes from behind her. This is the old triad of Industry, Agriculture, and Maritime Commerce. This note is also the only one by Hoyer & Ludwig to employ color, a green tint having been borrowed from a bank note. The cherubs in the overprint inhabit an organic floral pattern, thereby reinforcing the theme of fertile abundance portrayed in the central vignette.

Hoyer & Ludwig also printed a \$100 note, with written dates and bearing interest at two cents per day (Figure 197). Most of these notes, however, bear the imprint “J. T. Paterson, Columbia, S.C.,” but as basically the continuer of Hoyer & Ludwig’s production, Paterson does not warrant a heading of his own in this account of Confederate currency.⁴¹ The vignette of the train is a crudely rendered version of an earlier bank-note design. The image first appeared in a small folio lithograph published by the firm of N. Currier, the predecessor of Currier & Ives, as one of many renderings of the rural American landscape. In Currier’s lithograph, the vista on the right is closed by a slender arched bridge spanning the embankment. Although some bank-note vignettes faithfully record this detail, Hoyer & Ludwig, following the lead of W. L. Ormsby, deleted the bridge and added a ship at sea, sacrificing a graceful closure in favor of the didactic juxtaposition of two major means of transportation: railroads and steamships.⁴² But in both Ormsby’s vignette and the Confederate note after it, the ship is not well integrated into the landscape: rather than receding into the distance, the water appears more like a wall atop which the ship, an incongruous intruder, steams from left to right. The lithograph that started it all bears the title *The Express Train*, and all versions of the vignettes after it add telegraph poles, thereby extolling speed in communication as well as transportation.

By supplying the Confederacy with currency, Hoyer & Ludwig answered a need, even if its notes were undistinguished. Yet, although such familiar imagery provided the public with a sense of continuity, the Confederacy needed its own identity. The firm of Keatinge & Ball ultimately provided the new nation with a fixed identity; in the meantime, the firm of B. Duncan contributed some compelling and original imagery of its own.

Blanton Duncan: An Opportunistic Rogue

Blanton Duncan, a lawyer from Louisville, Kentucky, founded his lithography firm in Richmond after first having served briefly as a lieutenant colonel in the Confederate army (a rank he held because he had raised the regiment). He began his business in January 1862. Because his business practices were less than above board, Duncan soon became a persona non grata with the Confederate government, Memminger forcing him out of the business in April 1863.⁴³ Nonetheless, he put out some of the Confederacy's most intriguing currency. The designs created under his management often depart from the conventional repertoire of bank-note vignettes, and the liberties that he took with the subject matter can make for ambiguity in interpretation. Yet such challenges are preferable to the same old tired rehashing of familiar motifs. Whether in his shady business practices or in his imagery, no one can accuse Colonel Duncan of being boring.

The firm B. Duncan issued four notes dated 2 September 1861 (\$5, \$10, \$10, and \$20).⁴⁴ Politically astute, Colonel Duncan introduced three portraits of Confederate officials, all in the lower left corner. The \$5 note features Memminger, the secretary of the Treasury; one of the \$10 notes (see Figure 199) shows R. M. T. Hunter, the secretary of state; and the \$20 note shows Alexander Stephens, the vice president of the Confederacy (see Figure 200). The central vignette for the \$5 note shows a sailor seated amid bales of cotton holding a telescope, beneath which is a mariner's compass.⁴⁵ Justice stands at the right holding her scale, and the female kneeling beside with a wreath in her hair is traditionally identified as Ceres. Yet, because the wreath appears to be composed of laurel rather than grain, the figure who wears it should be identified with distinguished merit or victory (poets are often shown crowned with laurel in acknowledgment of their genius, and the victors at the Olympic Games in classical Greece were also crowned with laurel). Both vignettes may be original to the firm, but both are also close in conception to earlier bank-note designs.

One of the \$10 notes (Figure 198) offers a crude rendition of an enslaved man picking cotton, an image based on a pre-war bank-note vignette (see Figure 176). The Duncan vignette further dehumanizes this laborer. Coarseness of execution alone cannot account for the figure's awkward and clumsy portrayal. The vignette also expands the scene to include a row of plantation houses on the left and three bushy cotton plants descending the hill on the right. Even odder is the "filler" extending the image to the right. This separate, smaller design shows a plow, shovel, wheelbarrow, and sheaf of grain clustered in the foreground with a farmhouse in the background, but this addition is out of scale with the scene of which it is an extension. It is as if one of the smaller vignettes of agricultural emblems as seen at the bottom of the notes reproduced as Figures 48 and 139 has been elevated to a free-floating companion to the main design.

The other \$10 note (Figure 199) offers the only historical scene to appear on Confederate currency or Southern States currency. It copies an antebellum bank-note vignette of a Revolutionary War scene, which, in its turn, reproduces an 1840 print by John Sartain after John Blake White's painting *Francis Marion's Sweet Potato Dinner*.⁴⁶ The vignette shows General Marion, known as the "Swamp Fox" for his adroit use of South Carolina wetlands to evade the British after hitting them with guerrilla tactics, hosting a British officer. The composition contrasts the

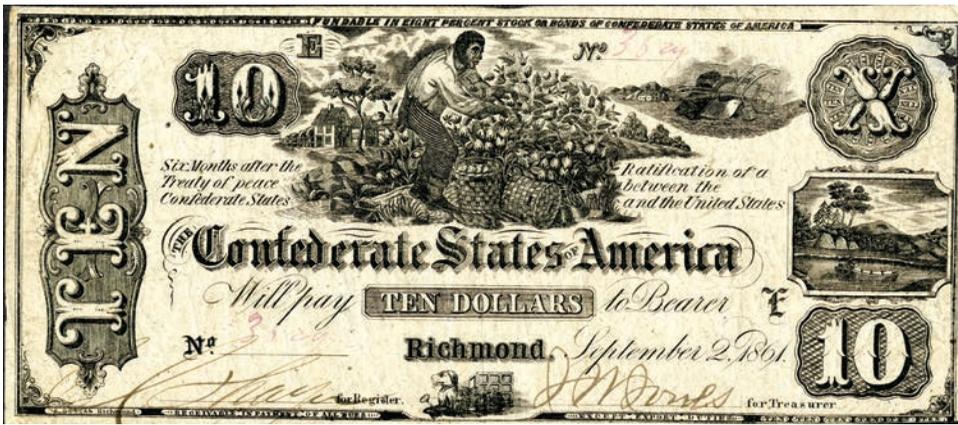


Figure 198. \$10 Note, Confederate States of America, Richmond, Va., 2 September 1861, 7.5 × 17.5 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

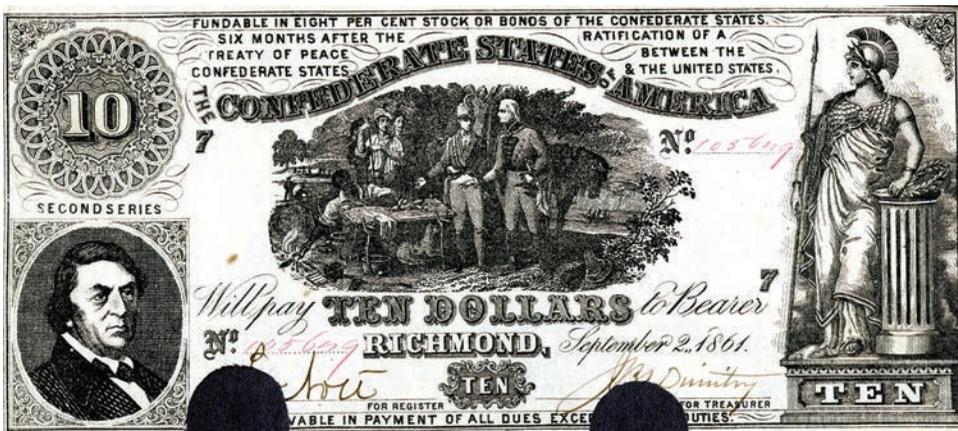


Figure 199. \$10 Sweet potato dinner note, Confederate States of America, Richmond, Va., 2 September 1861, 7.7 × 17.7 cm (punch-canceled). National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

humbleness of the American soldiers' living conditions, where a forest root is dinner, to the resplendent attire of the pampered visitor. Oscar Marion, the general's enslaved servant, attends to the roasting of the sweet potatoes. A favorite fantasy of White Southerners is the "loyal slave" who is content with his lot, but, in this instance, Oscar was a patriot who was as dedicated to the cause of American Independence as was his master. Duncan's choice of subject matter foregrounds the South's importance in fighting the British in the Revolutionary War, while suggesting Blacks and Whites were in the fight together. The vignette reminds us that, in its storied past, the South had already defiantly fought and defeated a better equipped foe.⁴⁷

The \$20 note's central vignette (Figure 200) is not drawn from the bank-note repertoire. The vignette shows a garden, and even the numerals identifying the

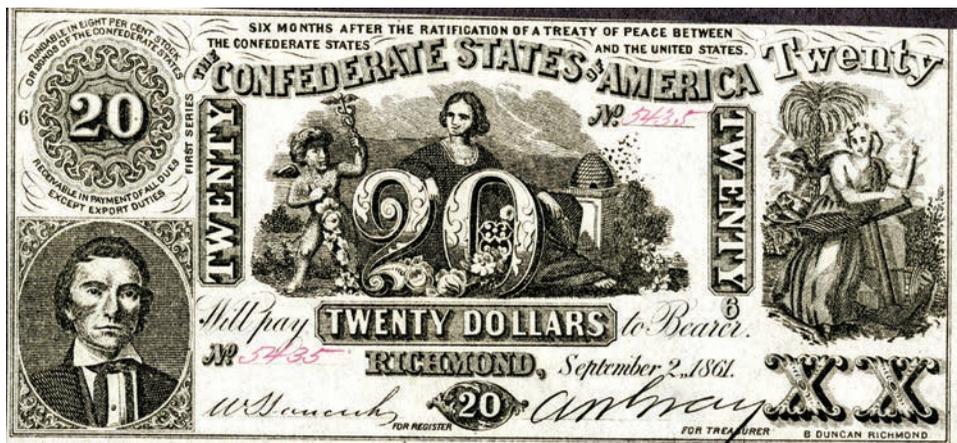


Figure 200. \$20 Note, Confederate States of America, Richmond, Va., 2 September 1861, 7.5 × 16.4 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

note’s denomination harmonize with this floral theme. The lettering framing the scene alludes to an arbor or trellis, in which the two vertical “TWENTY” counters act as posts holding up the curved crossbar containing the nation’s name. To the right of the central figure is an active beehive, symbolizing, as is traditional, an industrious, well-organized society.⁴⁸ Its location within a garden setting also emphasizes the bees’ role as pollinators ensuring fertility. The woman turns to look at the winged, young boy on her right (the viewer’s left) who holds Mercury’s caduceus in one hand while supporting a blooming vine in the other, attributes that associate him with agricultural commerce, the primary staple of which is King Cotton. Previously, the boy and the woman have been misidentified as Cupid and Industry (if the figure is Cupid, the woman would be either Venus or Psyche).⁴⁹ But because the woman is seated amid an abundance of flowers, she is Flora, and her young companion is Zephyr, whose west wind in the springtime begets flowers. Ample vegetation flows from his manhood, and the caduceus he holds is a reminder of his importance in supplying the wind on which waterborne commerce thrives. This original design is about love and fruitful (as well as profitable) abundance and those earthly delights that make up the Confederate States of America.

Colonel Duncan’s firm produced the first lower denomination notes: \$1 and \$2 bills dated 2 June 1862. The \$1 note (Figure 201) shows a side-wheel steamship also equipped with sails. To the lower right is an oval portrait of Lucy Pickens, the attractive and accomplished wife of the governor of South Carolina, who here represents Southern womanhood.⁵⁰ One presumes Duncan’s move to Columbia motivated her inclusion. In addition, he introduced other South Carolina references: a palmetto tree, reflecting the symbolism found on the state’s seal, is behind Hope at the right of the \$20 bill, and the scene honoring Francis Marion on the \$10 note is another South Carolina subject. Duncan clearly was going out of his way to ingratiate himself in his new location.⁵¹ Commentators have identified the graceful allegorical female at the left of the \$1 note as Liberty,⁵² but the laurel wreath on her head identifies her with Victory or Outstanding Merit. The blazing



Figure 201. \$1 Note, Confederate States of America, Richmond, Va., 2 September 1861, 7 × 16 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.



Figure 202. \$2 Note, Confederate States of America, Richmond, Va., 2 June 1862, 6.9 × 15.8 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

sun in the middle of her shield symbolizes Truth or Virtue, the sun's revealing light expelling the errors of darkness. This figure represents Victorious Truth, an allegory intended to confirm the Confederacy's ultimate triumph and vindication. A strong wind blows both the smoke and sails of the steamboat in the central vignette, but the lithographer made no attempt to provide a transition between the choppy waters surrounding this ship and the calm waters seen beyond. The main lettering is itself a rolling wave, which runs beneath the maritime scene, connecting the figure of Victorious Truth to Lucy Pickens. Both Truth and Pickens have the same long, thin faces, seen at the same angle, and it is likely that, by associating the two, Duncan's lithographers, despite the crudity of their renderings, were again attempting to flatter the governor's wife.

The \$2 note (Figure 202) includes a portrait at the upper left of Judah P. Benjamin, who had been appointed to replace Hunter as secretary of state. The central vignette offers an intriguing departure from the usual bank-note repertoire, another bold attempt to establish a new iconography for the Confederacy. However,

the ambiguity of the subject's treatment has created problems. The early interpretation describes the South striking down the North, with H. D. Allen adding, in 1918, "and crippling the [Union] Eagle."⁵³ But, in 1949, Claud Fuller identified the vignette as "Hercules liberating Prometheus by slaying the vulture [i.e., eagle]."⁵⁴ Although Fuller's description has largely supplanted the older one, the first identification is correct.⁵⁵ It is helpful to place the vignette within the context of contemporary treatments of similar subjects. Since 1776, Virginia's state seal has shown the armed goddess Virtus triumphantly standing over the prostrate figure of a fallen king, his crown beside him. In his later fresco of 1865 executed for the Rotunda of the U.S. Capitol, Constantino Brumidi shows a female America, brandishing a sword and holding a shield with the American eagle beside her, vanquishing a host of offending male personifications, including Tyranny and Kingly Power. In his conception, Brumidi was again following a well-established tradition of a heroic, virtuous female warrior triumphing over a male adversary. One problem with the Duncan design is that the figure's sex is ambiguous, but the most plausible reading is that the image conforms to the traditional trope of an allegorical female, in this case representing the South, overcoming a male figure representing the North along with his accompanying eagle.⁵⁶ Whatever the genders, the firm's basic intention is not in doubt, a conclusion that has been recently confirmed by Ross Brooks having unearthed a letter from Duncan to Memminger depicting the subject "as depicting the South prevailing over the North."⁵⁷

When the firm of B. Duncan executed another scene of a combat on the Louisiana \$5 note dated 10 October 1862 (Figure 203), it chose to approach this subject differently. The Louisiana vignette, given its relationship to the earlier depiction, has also led some to identify it as "Hercules liberating Prometheus by slaying the vulture."⁵⁸ No depictions of Hercules, Prometheus, and the "vulture" come close to this portrayal. The prone figure is not chained and holds a broken sword. The advancing figure wears medieval armor and hardly appears to be a liberator. Rather, this combatant personifies a heavily armored South and is depicted as a particularly formidable and menacing opponent: his eyes remain unseen, and he steps on the eagle's throat as he prepares to thrust his sword into the breast of the defeated and



Figure 203. \$5 Note, State of Louisiana, 10 March 1863, 7 × 15.7 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

recoiling North. This second version also introduces a train rumbling across a bridge, an addition that helps locate the allegory in the here and now. The Confederate \$2 note might be confused with a picnic gone horribly awry, but the pendulum has swung so far in the opposite direction on the Louisiana bill that one can be forgiven for siding with the defenseless North over the South's thuggish aggression.⁵⁹

Underlying the conception of the two vignettes is J. L. Magee's

1856 lithograph *Southern Chivalry—Argument versus Club's* (Figure 204), which depicts Congressman Preston Brooks of South Carolina viciously caning Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts on the floor of the U.S. Senate on 21 May 1856. Brooks was seeking retribution for an intemperate two-day address that Sumner had delivered on May 19–20. His speech had been filled with antislavery invective, prompted by the bloodshed being spilled in Kansas, and he had at one point grossly insulted Senator Andrew Butler of South Carolina for having “chosen a mistress to whom he has made his vows, and who . . . though polluted in the sight of the world, is chaste in his sight—I mean the harlot, Slavery.”⁶⁰ To avenge this affront, Brooks, who was a relative of Butler, assaulted Sumner in a one-sided contest in which the younger man permanently injured his target. In the lithograph, Magee shows Brooks as an unstoppable brute force, assailing a prone Sumner, who can only feebly raise a quill pen in his defense. Pieces of Sumner's flesh cling to the cane, as Brooks's supporters laughingly allow the thrashing to continue. To add insult to injury, the South acclaimed Brooks a hero. After he resigned from Congress, South Carolinians enthusiastically reelected him. Perhaps because of the unrepentant violence on the part of Brooks and his constituency, the Confederate government's note is careful, perhaps overly so, not to characterize the South as a savage aggressor, but the Louisiana bill has no qualms in portraying the South as violently remorseless. Magee's reference in his title to “Southern Chivalry” drips with sarcasm, but rather than be shamed or daunted by this stinging rebuke, the firm of B. Duncan embraces Magee's portrayal and throws it back at him. Magee had condemned Brooks as a faceless villain, and the Louisiana bill revels in and glorifies just this type of brutish behavior. Despite being dressed in the chivalrous armor of the age of knighthood, this personification of the South gives no quarter to Northern provocations.

The question arises as to why Fuller in 1949 felt the need to change the identification of the vignette on the Confederate \$2 note, from the South striking down



Figure 204. Lithograph, J. L. Magee, *Southern Chivalry—Argument versus Club's*, 1856, 23.5 × 40.6 cm. Library Company of Philadelphia.

the North to Hercules and Prometheus, and more importantly, how did this new identification gain so much traction that it even, in some cases, changed the reading of the vignette on the related Louisiana note? By exalting the violence portrayed in Magee's lithograph as a praiseworthy reaction to Northern aggression, both vignettes transgress the boundaries of civility and decorum one expects from a nation's currency. Presumably Fuller, and the writers who followed him, wanted to wish away so uncomfortable a portrayal of the "chivalrous" South by recasting this drama as an erudite classical myth about salvation rather than savagery. Yet the intensity of the passions aroused by the Civil War breaks through the thin veneer of polite society, just as it had earlier when Brooks caned Sumner on the floor of the Senate. The vignettes portray nothing less than a life-and-death struggle, in which the South emerges victorious.

Fashioning a Canonical Image: Keatinge & Ball's Mirroring of the Archenemy

Until Keatinge & Ball took charge, the first year and a half of the production of Confederate currency was noteworthy for its chaotic assortment of multiple printers producing multiple notes for the same denominations. All the firms had their reliance on bank-note imagery in common, either using bank-note plates or making inferior lithographic copies of bank-note engravings, thereby carrying over this antebellum world into the Confederacy. In these early years, B. Duncan was the only firm to attempt new, innovative subjects, but the poor quality of execution and the ambiguity of interpretation left much to be desired. The firm of Keatinge & Ball was eventually to bring order to this confusing situation.

Because the Confederate government could not rely on New York engraving firms, the source for high-quality printing of paper money in America, it enticed some of this expertise to come South. Memminger supported Thomas A. Ball, a lawyer, in a plan to establish a firm in Richmond by recruiting Northern talent. Traveling to New York, where the ABNC management proved sympathetic to his mission, Ball entered a partnership with Edward Keatinge, an Irishman and an accomplished portrait engraver, and with William Leggett, another employee of the ABNC. After bringing in equipment and supplies as well as other ABNC staff members, the firm of Leggett, Keatinge & Ball was ready by October 1861 to start work for the Confederacy.⁶¹ But after Memminger accused Leggett of being too closely associated with a Northern spy, the firm dropped him from the partnership. As a result, only two bills (Figures 205 and 207) include his name in the imprint. From then on, creative control was firmly in the hands of Keatinge, with Ball continuing to oversee financial matters.

To get notes into circulation as quickly as possible, Leggett, Keatinge & Ball reworked two steel engraved plates produced by Bald, Adams & Co., New York/Bald, Cousland & Co., Philadelphia (BA/BC), for the Mechanics Savings Bank of Savannah. These two plates had been part of a shipment of three sent to Memminger on 7 September 1861 by J. Richardson, the president of the Farmers & Mechanics Bank of Savannah (from 1854 to 1859, the bank's name had been the Mechanics Savings Bank).⁶² By hammering a plate from behind, an engraver could flatten it in the desired places, thereby removing the original lettering in order to introduce new text messaging. In this way, with alterations to the lettering

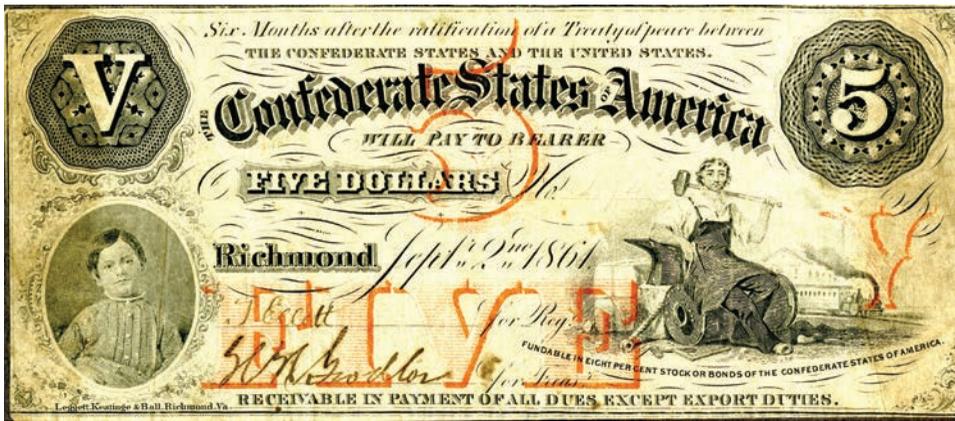


Figure 205. \$5 Note, Confederate States of America, Richmond, Va., 2 September 1861, 7.4 × 17.5 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.



Figure 206. \$10 Note, Confederate States of America, Richmond, Va., 2 September 1861, 7.8 × 18.3 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

and new plates for tints, Leggett, Keatinge & Ball could produce notes of high quality from the originals. But whereas such wholesale borrowing led to efficiency in the introduction of much-needed currency, it also created its own problems in terms of the suitability of the subject matter. The mechanic on the \$5 bank note, when used on Confederate currency (Figure 205), testifies to the new nation's industrial strength and capable transportation system (in reality, the South's railway system was far behind that of the North).⁶³

The young boy on the left, whose image is presumably based on a photograph, is in both the bank note and the Confederate note intended as a generic image of the charming innocence of childhood.⁶⁴ Borrowing another prewar vignette, Keatinge & Ball introduced an even younger and more winsome child on one of its \$10 notes (Figure 206), which was also part of the 2 September 1861 issue.⁶⁵ (A version of this image of adorable innocence can be seen on Asher B.

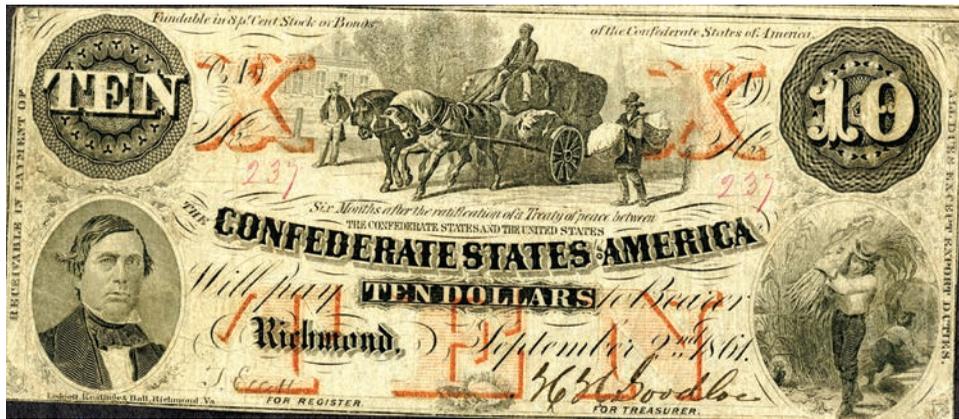


Figure 207. \$10 Note, Confederate States of America, Richmond, Va., 2 September 1861, 7.3 × 17.7 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

Durand's early specimen sheet [Figure 103], where, at the lower left, it appears in an elaborate frame just above the Christ Child). The model for this portrayal was Thomas Sully's idealized portrait of a young boy named Alfred L. Elwin.⁶⁶ Ironically, although Elwin grew up to become an abolitionist Philadelphia minister, the vignette renders only the fancy head of an angelic boy. In the context of the Confederate note, the child is positioned at lower right, and the grim R. M. T. Hunter, the secretary of state, is seen at lower left, where he keeps watch over his nation's commitment to protect childhood's idyllic world or, at least, the presumption of such an idealized state. The children seen in Figures 205 and 206 represent the next generation who will grow up under the toxic fantasy of White supremacy.

The \$10 note (Figure 207), also produced from one of the Mechanics Savings Bank plates, has its own appropriate and inappropriate baggage. In the central vignette, the enslaved man driving a cartload of cotton bales is a fitting subject for the Confederacy, as are the vignettes of the ducks at bottom center and the harvesting of corn at the lower right.⁶⁷ However, the male portrait at the left is a poor fit for the national currency. This portrait of John E. Ward was custom-made for the bank when he served on the board of directors. His inclusion gave the institution instant credibility. He had served in the Georgia legislature, even becoming its speaker, and when the notes were first issued, he was just ending his term as Savannah's mayor. What made sense for the bank did not carry over to the Confederacy. When Georgia seceded from the Union, Ward was serving as President James Buchanan's U.S. Minister to China. Unwilling to continue to serve under Abraham Lincoln's administration, he resigned, but although on good terms with the Confederacy, he never returned to Georgia and died in New York in 1890.⁶⁸ Outside of a few people in Savannah, Ward's identity apparently remained unknown, the image being accepted as one more example of male authority, and it was not until 1917 that the connection with Ward was made in print.⁶⁹

When producing its first \$100 bill (Figure 208), which bears written dates ranging from 26 August 1862 to 8 January 1863, Keatinge & Ball created a pastiche of three of the four notes from the first Montgomery issue. Calhoun at the lower left is derived from the \$1000 note, and the allegorical female at the right is

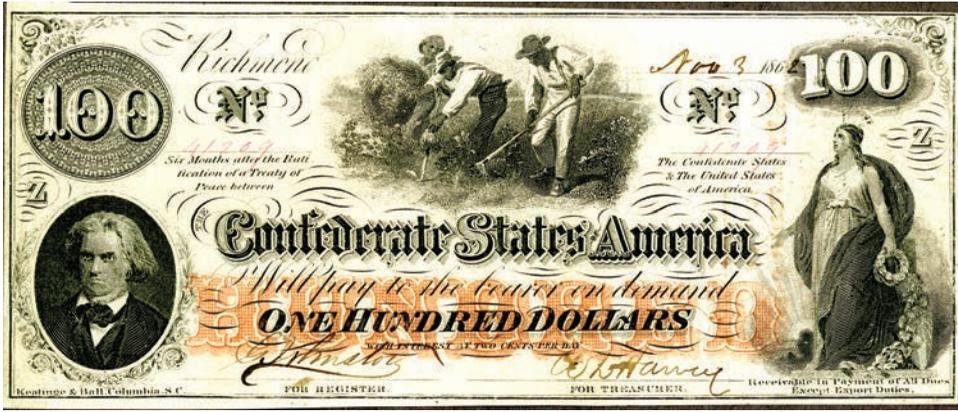


Figure 208. \$100 Note, Confederate States of America, Richmond, Va., 3 November 1862, 7.5 × 18.6 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

borrowed from the \$100 note (see Figure 188). But this image of America from the Montgomery note has been subtly altered. She no longer wears a liberty cap (a classical symbol that Jefferson Davis had earlier opposed as inappropriate regarding Southern slavery), and a cascading leafy vine has replaced the fasces, the Confederacy again distancing itself from the symbols of the Roman Republic.

As with the \$100 note, the earlier vignettes produced by the various firms picturing African Americans are overwhelmingly drawn from bank-note imagery. In this regard, the Confederacy's characterization of slavery was a continuation of, rather than a departure from, prewar norms. In the beginning the government seems to have exercised little oversight in the selection of images, but certain parameters apply. In general, the approach is low-key, borrowing mainly from scenes of enslaved people efficiently attending to the cotton economy. None of the enslaved are shown to be ridiculously exuberant, nor are there any sympathetic portrayals, and the one dehumanized worker depicted in Figure 198 may express more of Colonel Duncan's attitudes than those of the government, or at least those attitudes it would have chosen to express in such a public forum. Ian Binnington puts into perspective how enslaved people were characterized in the early issues of the national currency—they “fit the script of the Silent Slave,” who diligently and unobtrusively works for the profit of their White owner.⁷⁰

Starting with the issue of 2 December 1862, references to enslaved peoples vanish completely. Many citizens resented having to bear the burden of fighting a war on behalf of the prosperous planter class, whose members often were protected from having to serve in the armed forces. State governments also curtailed their use of enslaved people on their currency, even if class divisions did not stop them from using such imagery altogether.⁷¹ Another, perhaps more important factor behind the national government's response hinged on how it wanted to be perceived beyond its borders. After Lincoln announced the Emancipation Proclamation on 22 September 1862, which on 1 January 1863 was to free all the enslaved people within the Confederacy's borders, the issue of slavery was pushed to the forefront. The Confederacy desperately needed the English and the French governments to intervene on its behalf rather than remaining neutral, and in the

battle for the hearts and minds of the English and French peoples, featuring enslaved peoples on its money was best avoided. The inconvenient truth that the origins of secession were rooted in the “peculiar institution” became more and more a distant memory, until soon after the war it was denied altogether. In the expunging of Black people from Confederate currency, the notes again became more like those issued by its enemy, the United States of America. U.S. federal currency, then and now, has never shown African Americans, free or enslaved, on its paper money,⁷² and the Confederacy in its national currency soon adopted this same policy of completely ignoring this portion of its population despite slavery having provided the *casus belli*.

Keatinge & Ball produced work of a higher quality than that of their Richmond rivals. To help with expediting the production of a more professional supply of currency, the Confederate Treasury sent Major Benjamin F. Ficklin to London early in 1862 to procure materials and recruit skilled workers. His efforts were successful. A group of talented Scottish lithographers and engravers, led by George Dunn, soon joined the workforce. Prompted by Keatinge and Dunn, Memminger moved to adopt a more uniform currency, leaving behind the confusing *mélange* of multiple types. On 6 September 1862, the Treasury Department judged original designs submitted for a new, standardized format. Keatinge was the winner of this competition, and Dunn had drawings of three of the Confederacy’s state capitols accepted.⁷³ Beginning with the 2 December 1862 issue, a uniform currency was achieved.⁷⁴

By the last three issues (2 December 1862, 6 April 1863, and 17 February 1864), Keatinge had standardized the designs for the \$1, \$2, \$5, \$10, \$20, \$50, and \$100 bills (a \$500 note was added in 1864). Yet, in the multiple notes Keatinge & Ball had issued, dated 2 September 1861, there was already a hint of what was to come. What distinguishes these earlier notes is the central placement of portraits of government officials, more staid framing devices, such as counters contained in formal blocks, and the use of tints, in these cases green. The \$5 note (Type 33) features a large oval portrait of Memminger. At the right is Minerva, the last allegory to appear on one of Keatinge’s designs. The \$20 note (Type 21) gives pride of place to Confederate Vice President Alexander Stephens, and flanking his oval portrait are items denoting industry and agriculture, with commercial waterways behind. In later issues of these denominations, these men remain on their respective notes but are moved from the center to the lower right-hand corner. The \$50 note (Figure 209), which is slightly larger than the others, features a large portrait of Jefferson Davis, unconstrained by any restricting border. This format remains little changed throughout the rest of the war.

Before the last three issues, none of the currency except for Jules Manouvrier’s pedestrian \$5 note, dated 25 July 1861, had printing on its back.⁷⁵ This was to remain true for the \$1 and \$2 notes, their low denominations not warranting the expense. The remaining notes from the \$5 through the \$100 bills have backs emphasizing the denomination—in 1862 and 1863 either blue or green, and in 1864 uniformly in blue. Whereas there could be changes made to the notes’ backs, to the use of tints on the fronts, and to the type of paper used, Keatinge maintained a consistency in the designs. Allegorical female figures would have returned with a vengeance had the “Chemicograph” plates ordered by the Treasury Department from S. Straker and Sons in London for the backs of the 1864 \$5, \$10, \$20, \$50,



Figure 209. \$50 Note, Confederate States of America, Richmond, Va., 2 September 1861, 7.8×18.2 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

\$100, and \$500 notes made it through the federal naval blockade (a set of the six plates are now in the Smithsonian’s collections). However, lacking these plates or finding them too difficult to use if they did succeed in getting to their destination, Keatinge & Ball hastily substituted pedestrian blue backs for the 1864 issue.⁷⁶

The overwhelming volume of bills required to meet the government’s demands meant that the other firms had a role to play. In terms of the execution, the firm of Keatinge & Ball was responsible for the engraving of the two high-denomination notes, the \$50 and \$100 bills, whereas Evans & Cogswell in Columbia, South Carolina, where the firm had relocated in January 1863, oversaw the work of the Scottish lithographers and engravers in executing the lower denominations from the \$1 to the \$20 bill.⁷⁷ The firms of B. Duncan and J. T. Paterson also assisted in the printing. Currency production ceased when Columbia fell to General William Sherman in February 1865.

From its inception, Confederate currency had begun by extolling Southern culture by turning to an established antebellum iconography, including allegorical personifications, and ended with Keatinge & Ball’s defense of the legitimacy of the new government through a seemingly unending supply of its officials, important state capitols, scenes of military resolve, and Mrs. Pickens as an inspiring muse. By standardizing this iconography, it created an authoritative image to give the Confederacy a sense of reliability and stability. Ironically, however, under Keatinge’s management, the money took on many of the qualities of the U.S. Legal Tender Notes, so the Confederacy was mirroring the approach of its implacable foe.

The \$1 note features a central portrait of Clement C. Clay, a senator for Alabama. Cotton plants and corn stalks cradle his image. On the \$2 note, Judah P. Benjamin, then the secretary of state, appears on the right. The \$5, \$10, and \$20 notes each have an oval portrait of a government official at the lower right—Memminger on the \$5 note, Hunter on the \$10, and Stephens on the \$20—but their central vignettes are given over to “portraits” of state capitols. The \$5 note (Figure 210) in all three of the last issues shows the state capitol at Richmond, the meeting place of the Confederate Congress (a variety of reddish-orange overlays



Figure 210. \$5 Note, Confederate States of America, Richmond, Va., 17 February 1864, 7.6 × 18 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

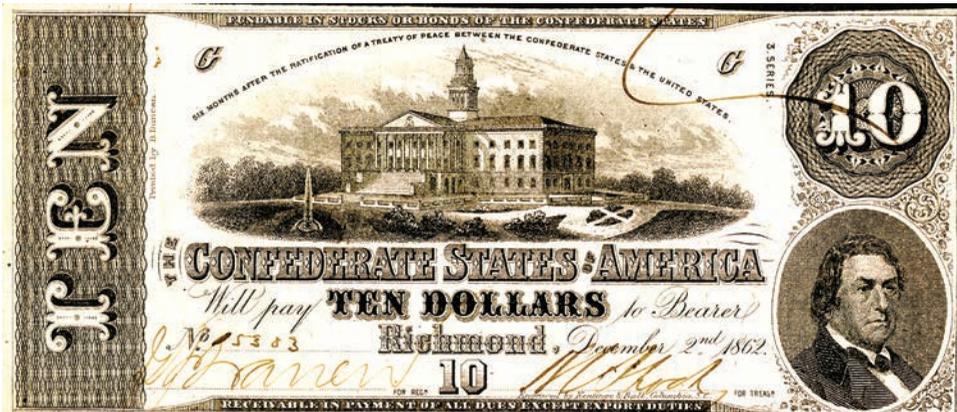


Figure 211. \$10 Note, Confederate States of America, Richmond, Va., 2 December 1862, 7.5 × 17.7 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

appear on all the Keatinge & Ball 1864 notes). This building is in effect what the U.S. Capitol was for the Union. The Stars and Bars flies over the apex of the pediments at both the building's front and rear. The \$10 note for 1862 (Figure 211) and 1863 shows the impressive state capitol of South Carolina, the first state to secede. The \$20 note (Figure 212) displays the state capitol in Nashville, Tennessee. In choosing state capitols, the government reaffirms its devotion to states' rights, even though in the aggregate the currency's imagery overwhelmingly supports Confederate nationalism.

Of the three buildings displayed, the reasons for selecting Tennessee's capitol are not at first readily apparent. Would not Alabama's capitol in Montgomery, given that was where the Confederate Congress first met, have been a better choice? In addition, the legislation authorizing these notes dates to 13 Octo-

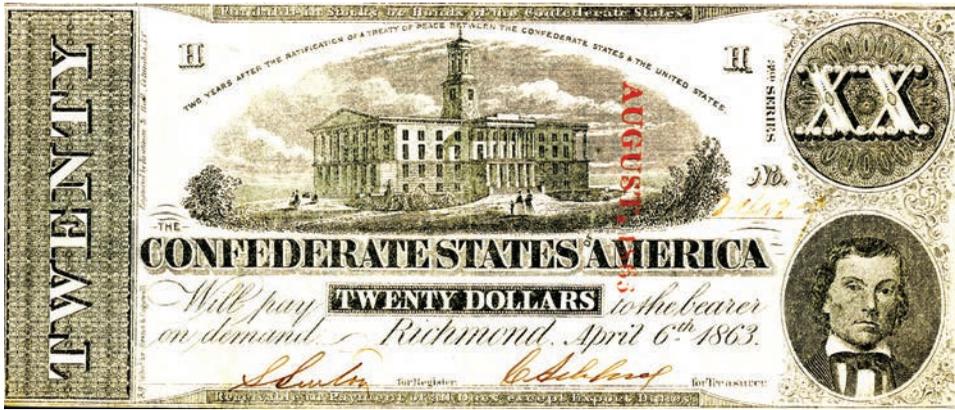


Figure 212. \$20 Note, Confederate States of America, Richmond, Va., 6 April 1863, 7.9×17.9 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

ber 1862, and Nashville had already fallen to the Union army on February 24 of that same year. Everett Cooper raises such pertinent questions, suggesting that the Treasury Department's decisions were not always well thought out, and once an image was in place, for reasons of expediency, it was likely to remain.⁷⁸ Yet Nashville's building did have substantial factors in its favor. The Alabama state capitol was already well represented in that state's own currency, and the Tennessee capitol was an important statement of the South's cultural heritage, having been designed by the well-regarded architect William Strickland, who had moved to Nashville from Philadelphia to supervise its construction. To not represent it would also suggest that the Confederacy had given up on its being retaken.

Together, the three buildings emphasize how the Confederacy was part of a cultural continuum rooted in the Greco-Roman tradition. Virginia's capitol building, designed by Thomas Jefferson and Charles Louis Clérissseau, was based on the Roman temple, the Maison Carrée, at Nîmes, France. Completed as early as 1788, it gave the South an antique pedigree unmatched at that time by any Northern public structure. In the case of South Carolina, its large, imposing building in the Greek Revival style had in fact not been completed. The proud tower rising from its center was never built, the structure after the war being topped by a shallow dome, an example of Roman architectural design. The Tennessee capitol also pays homage to Greek sources. Its lantern is an admiring copy of the Choragic Monument of Lysicrates in Athens, Greece, and, as seen in the bill, the spire of this lantern extends above the sky itself. The Tennessee State Capitol sits atop Capitol Hill, and a prewar vignette of it, executed in the 1850s by Danforth, Wright & Co., depicts the building, as seen from the hill's base, towering above its surroundings.⁷⁹ The Confederate vignette, on the other hand, depicts it from ground level, so that all three of the capitol buildings shown on Confederate currency are literally on equal footing.⁸⁰

With these three images of state capitols, the Confederacy proudly proclaims that it represents a cultured people, closely attuned to classical values and virtues. One should remember as well that these values encompassed slavery, both Athens and Rome having been slave-owning societies. Such a social structure, in which

enslaved people performed mundane tasks, was thought to have contributed to their greatness by allowing their citizens to devote more leisure time to cultural pursuits. All this, of course, conveniently ignored the fact that there is a wide gulf between the practice of slavery in the classical world and in the antebellum South. The first, not having been built on racist dogma, was much more receptive to manumission with its promise of integrating freed slaves into the larger culture. Even so, Southern Whites were only too happy to point to classical slavery and the elitist culture it fostered as affirming their own society, which they saw as being superior to the “petty” concerns of Northern shopkeepers.

All three state capitols, constructed in a classical vocabulary, occupy downtown sites, but the vignettes are careful to present them on their expansive grounds in bucolic isolation. These park settings are oases of inviting tranquility. A fountain shoots water high in the air on the Nashville grounds; couples and families stroll the Columbia grounds; two couples face one another in the foreground of the Richmond note, a woman and man on the left and two women on the right (what appears to be two more women are seen in the distance at the far right). These well-dressed people have ample leisure time in which to appreciate their nation’s superior cultural tastes. The grandeur of these buildings offers reassurance of the government’s authority and stability, and their peaceful settings suggest they oversee an idyllic land.

Jefferson Davis, the president of the Confederacy, continues to reign in splendid isolation on the \$50 note, whereas the \$100 note (Figure 213) features three vignettes. In the lower right corner is the by now requisite portrait of a government official—in this instance George W. Randolph, the secretary of war (despite having resigned his position on 17 November 1862, Randolph continued to appear on the 1863 and 1864 issues). Presumably taking its cue from the firm of B. Duncan, Keatinge & Ball inserted a portrait of Lucy Pickens in the note’s center. Wearing a cloak with ornate trim, her head set off by a white lace collar, Pickens offers an enchanting



Figure 213. \$100 Note, Confederate States of America, Richmond, Va., 2 December 1862, 7.9 × 18.6 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

vision of Southern womanhood. She wears a wreath as well in her hair. Adorned with this symbol of fertility and grace and seen in classical profile, she is both noble and resolute. “CONFEDERATE” provides an architectural frame sheltering her beneath an arch supported by two lintels composed of “States of” on the left and “America” on the right. Situated within this classical niche, she is cast in the role of a classical goddess.

For the first time, Confederate soldiers are included on currency, the armed forces more than the government better symbolizing the nation’s indomitable will and its hopes for independence. The vignette on the left of the \$100 note shows a seated young soldier wearing a cap and jacket and peering over a landscape that lies beyond the note’s frame. Standing next to him, looking in the same direction, is a much older bearded man. Both cradle rifles, the standing soldier with a bayonet affixed, and both are equipped with all the necessary paraphernalia.⁸¹

These well-appointed sentinels demonstrate that the full range of the South’s rank and file, both young and old, rallied to the cause. They stand guard, protecting Southern women in the form of Pickens and the government itself in the form of Randolph. Their watchful stance testifies that for them, this is not a war of aggression, which the Confederacy imputes to the North, but one of defense of the homeland.

The vignette is a creative adaptation of an earlier bank-note engraving by Baldwin, Bald & Cousland, New York/Bald, Cousland & Co., Philadelphia (BB&C/BC), as can be seen on the \$2 note of the Canastota Bank, Canastota, New York (Figure 214), which shows two Revolutionary War soldiers in similar poses. (The Confederate vignette in Figure 213 even copies without alteration the rocks and vegetation at the standing soldier’s feet.) The biggest change is to the seated soldier, who instead of holding a pipe in his right hand (as seen in the bank-note vignette in Figure 214), now shields his eyes, a sign of watchful vigilance rather than repose.⁸² This borrowing from the bank-note vignette associates the Confederate sentinels with Revolutionary War patriots, who had successfully fought for liberty and independence against an external, formidable, tyrannical foe.

In 1864, the central vignette in the \$10 note changes from the South Carolina state capitol to an image of an artillery unit galloping to join batteries that are already firing their cannons (Figure 215). The waiting sentinels of the \$100 bill are now accompanied by a rapid mobile force responding to an immediate threat. Of this vignette, H. D. Allen writes, “In the center, [is a] picture of an artillery reinforcement, said to be General Braxton Bragg’s Artillery in action.”⁸³ He suggests two possibilities as to which battlefield is intended: Murfreesboro, 30 December 1862 to 2 January 1863 or Chickamauga, 18–20 September 1863. Because the latter was a major Confederate victory, it is the more likely of the two. In addition, the hilly terrain seen in the background also points to Chickamauga, which is in the mountainous region of northwestern Georgia just outside Chattanooga, Tennessee. Before Eadweard Muybridge’s experimentation with stop-action photography, galloping horses, as is the case here, were shown with front and back legs fully extended. To modern eyes, this “rocking horse” gait seems archaic, but to the 1864 viewer it effectively conveyed speed. Yet amid the commotion and eminent danger, the stalwart soldiers riding the horses and the caisson remain poised and calm, in complete control as they respond to the task at hand.



Figure 214. Sheet of four notes (\$1, \$1, \$2, \$5), Canastota Bank, Canastota, N.Y., 1850s, 31 × 18 cm (punch-canceled proofs). National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

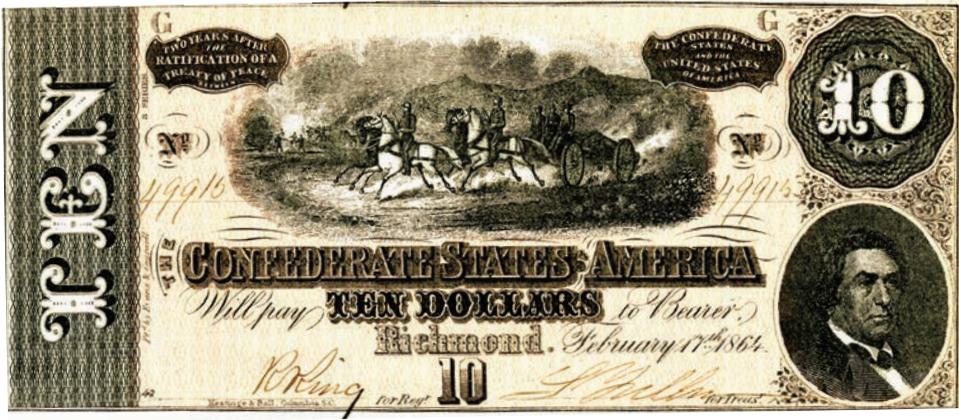


Figure 215. \$10 Note, Confederate States of America, Richmond, Va., 17 February 1864, 7.5 × 17.6 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

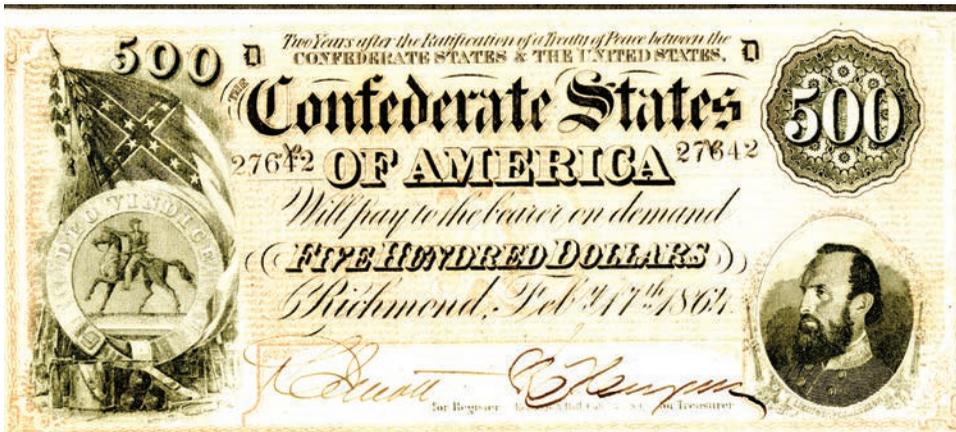


Figure 216. \$500 Note, Confederate States of America, Richmond, Va., 17 February 1864, 8 × 18.5 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

Keatinge & Ball introduced in 1864 what for them was a new denomination: the \$500 note (Figure 216). This was the last new bill to enter the Confederate repertoire. The vignette at the right inscribed “LIEUT. GENL. T. J. JACKSON” is the only portrait of a Civil War general to appear in either the North or South during the time the war was waged.⁸⁴ General “Stonewall” Jackson had proved himself a brilliant tactician, both on his own in the Shenandoah Valley Campaign and as Robert E. Lee’s finest and boldest commander in the Army of Northern Virginia. Jackson died on 10 May 1863 from complications from pneumonia after he had been shot by his own men on the first evening of the Battle of Chancellorsville, when they had mistaken his reconnoitering party for Union cavalrymen. His passing ensured his heroic, iconic status as a martyr in this epic struggle. Upside-down torches flank his portrait, their light, soon to be extinguished, symbolizing death, but

the blooming vines accompanying them give promise of a rebirth into a new life. The handling of Jackson's portrait differs from all others appearing on Confederate currency in that the background becomes progressively lighter as it travels upward (the portrait is based on a photograph by David Cowell, which has a neutral background). It is as if the heavens have opened, with a divine radiance enshrining and blessing him for eternity. Thus, even within this limited format, the designer suggests a stirring apotheosis.

Looking at the other portraits on Confederate currency, it is easier to see how Jackson fits into this pantheon. From the beginning, Keatinge & Ball repeated the same official on the denomination on which he first appeared. Interestingly, in the three instances in which government officials were introduced on bills, the firm B. Duncan employed the same identities as did Keatinge & Ball. Its use of Judah P. Benjamin after he had become secretary of state on its \$2 note even precedes Keatinge & Ball's use of the same dignitary on its design for this denomination. In general, the higher the official's ranking, the larger the denomination on which he appears. From early on, Confederate Secretary of the Treasury Memminger occupied \$5 notes; Secretary of State Hunter the \$10 notes; Vice President Stephens, \$20 notes; and President Davis, \$50 notes. Keatinge & Ball assigned Clement Clay, a senator, the \$1 note, and although it placed Secretary of War Randolph on the \$100 note, it was Lucy Pickens's portrait that was paramount. The use of Davis in the form of a classical cameo on the 50-cent note made him the only government official after December 1862 to appear on two different denominations. That Keatinge & Ball produced a \$500 note toward the end of the war is an indication that rampant inflation had created a need for a large denomination (it should be remembered that the \$500 and \$1000 notes of the Montgomery issue were interest bearing and more for investment purposes than for circulation). In choosing General Jackson for such a high denomination, Keatinge & Ball unhesitatingly awarded him its highest honor.

On the \$500 note's left-hand side is a rendering of the Great Seal of the Confederate States of America, which was formally adopted on 30 April 1863. At the seal's center is Thomas Crawford's equestrian statue of George Washington erected in Richmond in 1858, a Southern counterpoint to his statue *Freedom* conceived for the dome of the U.S. Capitol. Both the North and South embraced Washington, a military hero and the first president of the United States, as the most important member of the national patrimony. The South also could exalt Washington as a Virginian and a slaveholder, who oversaw at Mount Vernon an ambitious plantation economy. The vignette, however, takes liberties with Crawford's monument. In the seal and the statue, Washington, wearing his military uniform, points the way forward, as he commandingly looks off to his left. In the vignette, he still points forward but now looks back. In addition, in the vignette, the steed's hind legs are more dynamically positioned. These adjustments suggest that the general is summoning us to follow him into battle. The martial belt, which acts as a frame, is inscribed "DEO VINDICI" (Under God, Our Vindicator), a deliberately stronger reference to the deity than that found in the Great Seal of the United States.⁸⁵ The vignette's seal rests on an array of military items (stacked rifles with bayonets, a drum atop which is a sword, cannon balls, a bugle, more rifles backed up by a cannon). Above it is a dynamic rendering of the Stainless Banner, which had replaced the Stars and Bars as the national flag on 1 May 1863

(this flag's first official use was to drape the coffin of General Jackson, when his body lay in state in the Virginia Capitol). In the upper left corner of the flag is the Southern Cross, the army's battle flag, here curiously adorned with twelve rather than the expected thirteen stars (with Jackson's death has the missing central star been extinguished?). The rest of the flag's field is white, making it dull to reproduce, but the flag wraps around the seal so that the Southern Cross portion dominates.

Unlike the other bills in the Keatinge & Ball series (excluding the \$1 and \$2 notes), the \$500 note has no printing on its back. The "Chemicograph" plates created by S. Straker and Sons, London, include for this denomination a splendid allegory of Victory with wings spread wide, holding a palm branch in each hand while standing on a globe. The bold Straker designs offered imaginative, colorful allegories on a large scale, which would have filled the backs of the bills with impressive, symmetrical designs. In their approach, they exhibit a different sensibility from that displayed in the additive construction seen in the composition of the faces. Their elaborate symbolism would have as well energized the notes' overall content and appearance. But when the plates were lost to the Confederacy, it is telling that Keatinge & Ball refrained from supplying the \$500 note with a drab substitute, choosing instead to let the face appear unaccompanied by a back design. In this way, the note stands as an undiluted, solemn valediction to what was soon to be called "The Lost Cause." It represents a fierce martial spirit, a God-fearing purpose, and a heartfelt devotion to the nobility of sacrifice. This splendidly elegiac \$500 note, reflecting both glory and loss, provides a fitting capstone to the Confederacy's national currency.

The 1896 Series of Silver Certificates

Reimagining High Art's Role in U.S. Paper Money

Soon after the close of the Civil War, state-chartered bank notes and related paper currency that had formerly been printed in abundance was taxed out of existence. Initially, the major New York printing firms played the dominant role in the production of the federal government's paper money, but the government's Bureau of Engraving and Printing, which the Treasury Department created in 1862, gradually took over full control until, by 1877, it was the sole producer. The government's standards were high in terms of the level of the engravers' skills, but the overall designs sometimes lacked the idiosyncratic charm and imaginative energy of the earlier bank notes.

In 1893, Grover Cleveland appointed Claude M. Johnson as the Bureau's director. In that same year, he began efforts to upgrade the quality of the nation's paper-money design. In the following year, Johnson wrote in a report to John G. Carlisle, the secretary of the Treasury, what he hoped to accomplish: "Bank notes prepared twenty-five years ago are as finely engraved as those of to-day, but the designs, as a rule, are weak and meaningless. The conventional design for bank notes which has been used for many years appears to be wholly lacking in artistic merit, consisting of a patchwork of engraving, including portrait, title and the lathework counters, having no connection with each other."¹ In stressing the interdependence of all the elements, with the beauty of the pictorial vignette being paramount, Johnson's comment reflects, in part, W. L. Ormsby's criticisms about bank-note design.

Johnson's intention was to issue nine new notes in what became the 1896 Silver Certificates series. Bypassing the Bureau's skilled stable of professionals, he commissioned three New York artists to provide designs of artistic excellence, with the artists receiving \$800 for each approved design: Will Low, the \$1 and \$2 notes; Edwin Blashfield, the \$50 note; and Walter Shirlaw, the \$5 and \$10 notes. Ultimately, only three notes were issued: Will Low's \$1 bill, Edwin Blashfield's \$50 note reconceived as a \$2 note, and Walter Shirlaw's \$5 note.² These three artists had much in common: all of them had undergone extensive training in Europe; they were members of respected American art institutions; and in terms of their work as muralists and illustrators for journals and books, they had proved themselves adept at cooperating with others, such as architects, patrons, and publishers.³ Johnson also recruited from New York Thomas Morris, a designer rather than an engraver, making him the chief of the Bureau's Engraving Division. Morris reported to the Bureau on 1 November 1893, where he became a key player in overseeing the notes' execution.

In art, the term “American Renaissance” is often applied to the last decades of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth. “Renaissance,” which means rebirth, captures America’s sense of optimism and confidence after it had recovered from the traumatic events of the Civil War. The mobilization for war had greatly sped up the process by which it was to become a global industrial power. In painting, Renaissance also carries connotations of the Italian High Renaissance, alluding to the nation’s artistic connection to its European past. The High Renaissance saw the rebirth of the “universal” truths of classical antiquity, values that American culture had embraced from its inception but were now becoming ever more confidently expressed in its art.

Johnson’s reaching out to mainstream artists reflects the excitement and pride in America’s cultural achievements. One of the factors that may have inspired him to attempt this ambitious departure was the highly successful reception accorded the World’s Columbian Exposition held in Chicago in 1893. This exposition in honor of the 400th anniversary of Columbus’s “discovery” of America had an enormous impact, including stimulating the commissioning of murals in public spaces. Perhaps the most noteworthy of the participants was Blashfield, who was particularly lauded for his imagery on the dome of the Fair’s Manufacturers and Liberal Arts Building.

For the Bureau’s bills, the artists were responsible for the notes’ faces, executing for each a large semi-monochromatic oil painting. Fortunately, all three *modelli* for the bills that were issued have survived. Once approved, these preparatory studies were photographed and then reduced in stages, “about seventy times,” to achieve the bill’s actual size.⁴ Intended to be seen unequivocally as fine art, the fronts of these bills, including the intricate decorative borders and complex lettering, were engraved entirely by hand. In a reversal of usual practice, portraits were relegated to the back, where lathework was also introduced as an impediment to counterfeiting. As was customary, the faces were printed in black ink and the backs predominantly in green.

These patriotic images were intended to participate in America’s becoming a world leader, whose democratic culture could aspire to the sophistication and grandeur embodied in the classical ideals of European elites. The rulers of European governments had long used art as a means of proclaiming their values and their right to rule, and even if only in the limited venue of paper money, it was time for the U.S. government to support artists more vigorously in the celebration and definition of its perception of its place in the world. Because of their didactic content, which instructs viewers about America’s role in civilization’s progress, the notes are often referred to as the “Educational Series.”

An article that appeared in the *New York Times* just weeks before the release of the three notes (the article focuses on the \$1 and \$5 notes, as the \$2 note was still being prepared) supported Johnson’s decision to depart from standard procedures: “The fashion of reproducing in the centre of the face of the notes reproductions of paintings, such as the ‘Landing of Columbus,’ and other historical paintings from Government buildings in Washington, and elsewhere, and surrounding this centre composition by a series of conventional lathe turns, together with rigid lettering and figuring went out of vogue with the present Administration.”⁵ The writer enthusiastically endorsed the goal of “interjecting a little more of art and less of old-fashioned stiffness into the designs for paper money.”

This book's bias in focusing on vignettes as an art form that can be considered in its own right should not obscure the larger point that the making of paper money is a collaborative effort, not just in terms of the engraving of the designs and their printing but also in terms of the bills' treatment of the numerous other features. Accompanied by a large cast of engravers, Thomas Morris orchestrated the whole by overseeing the notes' overall design and conception. As pointed out by the *New York Times* article, not only was the work spread out over many engravers, but the allegories were the primary focus:

One man, Mr. [G. F. C.] Smillie . . . puts all his time upon the central composition [Charles Schlecht also played an important role in the engraving of the central designs]. Another man takes a figure, another a group of letters, a third a portion of the scroll, so that the work is thus divided up among fifteen or twenty men, and is accomplished with care and rapidity. The central composition of the face of the note, however, is so important that upon the engraving of that much more time of course is expended than upon all the remainder of the face. . . . Sometimes the centre engraving has been returned twenty or thirty times for important changes.⁶

In the case of the face of the \$5 note, no less than seven different engravers were involved in executing the peripheral elements surrounding the main design. Thus, the professional excellence of the Bureau's resources is one reason that these notes have been considered the finest produced by the United States government.

The ambitious nature of this concept brought its own set of problems. There was friction between the artists and the engravers, each group bringing to the project a different set of expectations. The tensions between the perceptions of what constitutes high art and what constitutes low art again come to the fore. At least one artist worried that bank-note imagery did not fall within his definition of high art. Walter Shirlaw, who had himself been a bank-note engraver early in his career, was now contemptuous of his former profession, feeling "that note designing was abasing."⁷ In contrast to "pure art work," he undertook the Bureau's commission only to supplement his income. The engravers, for their part, objected to the elaborate nature of the artists' compositions, feeling that their complexity would prove unsuitable when reduced and transferred to a much smaller size. From their perspective, the treatment of the content of the subject matter belonged more to the conventions of mural painting than to those of security printing, and they feared that the underlying meanings of the allegories might not be readily apparent.

Johnson's bold departure in his approach to the nation's paper money resulted in an important milestone in the enhancement of its artistic potential. Despite an awareness of its low-art status, this imagery still provided an opportunity to inculcate in the larger public the high-minded ideals of academic art. Reaching a much larger audience than mural painting could, "filthy lucre" could provide the means to educate and elevate the general public's sense of refinement, taste and virtue.

Will Low: Educating America's Youth in Its Nation's Values

Will H. Low (1853–1932) was born in Albany, New York, and after traveling to New York City when he was a young teenager, he worked as an illustrator for

several journals. After his talents had singled him out for better things, from 1873 to 1877, he studied art in Paris, where, primarily under the tutelage of Jean Léon Gérôme, he absorbed the academic principles of high art. He returned to New York and, less than a decade later, in 1886, he again traveled abroad for more than a year. Well educated in the art of painting and well connected—he had a talent for fostering friendships with notable peers—he enjoyed a successful career as an artist, teacher, and writer.

Low signed his preparatory study (Figure 217) in the lower right corner, using a block style imitating engraved lettering: “DESIGNED BY WILL H. LOW ENGRAVED AT BUREAU OF ENGRAVING AND PRINTING BY [unintelligible markings as the engraver had not yet been assigned].” His allegory and basic composition remain substantially unchanged in the \$1 note as printed (Figure 218). Morris, however, did make beneficial alterations to the design’s subordinate details. In addition, the placement of the names of the famous men providing the architectural frame underwent extensive reshuffling, changes that were conceptual rather than visual. For example, the first four names in the upper left-hand side originally honored the Civil War heroes Farragut, Sherman, Grant, and Lincoln, who in the note are relegated to the lower, vertical registers, thereby preserving the upper register for earlier, more senior worthies.⁸ In addition, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow was added to this group of luminaries at the expense of Edgar Allan Poe, further strengthening the New England contingent at the South’s expense. Given the engravers’ arguments that the compositions were too dense, making for images that were too dark and susceptible to smudging, it is surprising that the bill is considerably darker than the modello. Perhaps this can be explained, in part, by the canvas later having undergone too rigorous a cleaning.



Figure 217. Preparatory study for the 1896 \$1 note, Will H. Low, oil on canvas, 41.9×82.6 cm (framed). Bureau of Engraving and Printing, Washington, D.C.



Figure 218. \$1 Silver certificate, United States of America, Washington, D.C., series of 1896, 7.5 × 17.9 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

Whereas the modello is untitled, the note supplies one for the viewer, making sure its subject matter cannot be misconstrued. At the top of the “marble” block protruding slightly from the bench appears “HISTORY INSTRUCTING YOUTH.” The figure of History, whose head is adorned with a laurel wreath, wears a garment that alludes to the American flag, associating her with America or Columbia. She instructs a young shepherd boy, leaning on a staff, on the meaning of the vista of Washington, D.C., stretching out before them. Her pointing finger also overlaps with the banner inscribed “UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,” the only time in the series of three bills that the nation’s full name is given. The imagery contains references to the classical past, including the Roman fasces, with a laurel wreath encircling it, next to the boy’s leg. The boy himself alludes to this tradition: his dress (or more accurately undress) and his occupation hark back to an earlier classical Arcadian tradition. He evokes as well biblical associations, such as that of the young David as a shepherd boy or even a youthful Jesus as the Good Shepherd. Behind the figure’s meaning lies the Jeffersonian ideal of America as a prosperous, agrarian society, a nation of independent herders and farmers who live in close harmony with the land in opposition to the urban wage earners and the captains of industry. Well versed in academic training, Low had a great deal of experience in sketching from life, and in this figure, there is a tension between the idealized, ennobling forms of the grand-manner tradition and the sense of an actual studio model.

The foreground is staged within a Roman-inspired setting. The marble dais framed by elegantly curving walls has no back in order to open up the vista. Given its ornate decorations and austere, hard surfaces, it is simultaneously luxurious and coldly monumental. Laurel bushes sprout up behind the platform, and the end of the palm frond reclining on the open book containing the Constitution points to the word “AMERICA.” Even the viewer with only a rudimentary knowledge of the city of Washington’s typography would know this view is firmly grounded on an actual hilltop, the site of Arlington House, the former home of General Robert E. Lee and his wife Mary Custis Lee, whose estate during the

Civil War had been turned into Arlington National Cemetery. This is hallowed ground that speaks to the sacrifices made to maintain the Union.

By darkening the sky above his panoramic view, Low enhances the brightness of the reflective waters of the Potomac and highlights three structures as well in the background. Most prominent is the Washington Monument, which, completed in 1884, stands for the presidency (the executive branch in the form of the White House is not emphasized). Tellingly, Low also deemphasizes church steeples, letting the federal structures stand out from their surroundings. The second highlighted structure is the Capitol building, crowning Capitol Hill, a symbol of both the legislative branch and the judicial branch, the Supreme Court continuing to meet there until it moved to its own building in 1935. The third structure Low highlights is the Library of Congress, whose top is seen just behind and to the right of the Capitol building. This building was in the process of being erected when Low was at work on his view, and the library, a national institution devoted to the preservation and imparting of knowledge, is central to the artist's theme of the importance of instruction. The books in the note's lower corners and the scroll at the lower left, which provide information about the note, continue this educational theme. Of course, the most important book of all is that containing the Constitution with its promise that this is a nation founded on laws establishing the rights of its citizens and the limits on government's power. Together, the three highlighted structures chart a historical progression from the obelisk, a design inspired by the ancient Egyptians (Egyptian obelisks also form an essential part of Rome's fabric), to the classical architecture of the U.S. Capitol, to the High Renaissance, Italianate architecture of the Library of Congress. These sources of Western civilization are founding blocks for the new republic that Low lays out before the youth and the note's viewer.

The industrial chimney belching out a thin stream of black smoke at the base of Capitol Hill strikes the only discordant note, one that the artist could easily have edited out of this otherwise pristine scene. The success of the "White City" constructed for the World's Columbian Exposition held in Chicago in 1893 had inspired the City Beautiful Movement, as Americans were galvanized by what stately, large-scale city planning could accomplish. Low's retention of the polluting smoke may have been intended as a challenge to Congress to clean up the heart of the nation's capital.⁹

The frame surrounding three sides contains laurel wreaths that enshrine the names of some of America's famous men. In another example of civil religion, these outstanding representatives in their chosen fields provide worthy models for America's youth to emulate. The honoring of famous men has a long pedigree, stretching back to classical times and often appears in civic decoration. Three names are given prominence by being separated out in the upper center border: George Washington, occupying the center, is flanked by Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin. Accompanying this distinguished triumvirate are four clusters containing five names each. Running along the upper left border are Robert Fulton, the inventor; John C. Calhoun, South Carolina senator; Henry Clay, Kentucky senator; and presidents Andrew Jackson and John Adams. To the right of the top border are Alexander Hamilton, first secretary of the Treasury; Commodore Perry, the naval hero of the War of 1812; John Marshall, the distinguished Chief Justice of the Supreme Court; Noah Webster, lexicographer and author;

and Samuel F. B. Morse, who, although having begun his career as an artist, is part of this group based on his work as an inventor. From top to bottom on the left-hand side are James Fenimore Cooper, novelist; Washington Irving, author; Abraham Lincoln, sixteenth president of the United States; General William Tecumseh Sherman; and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, poet. To the right are Nathaniel Hawthorne, novelist; George Bancroft, historian; Ulysses S. Grant, Civil War general and eighteenth president of the United States; Admiral David Farragut; and Ralph Waldo Emerson, essayist and poet.¹⁰ Government officials are well represented, including six presidents. In the arts, however, only America's literary achievements are honored, a selection dominated by writers and poets from New York and New England. At the lower left, one glimpses a portion of yet another wreath, inviting the viewer to create his or her own selection. One commentator welcomed this more expansive range of professions, writing that this was "an innovation on former methods, where only American Generals and her politicians were represented."¹¹

On the back, encompassed in an ornate frame with elaborate details, oval pendant portraits of Martha and George Washington continue the theme of famous Americans, in this instance exalting family values. From 1861 to the present, if one excludes the image of Pocahontas in the engraving of John Chapman's painting, which appears on the back of the National Bank Note series' \$20 bill (see Figure 158), Martha Washington is the only woman to have her portrait appear on federal currency.¹²

Edwin Blashfield: Science's Role in America's Advancement

Edwin Howland Blashfield (1848–1936) was the most prominent of the three commissioned artists. Born in New York City, he enrolled at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology to study engineering but soon abandoned that profession to become an artist. In 1867 at age eighteen, he traveled to Paris to study with Léon Bonnat, remaining in Europe until 1881. His grounding in academic art and his extensive European travels prepared him well when he later became America's most prominent muralist.

For the Educational Series of 1896, Blashfield composed an allegory for the \$50 note (Figure 219). However, after Low's design for the \$2 note had been rejected, the Treasury Department decided, much to Blashfield's chagrin, to convert his \$50 note to a



Figure 219. Preparatory study for the 1896 \$50 note (later altered to become the \$2 note), Edwin Blashfield, oil on canvas, 70.5×141.9 cm (framed). Bureau of Engraving and Printing, Washington, D.C.



Figure 220. \$2 Silver certificate, United States of America, Washington, D.C., series of 1896, 7.6 × 17.9 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

\$2 bill (Figure 220).¹³ Aware that his audience might need help in “reading” his image, Blashfield provided a title, which in his modello forms a long base for his allegory and which is still present but downsized in the note: “SCIENCE PRESENTING STEAM AND ELECTRICITY TO COMMERCE AND MANUFACTURE.”¹⁴ Given that electricity is linked with commerce and steam with manufacture, and given the Western predilection of reading from left to right, the title is more coherently rendered as “Science Presenting Electricity and Steam to Commerce and Manufacture.”¹⁵ A regal Science commandingly sits in the note’s center dramatically encircled by the bold use of white unmarked paper. The young boy personifying Electricity holds an electromagnet in his left hand, whereas the boy personifying Steam rests his left hand on a machine’s throttle. Commerce wears a classicizing dress containing a decorative floral pattern appropriate to her prosperous status. A bag of money, marked with a dollar sign, sits beside her. Manufacture touches what appears to be textiles folded in front of her, as both figures, in mannered poses, are shown participating in America’s economic growth and vitality. The symmetrical, hierarchical composition occupies a shallow stage—Manufacture’s knee and clothing even protrude slightly over the platform’s edge.

There are only minor differences between Blashfield’s design for the face of the \$50 note and the note as printed. Morris introduced modifications to the decorative frame, changing the denomination and introducing a more elegant, compact, shaded lettering. He also no longer allowed the palm fringe to encroach on the “D” of “UNITED” or on the first “S” of “STATES.” In addition, he gave the note’s borders a stronger patterned definition that greatly enhances the whole.

One can better understand the reason why Blashfield chose Science as his main protagonist by considering his decorations for the dome in the Library of Congress, on which he was working at the same time.¹⁶ Following on the success of the grand (but temporary) Beaux Arts buildings at Chicago’s Columbian Exposition, Congress voted to fund a magnificent structure for its library in the Italian Renaissance style. It also supported an ambitious decorative program, involving a host of artists and sculptors, with the government providing substantial support



Figure 221. Segment of the mural on the collar of the dome in the Library of Congress Reading Room, Edwin Blashfield, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

for artistic decorations. Blashfield received the plum commission, being given the task of decorating the dome and lantern, which soar above the main reading room at the center of this large complex. Around the dome’s collar, he depicted the Evolution of Civilization,¹⁷ employing twelve figures representing civilization’s progress, beginning with ancient Egypt, which stands for “Written Records,” and culminating in America, who is a male figure representing “Science” (Figure 221). Science/America assumes a pose of deep, melancholic contemplation, for which Albrecht Dürer’s 1514 engraving *Melencolia I* is the prototype. His right hand rests on a book he has been pondering, and his legs straddle an electric dynamo that gives witness to America’s ongoing advancement in electrical studies (Blashfield signs the mural at the base of this dynamo). Blashfield purposely gave his personification the features of Abraham Lincoln, demonstrating that there is a moral dimension to America’s scientific exploration—with knowledge comes responsibility.¹⁸ Thus, the artist’s figure of Science in the \$2 note is fraught with larger connotations. Like Science/America in the Library of Congress, she is preternaturally solemn, and her eyes are closed. She is seeing with her mind’s eye, and we, the handlers of these notes, are invited to imagine the profundity of her thoughts.

Embroidered on the hem of Science’s dark robe are signs of the Zodiac, beginning with Aries, which traditionally begins the Zodiac calendar, and running through Leo. In this way, the artist associates Science with a cosmic harmony—with the passing of the years, more of nature’s secrets are revealed to humankind.

This dark robe also effectively anchors the composition, and Science's dark hair provides a needed contrast to the bright background. The shade of the hair of the other four figures in the lower register follows from left to right a rhyming pattern: dark, light, dark, light, as they progress in synchronized harmony.

Blashfield's allegory is a self-conscious attempt to revive specific examples of Italian High Renaissance art and their attendant meanings. Earlier bank-note engravers had taken pictures from the old masters and made them relevant to their new context by adjusting their details. Blashfield's approach is more holistic. Having fully absorbed the old-master "vocabulary," he is able to imitate its principles without copying specific compositions. His use of symmetry and the triangular composition of the dominating central woman with two children look to such models as those of Raphael. Underlying the whole is Science as the Madonna, Electricity as the Christ Child, and the slightly older Steam as St. John the Baptist. The seated figures of Commerce and Manufacture, each forming their own framing triangles, are the accompanying saints in a *sacre conversazione*, who respectfully look up to the central sacred figure. The circular background evokes the tondo form, and the palm fronds bordering the circle recall religious subjects, where they symbolize peace and humankind's ultimate victory over death. By looking back to these sacred traditions, Blashfield achieves a high-minded solemnity, infusing his ensemble with a meditative monumentality that is grounded in the older truths promulgated by Christian art and artists.

Walter Shirlaw: America's Leadership in Lighting the Way

Walter Shirlaw (1838–1909) was born in Scotland to American parents and returned with them to the United States when he was three. At the age of twelve, he was apprenticed to Rawdon, Wright, Hatch & Edson, giving him firsthand experience in engraving currency (one of the vignettes he engraved is *Columbus Discovering America* [see Figure 156]).¹⁹ Around 1860, Shirlaw joined the Western Note Engraving Company in Chicago, but his desire to become a painter led him to return after six years to New York. Then, in 1870, he traveled to Munich to study with German masters, remaining in Europe for almost eight years, settling again in New York on his return in 1877. Like Blashfield, he executed murals both for the Manufacturers and Liberal Arts Building of the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 and for the Library of Congress three years later.

Shirlaw's conception for the 1896 \$5 Silver Certificate (Figure 222) is a dazzling, bravura performance. The fact that he had begun as an apprentice to a bank-note engraving firm obviously paid dividends. The artist integrates classical and modern into a dynamic and seamless whole. His sense of scale, the sublimity of his conception of the figure of America holding up Electricity to light the world, and his dramatic staging create a majesty and grandeur not often seen in such a small format. His image bursts with energy. Lightning bolts, radiating beams of light, and fluttering ribbons animate the whole. On one side, a charging chariot is about to exit the stage, while on the other, an enormous building is only partially seen. The animated design trends from left to right, but is stabilized by its grand central figure, even if she is perilously perched on top of the globe. Holding an incandescent lightbulb in her right hand, this winged personification of America stands on that portion of the globe directly above the nation that she repre-



Figure 222. Preparatory study for the 1896 \$5 note, Walter Shirlaw, oil on canvas, 60.3×127 cm (framed). Bureau of Engraving and Printing, Washington, D.C.

sents. The artist based her pose on the celebrated Hellenistic statue *Winged Victory* in the Louvre, and he intended her holding up the light as a reference to the *Statue of Liberty* in New York Harbor. At her side is the American eagle, his talons planted on the site of Washington, D.C. Precariously seated on the globe to the left of America is Fame, with her trumpet to her lips.²⁰ With theatrical flair, Shirlaw frames his allegory within an elaborate proscenium arch, but this arch cannot contain the Baroque exuberance of his composition. The lightbulb overlaps the upper border, and Fame's left foot comes close to breaking through the lower frame. Both the artist and the Bureau felt comfortable enough with the clarity of the design's meaning that they dispensed with an inscribed title.

In the note as printed (Figure 223), Morris played a significant role in changing for the better aspects of Shirlaw's original design. By lowering the boxes at the bottom, he expanded the allegory's base. In addition, he transformed Shirlaw's proscenium arch, replacing its hard, defining edges with an orgy of organic forms and twisting scrolls that better integrate the allegory to its surroundings. Branches of laurel are introduced on the left and of oak on the right, the first a symbol of honor and victory and the second of strength and endurance. Within the medallion, the female figures are bare-breasted, but their covering in the note is almost transparent. Changes are made to the light: there is no longer a reflector behind the bulb, and the bulb's jagged rays are altered to straight ones. In addition, the light no longer obscures the lettering along the top edge, as Morris parts the inscription to allow for full legibility, although he allows America's right wing, which is on the note's left-hand side, to overlap the "D" in "UNITED."

On the allegory's left is Jupiter wielding thunderbolts in his raised right hand, and thunderbolts compose the reins with which he controls the three horses (presumably Shirlaw chose to depict a triga rather than the more usual quadriga to avoid including eight forelegs, which would have been two too many). Implausibly but effectively, the chariot is composed of clouds. Although thunderbolts are one of Jupiter's attributes, this figure also strongly evokes Apollo in terms of his youthful appearance and laurel crown, making for a more inclusive classical hybrid.



Figure 223. \$5 Silver certificate, United States of America, Washington, D.C., series of 1896, 7.6×17.8 cm. National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

Jupiter/Apollo looks at America at the same time he is driving his horses out of the frame to the left, denoting that the past continues to recede from the present.²¹ The classical god wields nature’s rough, jagged thunderbolts, whereas American Electricity has harnessed this raw energy, producing by way of contrast straight beams of a “purer,” more constant light. Classical principles are still there in the sources for the figures, but America is no longer so dependent on the Greco-Roman past. A new civilization of even greater splendor and consequence is announcing itself on the world’s stage.

Springing up on the right is a female whose right hand is on a scrolled document, presumably the Constitution, as her raised left hand points upward. America and Fame look toward her, as she represents the soaring future. The dove above her, a symbol of peace, holds in its beak a twisting, fluttering ribbon that mimics the god’s lightning at the left. Despite the Capitol building’s large size, by dramatically revealing only portions of the whole, Shirlaw does not allow it to become too intrusive. Thomas Crawford’s *Freedom* again stands watch over the nation’s legislators and Supreme Court justices, who will be instrumental in overseeing the way to an ever more glorious future.

The note’s back (Figure 224) ensures that no one would mistake America’s support of peace on the bill’s face for a lack of military resolve. Ulysses S. Grant is on the left in his role as president, but the inclusion of General Philip Sheridan on the right reminds one of Grant’s military service as well. The head of another image of Victory looks out at the viewer with fierce resolve.²² Bristling forms recalling pointed swords appear beneath her spread wings.²³ The Roman numeral “V” in the shield in the note’s center does double duty, as in this context it also stands for “Victory.”

Although introducing no identifiable historical figures on the note’s face, the artist references all three of America’s great inventors who contributed to the understanding of electricity’s properties and benefits. The cord that zigzags down from the lightbulb with its end touching one of the bolts of lightning recalls Franklin’s kite string that channeled lightning in a thunderstorm. The capitol, in



Figure 224. Back of Figure 223.

its turn, is a reminder of Morse. With congressional funding, he sent from Washington to Baltimore on 24 May 1844 the first telegraph message over a long-distance system. Finally, the dominant lightbulb recalls Thomas Edison’s ongoing efforts to light up the world. Whereas America literally provides light to help dispel night’s darkness, she also figuratively brings the Enlightenment—the light of liberty, freedom, and democracy—to the world at large. As a light to the nations, she will help dispel the darkness of error and superstition that has for so long retarded humanity’s progress.



For the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, the Educational Series proved to be a difficult endeavor with only three of the projected nine notes being issued.²⁴ Plans were made to “correct the major deficiencies of over-black faces [‘faces’ here means the fronts of the notes] and insufficient light and shadow contrasts.”²⁵ But after the election of a new administration, President William McKinley, a Republican, replaced Carlisle with Lyman J. Gage as secretary of the Treasury. On 3 May 1897, it was announced that the notes would be withdrawn from circulation. One of the reasons given in an article in the *Detroit Free Press* was that “after a little handling they [the notes] became dingy and blurred; and the experts declared that no money ever had been printed that made it so difficult to distinguish the spurious from the genuine.”²⁶ The *New York Times* article, published in 1896 just before the notes’ release, had already commented on the security-printing professionals’ jaundiced view: “The bank-note people, however, were opposed to the plan. They thought the substitution of an original set of designs for the copies of paintings now in use would, contrary to Mr. Johnson’s expressed opinion, not be safe from counterfeiting. They thought, too, that the artists who would be engaged to prepare the designs . . . could not appreciate the real necessities of the situation from an artistic or practical standpoint.”²⁷ Obviously, the engravers did not take kindly to this encroachment on their area of expertise, and the counterfeiting argument made in 1896 and again in 1897 may have been, in part, a self-fulfilling prophecy. Bank tellers also had their complaints, arguing that so much emphasis was put on the allegories that the numerals were given short shrift, making the denominations too indistinct. The notes were soon replaced by the Silver

Certificates series of 1899, a series that was created by the Bureau's staff and employs simpler designs.²⁸

Members of the public also weighed in, complaining about too much nudity.²⁹ Shirlaw was known for his enticing females, and despite the idealized nature of his figures, they were criticized for their prurience.³⁰ One suspects, however, that the young boy in Low's design also created unease. In this figure, there is a tension, as already noted, between the idealized conception of the Arcadian/biblical shepherd boy and the realistic representation of a studio model. The realism of the actual model ultimately wins out over idealization, and the figure can be said to be more naked than nude, arousing concerns for the viewer when the similarly realistic image of American History or Columbia clasps a hand on his buttock.

There is also the problem that the designs speak the language of allegory, which was becoming increasingly more alien to the public. The *Detroit Free Press* snidely remarked, "When the series was issued everybody said the pictures were very pretty. They covered most of the faces of the notes, and were so splendidly allegorical that they had to be diagrammed again and again. Nobody understood them."³¹ The newspaper had also sarcastically observed, "The whole world should know by a glance at our money that we are a nation devoted to high art. The ordinary engraver must take a back seat, and the professional painter and decorator must be called into requisition." From this perspective, high art in the form of allegory is pretentious, elitist, and perplexing. Furthermore, high-art vignettes are mere decorations that should not aspire to assume a more exalted role than their status allows.

The artist Charles Shean lamented that the program at the Library of Congress, executed at the same time as these notes, went horribly awry in its choice of allegory as its expressive medium. For him, mural painting was the highest form of art because it, unlike easel painting, addressed the wider public, but his comments about mural painting also apply to paper money because this currency participates even more actively in public life:

The future great art of this Republic . . . will be primarily a recording art. . . . It will be simple, virile and direct.

It will have emancipated itself from supernatural figures and accessories. It will speak with no foreign accent, nor be encumbered with the theatrical properties of the schools. Except as they personify the ideals of the people, it will not need for its expression the tiresome collections of classical paraphernalia: Fame with her trumpet. The winged victory. The laurel crown and the palm of victory will fade and vanish away.³²

In his complaint, Shean could almost be writing about Shirlaw's \$5 note depicting Fame with her trumpet and Winged Victory. Low's History wears a laurel crown, and multiple palms of victory surround Blashfield's "supernatural" (i.e., allegorical) figures. In the Library of Congress decorations, Shean's self-serving preference was for scenes drawn from American history in place of what was for him an outworn foreign mode. The National Bank Note series had employed both his-

torical vignettes and allegorical ones, and Shean obviously preferred the former to the latter. But is his assessment right?

In presenting an ennobling neoclassical scene, Low's image is highly successful in its own terms. The foreground setting is parallel to the picture plane with a tight, severe frame encasing the whole. Behind stretches the kind of topographical, panoramic vista of which Shean would have approved because it, unlike the foreground, deals with "reality" rather than the fiction of "supernatural figures and accessories." But to dismiss the allegorical figures in the foreground is to miss the note's primary message about the importance of instructing America's youth in its nation's values.

Blashfield's design, on the other hand, is so indebted to Italian Renaissance art that it, unlike the other two notes in the series, speaks with a strong foreign accent. The nobility of the symmetrical composition and the skill demonstrated in the idealization of the figures is impressive, but most of the public, to say the least, was untutored in Roman Catholic iconography. The result is a somewhat remote, bloodless allegory that would, as critics feared, have little to say to its audience. Without its title having been included in the margin beneath the allegory, its meaning would have indeed proved incomprehensible to the average citizen. Whereas the artist's subject in praise of science, industry, and commerce is entirely modern, his characterization is so bound to the grand-manner European tradition that it collapses under the weight of its overly esoteric baggage.

In aesthetic terms, like Low's \$1 note, Shirlaw's \$5 face is one of the great achievements of American paper money. The central figures imperiously surmount the globe itself, the triangle they form providing an anchoring center to the dynamic and animated composition. Shirlaw's skillful orchestration of a last grand, climactic crescendo to the increasingly moribund tradition of allegorical figures exuberantly captures the progress of Western civilization as embodied in the dynamic, unstoppable spirit of America.

The Educational Series of 1896 marks the apex of federal currency's design by embodying many of the attitudes that had come before. Its imagery loudly proclaims American Exceptionalism, a belief in the preeminent status and altruistic mission of the United States. Accompanying this perception is the celebration of a civil religion that expresses the nation's spiritual values within the public sphere. In highlighting the Constitution, Will Low's \$1 note upholds it as a sacred text, and the note's borders commemorate the nation's Great Men, who are not only to be emulated but also to be venerated just as one would a saint. Edwin Blashfield bases his concept squarely on religious art of the High Renaissance. He sees America's progress in commerce and manufacture as being inspired by science, but a science whose purpose is enshrined in sacred Christian principles. In Walter Shirlaw's allegory, America holding up Electricity becomes the Light of the World as she takes on Christ's mantle in pushing forward to a new, brighter, more progressive, peace-loving future. In this dynamic image, a fitting climax to America's self-perception, the antebellum nation with its weak central government has been left behind in favor of the concept of an enlightened Union that leads the entire world beyond the foundations of a Greco-Roman past toward a transformative future. In this regard, it brings to fruition one of the Latin mottoes on the Great Seal of the United States, which translates "A New Order for the Ages."

Beyond the complaints about security, serviceability, inappropriate attire, and overindulgence in the use of allegory, there was, at a deeper level, a reluctance to accept the project's fundamental premise that large pictorial vignettes, well integrated with accompanying lettering and ornamental details, could enhance the money's value beyond that of conveying a specific denomination. In a letter of 7 February 1897, Morris writes that a Treasury Department chief had said that Carlisle had "told him long ago that he did not like the faces and was afraid they were too much like pictures to be liked by the commercial world and the bankers."³³ Thus, the notes' strength was perceived as their weakness. The conservative marketplace was unprepared to accept so radical and innovative a departure from the old norms. Whereas it was acceptable to reproduce the large, detailed, multi-figure Rotunda paintings in a greatly reduced format that sapped their vitality, the business community felt uneasy with bold, original designs covering a note's face. The idea of the entirety of paper money's surface acting as a canvas for the nation, the culmination of two centuries of American paper-money design, was a bridge too far. "Too much like pictures" provides a fitting epitaph for the demise of this daring and exciting opportunity.

The U.S. government and the arts have always had a fraught relationship. The Bureau of Engraving and Printing, for its part, did not repeat its experiment in reaching out to mainstream artists. In 1929, its paper money shrunk in both size and imagination, beginning the pedestrian line of notes produced today. The Bureau has added sophisticated bells and whistles to help frustrate counterfeiting, but by clinging to uninspiring, tired formulas, the Treasury Department promotes the idea of its money's reliability at the expense of letting a great American art form languish on the vine.

Conclusion

A Neglected American Art Form

Paper money is about communication. It conveys a great deal of essential information in its texts and, of course, in the enumeration of the denomination itself. Also significant are the typefaces in which this information is conveyed, the note's ornamentation, and its overall design. All these elements, the product of multiple hands working in a variety of techniques, are orchestrated into a pleasing whole. But one feature, which on one level is superfluous, proved to be in many ways the most important of all—the pictorial image or vignette. As a result, paper money straddles two value systems: that of art and commerce. Neither the perception of a note's aesthetic quality nor the financial stability of its issuing institution is absolute, and these measures of “worth” are in competition. Yet the more important of the two is money's imagery, which builds communal bonds and shared experiences. Bank notes expedited trade, but by operating as a canvas for an emerging nation, their content helped create a national identity of boundless energy, abundance, opportunity, and optimism.

In 1690, pictorial imagery on paper money began in America, where it flourished for over 200 years. At the start, vignettes were frequently token representations closely tied to the emblem-book tradition. During the Revolutionary War, they came to possess a more expansive and descriptive function, assertively supporting the war aims of the states and the country. After the war, when government authorities were no longer in the business of issuing paper currency, banks stepped slowly into the breach, issuing notes of their own. After a modest beginning, elaborate notes produced by security-printing firms for banks and other financial institutions soon dominated the antebellum period.

Although mindful of their client's wishes, the private printing firms producing bank notes were free to choose their subject matter without government interference and, in the process, create their own imaginative worldview. There were multiple possibilities, such as portraits, fancy heads, allegorical figures, mythological subjects, and historical and contemporary scenes. There was, as well, a vast reservoir of visual sources from which to choose models for reproduction: the canonical imagery of high art drawn from the old masters, journal and book illustrations, contemporary American and European paintings and prints, original images commissioned from artists working for the various printing firms, and subjects commissioned by the banks themselves, such as the depiction of a bank building or a bank president. The engravers, however, were far from passive recipients. In the case of old-master content, for example, they could, with ironic, tongue-in-cheek impudence, reinvent these images to fit a new American context, championing the freewheeling spirit of commercialism and materialism.

Because paper money circulated everywhere, it became America's most widely distributed imagery. Its iconography communicated to the public a national narrative and purpose to which all the country's citizens had access, many of them daily as notes passed from hand to hand in multiple, anonymous transactions. Early on, subjects frequently drew on the classical tradition, thereby associating in a public forum the values of the young republic with those of ancient Greece and Rome. When this imagery came to be seen as elitist, more emphasis was placed on a populist program in tune with middle-class tastes. Allegories, however, continued to flourish alongside this increased focus on scenes of American life.

Bank notes displayed triumphant historical events, portraits of national heroes and local men of distinction. The land itself was a major protagonist, with vignettes portraying grand, majestic vistas, productive fields, and quiet corners of paradise, all knitted together by roads, rivers, canals, trains, and the telegraph. Bank-note imagery celebrated urban life and rural living, hard work, well-earned rest, family life and domestic chores, healthy children, and inspiring, iconic women—imagery that composed a hymn to the nation's prosperity and progress. Allegorical figures endorsed a multitude of virtues, and no figure was more honored than that of America/Columbia as Liberty. Agriculture, industry, and commerce on the land and on the sea provided an accompanying secular trinity.

The artists/engravers knew full well that they were creating more than merely pleasing, decorative adornments: in addition to providing security against counterfeiting, they were creating pictures that were engaged in a larger cultural discourse. Operating out of the major population centers, primarily New York and Philadelphia, many of them were part of American art's mainstream and were, as well, members of prestigious artist societies. Attuned to popular tastes, they participated in, and contributed to, the country's vibrant artistic developments, not only reflecting but also helping to shape mainstream American art.

Through bank-note imagery, Americans were able to express their pride in the belief that their country enjoyed an unparalleled place in history, the fulfillment of God's having preordained a special destiny. They could congratulate themselves that they were unrestrained by what they perceived as the limitations of a sclerotic European society that suffered from the constraints of rigid institutions and social structures and from the absence of those abundant resources made possible in America by continual territorial expansion. Having departed an exhausted and corrupt Europe to begin anew in a land of almost unlimited possibilities, Americans saw themselves as the new representatives of Western civilization's promise for all humankind. Bank-note imagery unapologetically held up to the world an idealizing mirror of this new promised land, the birthing of which would benefit all peoples.

Bank-note vignettes did not look too deeply into the less savory aspects of the national culture—the brutal treatment of non-White peoples. Vignettes, however, capture the ambivalent, conflicting feelings of White society's relationship with the Native American, displaying sympathy for the disappearance of the noble Indigenous peoples while taking no responsibility. The approach to this subject matter by engravers is often original, as they made their own contributions to this larger discourse. Developing the themes of American painters, they created their own impressive body of work that mythologized the Native American as an

essential part of the nation's identity. As for slavery, bank notes refused to engage with its horrors, focusing instead on how it underpinned the economies of both the North and South. The vignettes' constant extolling of liberty as an American virtue blithely disregarded, without any trace of irony, such omnipresent oppression. The money that facilitated the movement of capital on a local, national, and global scale celebrated such concepts as modernity, prosperity, innovation, independence, democracy, and freedom, the birthright of a God-fearing people. As a reflection of the culture that produced it, the creators of paper currency and its public chose to see what they wanted to see, a flattering identity uncompromised by reality.

The history of bank notes is also closely tied to those technological developments that made the wide distribution of paper currency possible. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Jacob Perkins's innovations in steel engraving enabled almost unlimited print runs. His system (die to roll to plate) also gave bank-note engraving a protean energy. Alterations could be made to existing vignettes, with such shape-shifting seamlessly expanding the available repertoire. The same vignette could also occupy different positions on different notes. As a result, among the thousands of types of bank notes, no two are the same.

As the number of banks increased, competition among firms spurred ever greater technological and aesthetic advances, taking the mass-produced printing of paper currency to new levels of excellence. The omnipresent specter of counterfeiting was another factor that pushed firms to increase the sophistication of a note's appearance. The resulting emphasis on the discernment of qualitative differences among the notes in circulation helped to instruct the public in connoisseurship. In 1848, one writer praises bank-note production for having risen above the limitations of "a mere money-making *trade*" to achieve "the dignity of a beautiful ART."¹

The coming of the Civil War in 1861 placed bank notes in competition with the currencies of two nation-states, the United States of America and the Confederate States of America. At the beginning, both warring countries relied on the repertoire of images built up by the prominent bank-note firms, with both even turning to these same firms to print their currency. To focus on a more consistent, disciplined national image befitting a proud nation-state, the federal government severely restricted the number of types of notes it issued. Although each series of bills has its own characteristics, the wide-ranging diversity of the antebellum period was soon extinguished. The Confederacy's attempts to print vast quantities of paper money made for a somewhat chaotic and haphazard start, but soon in its iconography, it chose a path like that of its enemy—sobering portraits of government officials, a martial spirit, and state capitols in place of the U.S. Capitol, as was befitting a nation built on states' rights.

Marking the apex of federal currency's design, the three notes in the 1896 Educational Series are the result of an ambitious, self-conscious attempt to achieve the status of high art. All parts of the face of the notes are engraved by hand without the aid of any machine-made patterns. The decorative borders are fully integrated with the imagery, and care is taken in the placement of the various texts. The large, central vignettes dominate this harmonious whole, with each note proclaiming the nation's greatness and nobility by promoting its spiritual and aspirational values within the public sphere. Yet, there were also conceptual

tensions between the requirements of bank-note design and those of painting, as objections were made to the large pictorial vignettes. Although the technical quality of the imagery on U.S. paper money remains second to none, unfortunately, the artistic quality eventually experienced a precipitous decline as bureaucracy and uniformity stifled creativity.

Paper money's dedication to commerce reflected its culture's values, as did its unapologetic pandering to patriotic, pious, and sentimental rhetoric. Despite being often condemned as the Almighty Dollar, a facilitator of greedy commercial transactions, paper money achieved the status of an original art form that in its bones is entirely American. For a time, America's security-printing firms were charting new territory. There was merit in the assertions that paper currency should be considered works of art. Despite the small size of the format, vignettes could effectively capture a large field of vision on both descriptive and imaginative levels. These vignettes, along with the overall designs of the notes, express a distinctly American art that in the nineteenth century was acknowledged as such, even if these achievements tend to be overlooked today.

When seen in its totality, America's paper currency embodies the irrepressible spirit of the new economy and the new nation, the excitement and curiosity surrounding the country's potential. In keeping with the culture that spawned it, paper money could be crassly commercial, the manifestation of an unruly, frenetic materialism; roguishly unconventional; nostalgic and sentimental; the expression of a brash, brave new world; breathtakingly heroic in its high self-regard; and, in its finest moments, transcendently aspirational. Ultimately, paper currency's messaging instilled confidence in the value of the money and in the country itself by portraying its vision of a nation that, although indebted to classical and biblical traditions, was without precedent or peers.

Notes

Introduction

- 1 In Sweden, the Stockholms Banco began issuing paper money as early as 1661, but this was a privately owned bank and its notes did not contain images other than the use of embossed seals. One should also mention that, in 1685, a French-Canadian official used playing cards, sometimes cut into quarters, to which were added denominations and his signature, to pay soldiers until a delayed shipment of coins could arrive to replace them. Although an important forerunner and catalyst to Massachusetts's paper currency, the improvisational nature of this money, in which playing cards are the medium, does not place it on the same level as the Massachusetts notes. The French Crown, in fact, disapproved of the "card money," considering it as the official's personal promissory noted (for a fuller accounting, see Eric P. Newman, *The Early Paper Money in America*, 5th ed. [Iola, Wis.: Kraus Publications, 2008], 7). When taking a wider perspective, China issued paper money centuries before any institution in the West. China, though, had abandoned this type of currency long before the West was to begin its own efforts. Whereas this money bore the stamp of inked seals, it did not contain vignettes, and in any case, it would have presumably been unknown to America's pioneers in this medium.
- 2 Of course, the use of precious metals as money long predates the creation of coins: "While coinage only makes its earliest appearance in the late seventh century BC [in Lydia], the tradition of using precious metals, especially silver, as money takes us back as far as the twenty-fourth century BC in Mesopotamia" (Catherine Eagleton and Jonathan Williams, *Money: A History*, 2nd ed. [London: British Museum Press, 2007], 16). For another overview of this subject, see Glyn Davies, *A History of Money: From Ancient Times to the Present Day*, 3rd ed. (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2002).
- 3 To be added to the books in this study on the art of design are the following: Ellen R. Feingold, *The Value of Money* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Scholarly Press, 2015); Alan M. Stahl, *Money on Paper: Bank Notes and Related Graphic Arts from the Collections of Vsevolod Onyshkevych and Princeton University* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Library, 2010); and David Standish, *The Art of Money: The History and Design of Paper Currency from around the World* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2000).
- 4 Richard Doty, *Pictures from a Distant Country: Seeing America through Old Paper Money* (Atlanta: Whitman Publishing, 2013), vii.
- 5 Eric P. Newman, "Preface" to Q. David Bowers, *Obsolete Paper Money Issued by Banks in the United States, 1782–1866* (Atlanta: Whitman Publishing, 2006), vi.
- 6 Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America and Two Essays on America*, trans. Gerald E. Beran with an Introduction and Notes by Isaac Kramnick (London: Penguin Books, 2003), 526.

- 7 Charles Dickens, *American Notes* (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1968), 43.
- 8 [Charles Toppan], "History and Progress of Bank Note Engraving," *The Crayon* 1 (21 February 1855), 116. His son, Robert Noxon Toppan, identified his father as the author of this unsigned article (see the reprint of Robert Toppan's 1896 address to the American Bank Note Company's board of trustees, of which he was a member: "A Hundred Years of Bank Note Engraving in the United States," *The Essay-Proof Journal* 11 [April 1954], 75). Three years after Charles Toppan published his article, he became the first president of the American Bank Note's board of trustees.
- 9 [Charles Toppan], "A Hundred Years of Bank Note Engraving," 116.
- 10 Jason Goodwin, *Greenback: The Almighty Dollar and the Invention of America* (New York: Henry Holt, 2003), 150. Unfortunately, Goodwin does not give the source for this quote, leaving open the person's identity and the date of his or her response, but the observation is too apropos to resist.
- 11 See William H. Gerdts, "Preface," in Mark D. Tomasko, *Images of Value: The Artwork behind U.S. Security Engraving, 1830s–1980s* (New York: Grolier Club, 2017), 7–9.

Chapter 1

- 1 For a detailed discussion of Massachusetts paper money of the colonial and revolutionary periods, see Leonard Travers, "Sinews of Trade, Sinews of War: The Paper Money of Massachusetts, 1690–1780," in *Massachusetts Paper Money, 1690–1780: The Collection of the Massachusetts Historical Society* (Portland, Maine: Anthoensen Press for the Massachusetts Historical Society, 1988).
- 2 See Elvira and Vladimir Clain-Stefanelli, *The Beauty and Lore of Coins Currency and Medals* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1975), 196. The four denominations were 5-, 10-, and 20-shilling notes and a £5 note. Bob McCabe argues in favor of the Boston silversmith Jeremiah Drummer as a more likely candidate than John Cony as the engraver of these notes (Bob McCabe, *Counterfeiting and Technology: A History of the Long Struggle Between Paper-Money Counterfeiters and Security Printing* [Atlanta: Whitman Publishing, 2016], 18–20).
- 3 See Ellwood Parry for a discussion of the first seal of 1629 and the woodcut copy of about 1675, executed by John Foster, which is the first version of the seal to be created in America (Ellwood Parry, *The Image of the Indian and the Black Man in American Art, 1590–1900* [New York: G. Braziller, 1974], 14–16). The etched notes of 1690 offer their own version of this same design.
- 4 This image of the Standing Indian is discussed in greater detail in chapter 7 in the section on "The American Indian as an Allegory for the Nation."
- 5 This paragraph is indebted to Newman's authoritative introduction to the making of colonial notes (Eric P. Newman, *The Early Paper Money of America*, 5th ed. [Iola, Wis.: Krause Publications, 2008], 7–25).
- 6 David Hall was born in Scotland in 1714. In 1744, after Benjamin Franklin had offered him a job as a journeyman printer, he sailed for America. Just four years later, Franklin made him a partner.
- 7 For an overview of issues surrounding counterfeiting in early America, see Kenneth Scott, *Counterfeiting in Colonial America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1957). England was far more committed to capital punishment for counterfeiting than were the colonists.

- 8 Anonymous, *Emblems for the Improvement and Entertainment of Youth* (London, 1755), pl. 1, nos. 3 and 9. In 1776, both New York and South Carolina issued money with an elephant on it, in these instances accompanied by Latin phrases that translate, “Virtue is equal to strength” (New York) and “hostile only to the hostile” (South Carolina) (see Newman, *The Early Paper Money of America*, 240 and 370). This last motto is close to that accompanying another elephant in *Emblems for . . . Youth*, which reads, “We do no Ill but to those who are injurious” (pl. 25, no. 11). With the outbreak of the American Revolution, South Carolina was responding to the increase in tensions by emphasizing the peaceful elephant’s power when provoked, a sentiment that is also straight out of the European tradition.
- 9 See Roland E. Fleischer, “Emblems and Colonial American Painting,” *The American Art Journal* 20 (1988), 5. In his endnote 8, Fleischer cites as sources three emblem books and a single-leaf print. To his books, one should add *Emblems for . . . Youth*, where, accompanying “A Squirrel taking the Meat out of a Chestnut,” is the sentence “Nothing that’s worthy having, can be obtained without Trouble and Difficulty” (pl. 57, no. 4).
- 10 Fleischer reproduces many of these portraits (see Fleischer, “Emblems and Colonial American Painting,” figs. 1, 24–28). The vignette of a squirrel eating a nut was also carried over into nineteenth-century bank notes. The Philadelphia firm Harrison depicts a squirrel perched on the branch of a tree in the \$2 note with Farmers Bank of Maryland, Annapolis, Md., appearing with the written date of 18 July 1814 (see Q. David Bowers, *Whitman Encyclopedia of Obsolete Paper Money* [Atlanta: Whitman Publishing, 2017], 8:168, W-MD-010-002-G110).
- 11 Cæsar Ripa, *Iconologia: or, Moral Emblems* (London, 1709), fig. 167.
- 12 See the following for examples of bees and beehives in emblem books: Geoffrey Whitney, *A Choice of Emblemes and other Devises, for the moste parte gathered out of Sundrie Writers, Englished and Moralized* (Leyden, 1586), 200–201; George Wither, *A Collection of Emblemes, Ancient and Moderne* (London, 1635), 250; Anonymous, *Emblems for . . . Youth*, pl. 15, no. 5; pl. 19, no. 11; and pl. 54, no. 10; and John Huddleston Wynne, *Choice Emblems, Natural, Historical, Fabulous, Moral and Divine, for the Improvement and Pastime of Youth* (London, 1772), no. 16.
- 13 The bee was presumably drawn from a printed source rather than from an actual specimen.
- 14 See Newman, *The Early Paper Money of America*, 98 and 100.
- 15 See Newman, *The Early Paper Money of America*, 236–241.
- 16 See Newman, *The Early Paper Money of America*, 301.
- 17 Anonymous, *Emblems for . . . Youth*, pl. 20, no. 10.
- 18 See Richard T. Hooper, “Franklin’s Influence on Colonial and Continental Paper Money,” *The Numismatist* (December 1956): 1357–1362.
- 19 Spanish silver dollars were often divided into eight pie-shaped segments, giving rise to the phrase “a piece of eight.” Well into the nineteenth century, some bills recalled this old practice: for example, there are notes denominated 12½ cents (i.e., one-eighth of a dollar) and even 6¼ cents, which is one-half of an eighth. The American quarter, or two bits, a term that is still in use, also originated from this formulation. See also Roger H. Durand, *Interesting Notes about Denominations* (Rehoboth, Maine: R. H. Durand & Co., 1988).

- 20 See Newman, *The Early Paper Money of America*, 48. Throughout this book, the English translations of Latin mottoes appearing on Colonial and Continental notes are drawn from Newman (47).
- 21 *The Architecture of M. Vitruvius Pollio*, trans. W. Newton (London: J. Dodsley, 1771), 69–70.
- 22 Georgia issued an eccentric variation on this theme in 1776, when its \$10 note showed a millstone atop a fully grown palm tree accompanied by the same motto as seen in the Continental design (see Newman, *The Early Paper Money of America*, 109). For Georgia, the palm was more appropriate than an acanthus, but some of the richer meanings embodied in the classical story were lost.
- 23 One suspects that such emblems, borrowed from an esoteric European tradition, proved difficult for many Americans to comprehend fully. One explanation offered in a 1777 almanac is as confusing as it is helpful: “This, perhaps, was intended to encourage us, by representing that our present oppressions will not destroy us, but that they may, by increasing our industry, and forcing it into new courses, increase the prosperity on the base of liberty, and the well-proportioned pillar of property, elevated for a pleasing spectacle to all connoisseurs, who can taste and delight in the architecture of human happiness” (quoted in Q. David Bowers and David M. Sundman, *100 Greatest American Currency Notes* [Atlanta: Whitman Publishing, 2006], 77).
- 24 For related images of sundials, see Anonymous, *Emblems for . . . Youth*, pl. 27, no. 4, and Wynne, *Choice Emblems*, 45.
- 25 Franklin’s conception was well known and was later employed on the obverse of the Fugio cent, a copper penny authorized by the Congress of the Confederation of the United States in 1787.
- 26 In Figure 5, the pilaster on the left is inscribed “CONTINENTAL.” The right-hand pilaster completes it with the word “CURRENCEY.” However, the capital of the left-hand pilaster is also inscribed “CUR/REN/CEY,” and, more surprisingly, it appears upside down. The capital of the right-hand pilaster reads “\$1 Sixth/of a/Doll.”
- 27 In a gloss on an emblem showing flames rising from an altar, a 1755 book states, “The holy and pure Flames of Religion will be eternal; whereas such as proceed from other Motives, as Lust and Sensuality, can be but of short Duration” (Anonymous, *Emblems for . . . Youth*, pl. 52, no. 3).
- 28 In later issues, “MAGNA CHARTA” was changed to “Independance,” as America’s own Declaration of Independence of 4 July 1776 replaced the medieval English document.
- 29 This Native American is derived from Revere’s earlier illustration of 1772 of the Indian leader, King Philip, engraved for a new edition of Thomas Church’s *The Entertaining History of King Philip’s War*. Furthermore, that figure was based on the famous four 1710 lithographs after John Verelst’s paintings executed in London to commemorate the visit to the royal court of four American Indian leaders drawn from the Mohawks and Iroquois.
- 30 See Newman, *The Early Paper Money of America*, 272.
- 31 Sparrow’s attempt at reconciliation is akin to the \$2 and \$4 bills of 1776 and the \$2 bill of 1777, issued by Georgia, which show two floating jugs representing England and America with a Latin motto that translates, “If we collide we break” (see Newman, *The Early Paper Money of America*, 109, and for the motto’s translation, 110). These two float-

ing pitchers are also taken from the iconography of emblems. Geoffrey Whitney's book of 1586 shows two pots floating in a stream (Whitney, *A Choice of Emblemes*, 164), but the Georgia note, while embracing this concept, changes its meaning. In Whitney's case, one pot is made of brass, the other of clay. The brass pot represents the mighty and the earthen one the poor. If they collide, only the poor stand to lose. In the Georgia note, should they collide, both jugs will break. The rock holding steadfast even as the four winds blow against it on the South Carolina \$8 note, dated 19 October 1776 (see Newman, *The Early Paper Money of America*, 371), is also derived from one of Whitney's emblems (see Whitney, *A Choice of Emblemes*, 96).

- 32 On the note's back, America on the left and Britannia on the right join hands, from which clasp rises an olive branch. The Latin inscription in the ribbon beneath spells out the pacifist intent: "Peace is preferable to Victory." Sparrow may well have been influenced by the bas-relief on the pedestal of the statue of Lord Botetourt, sculpted by Richard Hayward and erected by the Virginia Assembly at Williamsburg in 1773. This relief shows Britannia on one side of an altar with America on the other, each figure extending to the other an olive branch (reproduced in E. McClung Fleming, "The American Image as an Indian Princess, 1765–1783," *Winterthur Portfolio* 2 [1965], 75, fig. 90).
- 33 One could point to the muscular figure of St. Sebastian as depicted on the right-hand side of *The Last Judgment* in the Sistine Chapel, who is climbing upward to a new and glorious life, where the cloud above and behind him could suggest a boulder. Because the fresco was engraved multiple times, Coram could be expected to have had available a print after this famous painting. In addition, his figure would have been the same way around as Michelangelo's since printing reverses the image.
- 34 According to Howard Hibbard, Michelangelo chose this subject based on its Renaissance meaning: "Tityus was a symbol of the hopeless suffering of one who loves in vain" (Howard Hibbard, *Michelangelo* [Cambridge, Mass.: Harper & Row, 1985], 235). Hibbard agrees with Erwin Panofsky that "Tityus, tortured in Hades by a vulture, symbolizes the agonies of sensual passion, enslaving the soul and debasing it even beneath its normal terrestrial state" (Hibbard, *Michelangelo*, 236). Coram was surely unaware of any such esoteric Platonic meanings and, as we shall see, interpreted his figure as Prometheus.
- 35 See Maureen and Stu Levine, "From Rome to Charleston: Michelangelo, Beatrizet, and Coram," *The E-Sylum* 21 (21 January 2018), https://www.coinbooks.org/v21/club_nbs_esylum_v21n03.html#article16 (accessed 8 September 2023). I made the connection between Coram and Beatrizet as a graduate student in the late 1960s. It occurs to me now that I may have sat on this information for too long.
- 36 Richard Doty has made the intriguing suggestion that the roles of the two protagonists should be reversed: "One of Coram's ideas featured an American eagle assiduously plucking at the liver of a chained British Prometheus, which is perhaps the earliest numismatic association of the eagle with the new nation" (Richard Doty, *America's Money. America's Story: A Chronicle of American Numismatic History*, 2nd ed. [Atlanta: Whitman Publishing, 2008], 45). In this scenario, the chained figure is Britain getting its just retribution. It seems unlikely, however, that Coram would equate Britain with the heroic Prometheus, and if this figure were to be read as the debased Tityus, a more fitting persona for Britain, then the bird is unquestionably a vulture, an unsuitable emblem for the new nation. In any case, the bald eagle first appeared as the national bird on 20 June 1782, when the Great Seal of the United States was adopted, and it did not acquire official recognition until six years later. In addition, given America's dire

situation in 1779, it was more appropriate that it be identified with Prometheus rather than the eagle: like Prometheus, it must endure its tormentor until eventually rescued. The figure supporting the huge boulder on the \$50 bill similarly does not have an easy road ahead, nor does Hercules locked in mortal combat with the Nemean lion on the \$90 bill.

- 37 The three well-defined wounds on Prometheus's chest are perhaps related to a typological tradition that links him to Christ. James Hall writes, "Prometheus' role was to rescue man from his original ignorance. Christian writers saw this pagan creator and his act of mediation as a prefiguration of the Christian story; his punishment, chained to the rock, foreshadowing the crucifixion" (James Hall, *Dictionary of Subjects and Symbols in Art*, rev. paperback ed. [London: John Murray, 1985], 254). In this reading, the wound in Prometheus's side foreshadows the wound in Christ's side made when Longinus stabbed him on the cross with a spear. Furthermore, Coram's depiction of three wounds, rather than the traditional one, is perhaps a reference to the Trinity. If this image is intended to link Prometheus and Christ, it would not only demonstrate America's importance within God's plan for humankind, but it also would confirm the country's impending resurrection.

Chapter 2

- 1 See the notes of the Bank of North America reproduced in Eric P. Newman, *The Early Paper Money of America*, 5th ed. (Iola, Wis.: Krause Publications, 2008), 312–313. It should be noted that this bank superseded the Bank of Pennsylvania, which was established in 1780 under the leadership of Robert Morris to provide funds for the Continental Army. Apparently, this forerunner also issued a limited number of notes (see Arthur Nussbaum, *A History of the Dollar* [New York: Columbia University Press, 1957], 44), none of which I have been able to locate. For a helpful guide to the intricacies surrounding banking practices in nineteenth-century America, see Sharon Ann Murphy, *Other People's Money: How Banking Worked in the Early American Republic* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2017).
- 2 See reproductions of the notes for the Massachusetts Bank in Boston and the Bank of New York in Newman, *The Early Paper Money of America*, 172–173 and 245–246, respectively. The fourth bank to open its doors was the Bank of Maryland in Baltimore. Incorporated in 1790, it opened in the following year.
- 3 Apparently, no notes from this plate were ever issued. Donald C. O'Brien devotes a chapter in his book to Doolittle's work as a bank-note engraver (O'Brien, *Amos Doolittle: Engraver of the New Republic* [New Castle, Del.: Oak Knoll Press; and Farmingdale, N.Y.: The American Historical Print Collectors Society, 2008], 57–63). Three plates for the Washington Bank of Westerly, Rhode Island (now known as the Washington Trust Company) are still in the bank's possession: four \$1 notes (reproduced here); three \$5 notes and one \$10 note; three \$3 notes and one \$25 note. Based on a \$2 note in the New Haven Museum and Historical Society, there would also appear to have been a plate of \$2 bills. A correspondent in a letter dated 30 November 1805 states that Doolittle received eight dollars for engraving each note. For the printing of the notes, he charged one dollar per 400 bills (see O'Brien, *Amos Doolittle*, 58). The bank opened in 1800 with a capitalization of \$200,000, and O'Brien estimates that Doolittle received \$128 for the sixteen notes on the four plates; if he printed notes for "the whole amount of the capitalization (at \$1 per every 400 bills), he would have made another \$500 minus the cost of the paper" (61).

- 4 The Wright portrait and that by Doolittle are reproduced in Wendy C. Wick, “American Icon: The Eighteenth-Century Image of George Washington,” *Imprint* 7 (Autumn 1982), 5, fig. 6, and 8, fig. 9. Wright also executed a profile plaster relief of Washington’s head, showing him wearing a laurel wreath (see Monroe H. Fabian, *Joseph Wright: American Artist, 1756–1793* [Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press for the National Portrait Gallery, 1985], 109), but such a conceit was commonplace. Roger Durand points out that this is “the first portrait engraved on a states [*sic*] bank note” (Roger H. Durand, *Interesting Notes about Portraits* [Rehoboth, Maine: R. H. Durand & Co., 1996], [1]:4).
- 5 An introduction to the technological advances made by inventors, such as Jacob Perkins and Asa Spencer, can be found in Q. David Bowers, *Obsolete Paper Money Issued by Banks in the United States, 1782–1866* (Atlanta: Whitman Publishing, 2006), 50–77.
- 6 See Bob McCabe, *Counterfeiting and Technology: A History of the Long Struggle Between Paper-Money Counterfeiters and Security Printing* (Atlanta: Whitman Publishing, 2016), 57.
- 7 Bob McCabe estimates that a copper plate would need retouching after printing 2,000 impressions. The steel plate would be able to print 100,000 impressions (McCabe, *Counterfeiting and Technology*, 60–61). W. H. Griffiths gives 5,000 impressions as the practical limit for copper plates and estimates 30,000 could at first be achieved with Perkins’s method, a number that in later years became still larger (William H. Griffiths, *The Story of American Bank Note Company* [New York: American Bank Note Company, 1959], 20–21).
- 8 In his chart “Historical Evolution of American Bank Note Company,” Griffiths records the firm’s start-up date as 1810 (Griffiths, *The Story of American Bank Note Company*, 31). I am accepting the date 1811 given in the later article by Foster Wild Rice, “Antecedents of the American Bank Note Company of 1858,” *Essay-Proof Journal* 18 (Fall 1961), 140.
- 9 Just four years later, in 1819, Perkins moved again, this time to London. There, accompanied by a number of members of the firm along with sophisticated equipment, he set up an office to compete for the Bank of England prize to improve the quality of its notes in an effort to thwart counterfeiting. Stymied by the biased chair of the prize committee, who did not welcome American participation, he failed to win, but Perkins stayed on, finding other opportunities for his talents until his death in 1849.
- 10 Richard Doty, *Pictures from a Distant Country: Seeing America through Old Paper Money* (Atlanta: Whitman Publishing, 2013), 81. The vignette appears, often with minor variations, on the bank’s \$1, \$3, \$5, \$10, and \$20 notes. The note illustrated in Doty (fig. 7–27) is the \$10 note, in which Thomas Jefferson’s name is beneath the bust’s pedestal.
- 11 See Doty, *Pictures from a Distant Country*, 82.
- 12 McCabe, *Counterfeiting and Technology*, 51. According to McCabe, this process was featured in the *Port Folio* 6 (September 1815): 308–309 (see McCabe, *Counterfeiting and Technology*, 405n30).
- 13 The vignette is reminiscent of a similar subject by Amos Doolittle, which appears on a bill dated 1808 (see Bowers, *Obsolete Paper Money*, 134). Doolittle’s figure of Hope sits on a rock surrounded by water as she gestures toward a ship in the distance. The quality of the execution is not as sophisticated as that of the Philadelphia note.
- 14 For a discussion of Reed’s work, see Bowers, *Obsolete Paper Money*, 94–112.

- 15 For a contemporary tribute to Cyrus Durand (1787–1868), see Anonymous, “Cyrus Durand, the Machinist and Bank-Note Engraver,” *The Illustrated Magazine of Art* 3 (1854): 267–270. For an insightful discussion of the work of both Asher and Cyrus Durand, see Jennifer L. Roberts, *Transporting Visions: The Movement of Images in Early America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 119–126.
- 16 Jennifer Roberts writes about A. B. Durand’s philosophical approach to issues around coding, replication, and transmission in her article detailing his engagement, in both engraving and painting, with Samuel F. B. Morse’s invention of the telegraph (see Jennifer Roberts, “Post-Telegraphic Pictures: Asher B. Durand and the Nonconducting Image,” *Grey Room* 48 [Summer 2012]: 12–35).
- 17 Inman’s supporter Charles Edwards Lester wrote in 1846, the year the artist died, about his early years: “He was soon applied to for vignettes for illustrated works, and in bank note vignettes particularly, he introduced the first improvements known in this country. Those who are familiar with his designs of this description, have assured me that in the charm of light and shadow so peculiarly his own, they are very beautiful” (C. Edwards Lester, *Artists of America* [New York: Kennedy Galleries and Da Capro Press Reprint, 1970], 40). Lester apparently had not seen Inman’s bank notes, knowing them only by reputation. His statement about the artist having introduced the first improvements may be hyperbolic, but Inman’s vignettes do expand on conventional formulas.
- 18 New York, Stack’s, *The 52 Collection Part II*, 25 January 2011, lot 3497. A cropped version of this vignette, focusing only on the woman leaning against the rock, appears in the right-hand margin of the \$10 note for the Huntsville Branch of the Bank of the State of Alabama (see Q. David Bowers, *Whitman Encyclopedia*, 8 vols. [Atlanta: Whitman Publishing, 2014–2017] 7:17, W-AL-090-010-G070). The imprint on this bill is Draper, Toppan, Longacre & Co. instead of Maverick, and Bowers dates the note to the 1830s, demonstrating how vignettes could migrate from one firm to another.
- 19 Julian Blanchard identifies the earliest signed note as dating to 1808. The name is that of the Philadelphia engraver, George Murray. See J. Blanchard, “Signed Vignettes on Obsolete Bank Notes,” *Essay-Proof Journal* 2 (April 1945), 77.
- 20 See the back of the \$5 note, Danvers Bank, Danvers, Mass., in James A. Haxby, *Standard Catalog of United States Obsolete Bank Notes, 1782–1866*, 4 vols. (Iola, Wis.: Krause Publications, 1988), 2:837, MA-505, G48. The New England Bank Note Co. printed this bill in the 1840s–early 1850s.
- 21 Given that such engravings were essentially security documents, they did not circulate among the public. The artists who created them, however, were supplied with examples beyond the proof impressions needed for critiquing the work, and they traded these examples among themselves. In addition, the bank-note firms also made bound books of die proofs for presentation to trusted dignitaries, such as bank presidents, demonstrating that the firms considered them as having value apart from the documents they adorned. The proof vignette in Figure 106 is no. 312 in the American Bank Note Company’s original series of 924 vignettes, which was produced from 1858 to 1878. I am grateful to Mark Tomasko for this information.
- 22 The bank-note engraver George W. Casilear (b. 1825), who retired as superintendent of engraving at the Bureau of Engraving and Printing in 1893, compiled at least five scrapbooks containing a mélange of engravings, etchings, and vignettes (these five scrapbooks were sold at auction: New York, Spink, 24–25 September 2015, lots 82–86). As-

sembled probably in the 1870s, these books contain bank-note vignettes alongside fine-art, large-scale engravings, demonstrating that Casilear placed them on par with one another. It is noteworthy that George Casilear was the nephew of John William Casilear (1811–1893), who, after beginning his career as a bank-note engraver under the apprenticeship of Peter Maverick, was instrumental in founding the firm of Toppan, Carpenter, Casilear & Co. Like his close friend, Asher B. Durand, he went on to become a celebrated landscape painter.

- 23 For a discussion of Philadelphia's financial preeminence in America before it relinquished its position to New York, see Robert E. Wright, *The First Wall Street: Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, and the Birth of American Finance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).
- 24 See Donald C. O'Brien's chapter, "The Development of Banknote Engraving," in his book *The Engraving Trade in Early Cincinnati* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2013), 46–67.
- 25 Warren S. Henderson, "Rawdon, Wright, Hatch & Edson Prospectus, 1853," *Essay-Proof Journal* 25 (Fall 1968), 169.
- 26 Bowers, *Obsolete Paper Money*, 123.
- 27 See Griffiths, *The Story of American Bank Note Company*, 27. Griffiths traces the ABNC's origins even further back to Robert Scot, who began to execute bank notes in 1795 in Philadelphia (15). One of Scot's later assistants, John Draper, went on to help found Murray, Draper, Fairman & Co. (20).
- 28 James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 26.
- 29 See Warren E. Weber, "Early State Banks in the United States: How Many Were There and When Did They Exist?" *Journal of Economic History* 66, no. 2 (2006), 450, Table 2. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022050706000180>
- 30 Stephen Mihm, *A Nation of Counterfeiters: Capitalists, Con Men, and the Making of the United States* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009), 116.
- 31 Bray Hammond, *Banks and Politics in America* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1957), 329.
- 32 For a helpful accounting of the many permutations, creative and technical, that go into the making of a bank-note vignette, see Mark D. Tomasko, *The Feel of Steel: The Art and History of Bank-Note Engraving in the United States*, 2nd ed. (New York: The American Numismatic Society, 2012), and Tomasko, *Images of Value: The Artwork behind U.S. Security Engraving, 1830s–1980s* (New York: Grolier Club, 2017).
- 33 Drawing from the correspondence in the British Library in London, Philippa Hubbard offers a helpful summary of the early-nineteenth-century exchange between the English firm of Perkins & Heath and the provincial banks that were their clients. The banks wanted the vignettes to establish a business identity that reflected high standards. The images needed to be aesthetically appealing, with Hubbard pointing to the frequent reoccurrence of words such as "beauty," "handsome," "neat," and "taste." See "Security Printers to the Provincial Banks: Perkins Company and the Production of Banknotes in 19th-Century Britain" in online research catalogue *Paper Money of England and Wales*, eds. Catherine Eagleton and Artemis Monolopoulou, <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20190801105956/https://www.britishmuseum.org>

/research/publications/online_research_catalogues/paper_money/paper_money_of_english_wales.aspx (accessed 9 September 2023).

- 34 John Durand, *The Life and Times of A. B. Durand* (New York: Kennedy Graphics and Da Capo Press Reprint, 1970), 71.
- 35 Anonymous, "Bank-Note Engraving in America," *The Illustrated Magazine of Art* 3 (1854), 310.
- 36 Change of firm name here (from Danforth, Perkins & Co.) is correct. Principals of firms often changed or recombined in new partnerships.
- 37 Anonymous, "Bank Note Engraving in America," 308.
- 38 For the breakdown of the company's shares, see Griffiths, *The Story of American Bank Note Company*, 34.
- 39 A. H. Guernsey, "Making Money. III.—The American Bank Note Company," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 24 (February 1862), 307.
- 40 Guernsey, "Making Money," 315.
- 41 Guernsey, "Making Money," 318–319.
- 42 Guernsey, "Making Money," 320.
- 43 Guernsey, "Making Money," 313–314.
- 44 Michael O'Malley, *Face Value: The Entwined Histories of Money and Race in America* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2012), 69. The italics in this quote are his. His endnote providing his sources for this estimate clarifies that the 40 percent number includes unsecured notes by disreputable banks along with counterfeit bills. Joshua Greenberg discusses the fraught issues in determining a note's monetary value in his chapter 2, "Face-to-Face" (Joshua R. Greenberg, *Bank Notes and Shinplasters: The Rage for Paper Money in the Early Republic* [Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020], 45–73).
- 45 For a book focusing on the paradigmatic career of the entrepreneur and banker Andrew Dexter, Jr., see Jane Kamensky, *The Exchange Artist: A Tale of High-Flying Speculation and America's First Banking Collapse* (New York: Viking, 2008).
- 46 For three books that address counterfeiting in detail, see McCabe, *Counterfeiting and Technology*; Mihm, *A Nation of Counterfeiters*; and Ben Tarnoff, *Money-Makers: The Wicked Lives and Surprising Adventures of Three Notorious Counterfeiters* (New York: Penguin Press, 2011). Also see Lynn Glaser, *Counterfeiting in America: The History of an American Way to Wealth* (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, Inc., 1968), and David R. Johnson, *Illegal Tender: Counterfeiting and the Secret Service in Nineteenth-Century America* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995).
- 47 For a more detailed treatment of this subject, see William H. Dillistin, *Bank Note Reporters and Counterfeit Detectors, 1826–1866: With a Discourse on Wildcat Banks and Wildcat Bank Notes* (New York: The American Numismatic Society, 1949), 59–77.
- 48 See Kamensky, *The Exchange Artist*, 17. After a half-hearted beginning in Boston, periodicals known as bank note reporters and counterfeit detectors did not come into their own until the late 1820s in New York. They had a dual purpose: "(1) to show the rate of discount at which uncurrent notes would be purchased or exchanged for specie in the more important business centers, and (2) to furnish a brief description of counter-

feit, spurious, altered, and raised notes” (Dillistin, *Bank Note Reporters and Counterfeit Detectors*, 41).

- 49 Roberts, *Transporting Visions*, 114–115. Roberts documents all her quotes: the term *financescape* is borrowed from Arjun Appadurai; Paine’s quote is from his *Dissertations on Government, the Affairs of the Bank, and Paper-money*; and Smith is quoted from Kamensky, *The Exchange Artist*.
- 50 For the novel’s discussion centering on bank notes, see Herman Melville, *The Confidence-Man: His Masquerade*, ed. Elizabeth S. Foster (New York: Hendricks House, Inc., 1954), 281–283.
- 51 John Kenneth Gallbraith, *Money: Whence It Came, Where It Went*, rev. ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1995), 90. In his book *Bank Notes and Shinplasters*, Joshua Greenberg offers a well-sourced, insightful analysis of the many ways in which the American public perceived and interacted with paper currency.
- 52 Heinz Tschachler argues that the antebellum system of banking, in which the management of currency was under the direction of private entrepreneurs rather than elected officials, was not as bad as it is often depicted: “Most private banks managed the business of paper money quite responsibly. The final stripping of these banks of their power to issue money came, not because the freedom they enjoyed had degenerated into lawlessness but because of political movements to centralize power in Washington. Financier Jay Cooke might grumble about annual losses of \$50 million growing out of ‘broken banks, counterfeits, altered notes, and cost of exchange between different points,’ yet until the Civil War, the inconvenience was not so great as to cause Congress to overrule the money men” (Heinz Tschachler, *The Greenback: Paper Money and American Culture* [Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2010], 50).

Chapter 3

- 1 To every rule, there is an exception. On 3 March 1809, Massachusetts passed a state banking act, which required banks in the state to employ Perkins’s Patent Stereotype Steel Plate on denominations from \$1 to \$5 (see Q. David Bowers, *Obsolete Paper Money Issued by Banks in the United States, 1782–1866* [Atlanta: Whitman Publishing, 2006], 56). This attempt at a mandated standardized system was ultimately to fail.
- 2 Roger Durand writes that “Homer is the male figure in the vignette titled ‘Literature’” (see Roger H. Durand, *Interesting Notes about Allegorical Representations* [Rehoboth, Maine: R. H. Durand & Co., 1994], 28). One assumes that the generic title “Literature” appears on a die-proof engraving because it does not appear in the vignette.
- 3 Anonymous, “Cyrus Durand, the Machinist and Bank-Note Engraver,” *The Illustrated Magazine of Art* 3 (1854), 270.
- 4 Hinshelwood’s print after the painting, which is itself small (10.8×8.6 centimeters), is reproduced in Bartlett Cowdrey and Hermann Warner Williams, Jr., *William Sidney Mount, 1807–1868: An American Painter* (New York: Columbia University Press for the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1944), fig. 15. The vignette after Mount’s *Corn Gatherer* first appeared on notes in 1838, the year in which the engraving after the painting appeared. See John A. Muscalus, *Popularity of Wm. S. Mount’s Art Work on Paper Money, 1838–1865* (Bridgeport, Pa.: Historical Paper Money Research Institute, 1965). Roger H. Durand also reproduces this image in *Interesting Notes about Vignettes*, 3 vols. (Rehoboth, Maine: R. H. Durand & Co., 1995–2001), [1]:15.

- 5 For a reproduction of this note, see James A. Haxby, *Standard Catalog of United States Obsolete Bank Notes, 1782–1866*, 4 vols. (Iola, Wis.: Krause Publications, 1988), 1:30, CT-25, G112. A progressive proof is illustrated in Q. David Bowers, *Whitman Encyclopedia of Obsolete Paper Money*, 8 vols. (Atlanta: Whitman Publishing, 2014–2017), 2:12, W-CT-040-010-G230a.
- 6 Asher B. Durand’s son described this vignette as “a stalwart mechanic, with a cogwheel at his feet, welcoming Neptune as he comes out of the water to greet him” (John Durand, *The Life and Times of A. B. Durand* [New York: Kennedy Graphics and Da Capo Press Reprint, 1970], 71).
- 7 J. W. Casilear engraved the vignette on which this one is based for Casilear, Durand & Co. in the 1830s (see \$1 note, Bank of Sandusky, Sandusky, Ohio, in Haxby, *Standard Catalog*, 3:1988, OH-3785, G2). The Johnson note expands the scene to include the ship at the right.
- 8 For a discussion of Sully’s portrait as a model, see Roger H. Durand, *Interesting Notes about Portraits* (Rehoboth, Maine: R. H. Durand & Co., 2004), 3:17–19. R. Durand’s statement that this “is the only reported allegorical representation using a live person as a model” is misleading. Cook sat for Sully in the role of a country girl, and the engraver was responding to this picture as a fanciful construct rather than as a portrait.
- 9 After Patrick Lyon sold Neagle’s first portrait in 1828 to the Boston Athenaeum, he commissioned a replacement, which, dating to 1829, is a version of the first. The various vignettes are likely based on this last, presumably more accessible image, as it was in Philadelphia. For a discussion of these vignettes, see Terry A. Bryan, “Pat Lyon at the Forge,” *Paper Money* 59 (July–August 2020): 244–249.
- 10 The uncropped vignette of Pat Lyon sanitizes the image in the paintings by replacing the Walnut Street Jail with a passing train, which ties in with the trade of blacksmithing. For a proof of this uncropped vignette, see Bryan, “Pat Lyon at the Forge,” 248.
- 11 Reproduced in Bowers, *Whitman Encyclopedia*, 2:12, W-CT-040-005-G140.
- 12 Sir Joshua Reynolds declared in his Discourse VII, delivered on 10 December 1776, that although Rubens’s mixing of “allegorical figures with representations of real personages” is technically a fault, in doing so he furnished his “gallery with a rich, various, and splendid ornament” that overcomes “all lesser considerations” in pursuit of “the great end of the work” (Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Discourses on Art*, ed. Robert R. Wark [New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1975], 128–129).
- 13 Thomas Sparrow’s crude but expressive woodcut from 1775, appearing on the Maryland \$4 bill (see Figure 8), shows King George III appearing in a triumvirate that includes Britannia and American Liberty, thereby combining a historical figure with two allegorical ones. Sparrow’s design, however, operates within the conventions of political caricature, a propagandistic mode that is not employed in nineteenth-century bank notes because banks required a decorum that inhibits such freewheeling tactics. There are, on the other hand, political messages concerning economic policy that take the form of bank notes.
- 14 Another exception to the mixing of identifiable personages with allegorical ones on paper money can be seen in chapter 9, where a federal note includes a vignette of Columbus with the Four Continents (see Figure 156). This mixture has created confusion, with some modern writers having mistakenly identified the allegorical figure of America with Pocahontas or another unspecified Indian princess. Once again, academic conventions do not translate well into modern ways of seeing.

- 15 Curiously, in recent years, there has been a tendency to cite Thor when Vulcan is intended. To give one example, Roger Durand describes one vignette as showing three gods: Proserpina, Mercury, and Thor (R. Durand, *Allegorical Representations*, 17). A Scandinavian god would not have been introduced into this Greco-Roman pantheon, especially when Vulcan was readily at hand. In another vignette, Durand confuses Jupiter with Thor (see R. Durand, *Vignettes*, 2:94). This majestic figure, who holds thunderbolts in one hand and a staff surmounted by a small eagle in the other, can only be Jupiter. Furthermore, I doubt Thor was ever represented on nineteenth-century paper money, even in those parts of the Midwest settled by Scandinavians.
- 16 For an example of the vignette of the three men standing alone, see the \$100 note of the Washington Bank of Washington, N.C. (Bowers, *Whitman Encyclopedia*, 6:354, W-NC-560-100-G070). In this instance, the farmer extends the sheaf of grain to the bank, whose name is above and to the right of him.
- 17 Roger H. Durand labels this figure as “Morning,” another plausible identification. He records the artist as Christian Schussele and the engraver as William G. Armstrong (see R. Durand, *Vignettes*, [1]:22). Q. David Bowers mistakenly describes this figure as being earthbound: “At the left [of the \$2 note of the Bank of Desoto, Desoto, Nebraska] is a semi-nude woman standing on what appears to be a cliff, with a steamship below her” (Bowers, *Whitman Encyclopedia*, 1:7).
- 18 In the context of the Confederate Type 23 note, which shows *The Corn Gatherers* (see Figure 207), Joseph J. Gaines, Jr., remarks that this vignette “is relatively common on previous obsolete bank notes with approximately 15 notes known from the North and South from the 1850s” (Joseph J. Gaines, Jr., “Obsolete Bank Notes with Vignettes Used on Confederate States of America Type 23 and Type 32 Currency Notes,” *Paper Money* 53 [January/February 2014], 34). The vignette is also listed in R. Durand, *Vignettes*, [1]:10.
- 19 See the \$1 bill for the Commercial Bank of the City of New York reproduced in Haxby, *Standard Catalog*, 3:1618, NY-1540, G2. This bill contains the same two details, on left and right, of Rawdon’s vignette.
- 20 Tecumseh’s name appears above the figure’s head, but when the same vignette is used on a note for the Bank of Washtenaw in Ann Arbor, Michigan (see Haxby, *Standard Catalog*, 2:1041, MI-50, G8), the name is changed to Washtenaw to fit this new circumstance.
- 21 See Haxby, *Standard Catalog*, 4:2561, WI-125, G8, and 1:257, GA-100, G16. Hatch’s design is on the left, Rawdon’s on the right. This same pairing appears again in a vignette sample sheet produced at around the same time by the firm’s New Orleans branch. No contemporary impression of this sheet is currently known, but in 1979 the American Bank Note Company made reprints from the copper plate, which dates to the 1830s or early 1840s (reproduced in catalog by R. M. Smythe & Co., New York, Auction No. 262, 12 July 2006, lot 2558).
- 22 In at least one instance, Hatch’s vignette appears twice on the same bill, anchoring both ends of the \$20 note for the Planters Bank of the State of Mississippi, Natchez (Haxby, *Standard Catalog*, 2:1138, MS-175, Design 20C). In keeping with its patriotic content, a framed portrait of George Washington occupies the note’s center.
- 23 Hatch would seem to have used Joseph Eginton’s 1791 stipple engraving after William Hamilton’s *Hebe* as his starting point, but he goes well beyond the mannered, weak nature of this source (<https://www.christies.com/en/lot/lot-4858575>).

- 24 See Bowers, *Obsolete Paper Money*, 197.
- 25 The imprint on this \$3 note reads, “Peter Maverick N. York.” Maverick and A. B. Durand were partners from 1817 to 1820. In 1824, Durand formed another partnership, “A. B. & C. [Cyrus, Asher B.’s brother] Durand, Wright & Co.,” which lasted until 1827. Because other notes in the same series as the \$3 bill for the Bank of Augusta bear this Durand/Wright imprint—see, for example, the \$4 note (Haxby, *Standard Catalog*, 1:239, GA-30, G54) and the \$10 and \$20 notes (1:240, GA-30, G80 and G94)—presumably they were all executed at the same time. Because the \$3 note with the vignette of Hebe features Maverick’s imprint, Maverick may have been the artist/engraver instead of Durand.
- 26 For nine other depictions of Hebe and the eagle (these vignettes often appear on numerous bills of other banks, but only one example of each is cited), see the following: (1) the \$100 note for the Mechanics Bank, New Haven, Conn., printed by A. B. & C. Durand & Wright (Haxby, *Standard Catalog*, 1:99, CT-280, G84). John Durand, the artist’s son, explicitly refers to the eagle in this vignette as “the American eagle” (J. Durand, *The Life and Times of A. B. Durand*, 71); (2) the \$5 note for the National Bank, New York, by Durand, Perkins & Co. (Haxby, *Standard Catalog*, 3:1667, NY-1785, G8); (3) the \$4 note for the Bridgeport Bank, Bridgeport, Conn., by Casilear, Durand, Burton & Edmonds (Haxby, *Standard Catalog*, 1:29, CT-25, G72); (4) the \$9 note for the Peoples’ Bank of Paterson, Paterson, N. J., by Casilear, Durand, Burton & Edmonds (Haxby, *Standard Catalog*, 3:1353, NJ-438, G46). The figure of Hebe is based on the *Venus de Milo*; (5) the \$1 note for the Territory of Florida by N. & S. S. Jocelyn, New Haven, Conn. (Hugh Shull, *A Guide Book of Southern States Currency* [Atlanta: Whitman Publishing, 2007], 65); (6) the \$5 note for the Essex County Bank, Keeseville, N.Y., by Rawdon, Wright, Hatch & Co. (Haxby, *Standard Catalog*, 3:1557, NY-1140, G8). Clifford Thies has a different interpretation for this vignette: “The woman is *Leda*, Queen of Troy [Leda was the wife of the king of Sparta], and the eagle is *Zeus* [in this mythological tale, Zeus took the form of a swan]” (Thies, “Female Beauty as Depicted on U.S. Obsolete Notes,” *Paper Money* 46 (March/April 2007), 132); (7) the \$50 note for the Bank of Tennessee, Nashville, Tenn., by Draper, Toppan, Longacre & Co. (Haxby, *Standard Catalog*, 4:2401, TN-195, Design 50A); (8) the \$1 note for the Columbia Bank, Washington, D.C., by Danforth, Bald & Co. (Haxby, *Standard Catalog*, 1:192, DC-195, G2 (reproduced in this book as Figure 98). The last two vignettes include a national shield in the first instance and an American flag in the second; (9) the \$5 note for the Ship Builders Bank, Rockland, Maine, by Rawdon, Wright, Hatch & Edson, New York/New England Bank Note Co., Boston (reproduced in Richard Doty, *Pictures from a Distant Country: Seeing America through Old Paper Money* [Atlanta: Whitman Publishing, 2013], 140, fig. 1–12). As in Figure 39, Hebe is conflated with Liberty. The American eagle is perched on a cornucopia spilling out coins.
- 27 Although I had listed Rawdon’s vignette as having been derived from Barry’s painting as early as 1981 (see William L. Pressly, *The Life and Art of James Barry* [New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1981], 229), apparently in 2001, Roger Durand was the first to introduce this source to numismatists (see R. Durand, *Vignettes*, 3:95). Earlier in 1994, he had discussed the vignette without mentioning Barry (see R. Durand, *Allegorical Representations*, 52).
- 28 J. J. Winkelmann [Winckelmann], *Reflections on the Painting and Sculpture of the Greeks*, trans. Henry Fusseli [Fuseli] (London, 1765), 11.
- 29 In her essay “‘Glowing Thoughts on Glowing Canvas’: James Barry’s *Venus Rising from the Sea*,” Margaret W. Lind discusses the linkage of Venus with prostitution in the con-

text of late-eighteenth-century British art (Lind, *James Barry, 1741–1806: History Painter*, ed. Tom Dunne and W. L. Pressly [Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2010], 61–62).

- 30 *The Letters of Thomas Gainsborough*, ed. John Hayes (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2001), 104.
- 31 *The Collections of the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art: American Paintings to 1945*, ed. Margaret C. Conrads (Kansas City: Trustees of the Nelson Gallery Foundation, 2007), 1:438.
- 32 Another telling example of America's attitudes toward nudity can be seen in its response to John Vanderlyn's painting *Ariadne*, which displays the nude heroine stretched out asleep on the island of Naxos, where she had been abandoned by Theseus, her faithless lover. Vanderlyn, the first American artist to study in Paris, executed the painting while abroad and exhibited it to acclaim at the Salon of 1812. When he exhibited it three years later in New York, it "is said to have outraged public taste" (Alice Newlin, "Asher B. Durand, American Engraver," *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* n.s. 1 [5 January 1943], 169). Asher B. Durand, appreciating its merits, purchased the painting (now in the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia), publishing his print after it in 1835. Although well received by critics, the print proved unprofitable.
- 33 For a vignette depicting a fully clothed Venus, see the \$2 note of the Marine Bank of Baltimore by Cone, Freeman & Co., dating to the 1810s (Bowers, *Whitman Encyclopedia*, 8:236, W-MD-390-002-G200). Standing on her shell and holding Neptune's trident, with a frolicking sea creature in the foreground and a ship in the background, she is presented as a thin beanpole, devoid of any of the heroic qualities of academic art. In contrast, Rawdon's adaptation of Barry's grand-manner image puts this prudish version to shame. In the 1820s, Fairman, Draper, Underwood & Co. produced another version of a clothed maritime Venus (see Bowers, *Whitman Encyclopedia*, 7:265, W-LA-170-100-G250). This figure leans on an anchor while standing not on her traditional shell but on a large \$100 coin, again adapting the demands of classical imagery to those of vulgar commerce.
- 34 The image, which proved popular for bank notes, was often accompanied by vignettes of ships or port scenes, particularly when the bank was in a port city. It was used on all fourteen denominations (\$1, \$2, \$3, \$5, \$10, \$11, \$12, \$13, \$14, \$20, \$50, \$100, \$500, and \$1000) of the Commercial Bank of the City of New York, making it the bank's trademark (the \$1, \$2, \$3, \$14, \$100, \$500, and \$1000 notes are reproduced in Haxby, *Standard Catalog*, 3:1618–1619; the \$10 note is reproduced in Bowers, *Obsolete Paper Money*, 204; the \$11, \$12, \$13, and \$14 notes are reproduced in New York, R. M. Smythe & Co. Auction Catalogue, No. 241, 22–23 October 2004, lots 2739–2742).
- 35 The vignette also appears on the \$3 note for the Union Bank of Montreal, Canada, a bank that operated only from 1838 to ca. 1840 (see Haxby, *Standard Catalog*, 4:2674, AS-484-G12A). It appears as well on the \$2 note for the Mercantile Bank, Washington, D.C. The copy of this note reproduced by Bowers is dated in ink 4 March 1861 ("186" is printed), and it bears the imprint, "New York Bank Note Co. 50 Wall St." (Bowers, *Obsolete Paper Money*, 8:139, W-DC-690-002-G020). In 1861 this firm, the creation of the maverick engraver W. L. Ormsby was a rival to the American Bank Note Co., which had absorbed Rawdon, Wright, Hatch, & Edson along with its stock. That Ormsby should have had in his possession a die for this vignette is not unusual: firms customarily swapped designs. Its limited use by RWH&E suggests it was not one of their more popular designs. Perhaps the firm found it too esoteric for its intended audience.

- 36 For a fuller account of this fresco cycle, see W. L. Pressly, “The 1794 Frescoes by John Francis Rigaud (1742–1810) in London’s Guildhall and the Role of Alderman Boydell,” *The British Art Journal* 20 (Spring/Summer 2019): 98–109.
- 37 *Description, &c.: The Four Angles under the Cupola, in the Common Council Room, Guildhall. Painted in Fresco by J. F. Rigaud, Esq. R. A.*, in John Boydell, *A Description of Several Pictures Presented to the Corporation of the City of London, by John Boydell, Alderman of the Ward of Cheap, and Placed in the Common-Council Chamber of the City* (London, 1794).
- 38 Rigaud, *The Four Angles under the Cupola*, in Boydell, *A Description of Several Pictures*, 2–3. The artist’s conception, in word and image, relies heavily on the emblem of Providence seen in George Richardson, *Iconology; or a Collection of Emblematical Figures* (London, 1779), 2:130–131 (text) and 208 (image).
- 39 A characterization of Providence had already appeared on the \$50 note of 8 February 1779, for South Carolina. Presumably adapted from a European emblem book, it shows a majestic female figure in classical attire, standing and holding a long staff in her right hand while commandingly pointing at a globe with a scepter in her left hand. The Latin motto contained in the flanking ribbon banner reads, “PROVIDENTIA NOSTRIS PRAESIDEAT” (Let foresight guide our people). This 1779 emblem focuses on the need to look to an all-powerful God for guidance, whereas Rigaud’s emphasis is on the gratitude one feels for Providence as a personification of God’s power to bestow blessings on humans. The other designs on the Rawdon, Wright & Hatch sheet even more emphatically signify that humanity, under God’s benevolence, should be aggressively engaged in the exploitation of the world’s potentialities. For Roger Durand’s account of the meanings underlying the vignette of Providence, see R. Durand, *Allegorical Representations*, 88.
- 40 Robert N. Bellah, *The Broken Covenant: American Civil Religion in Time of Trial*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 61.
- 41 This vignette also appears on the \$1 note of the Union Bank, Baltimore, Md. One version bears the imprint of Toppan, Carpenter & Co. and the engraved date of 10 March 1842. Two later versions, produced by the American Bank Note Company, are dated to 1 May 1861 (see Bowers, *Whitman Encyclopedia*, 8:257, W-MD-510-001-G130a, G130b, and G140).
- 42 Jonathan Richardson, Sr. and Jr., *An Account of the Statues, Bas-reliefs, Drawings and Pictures in Italy, France, &c.* (London, 1754), 249.
- 43 Richardson, *An Account*, 249.
- 44 Joshua Greenberg, *Bank Notes and Shinplasters: The Rage for Paper Money in the Early Republic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020), 87. Also see Thies, “Female Beauty,” 122–133, and W. Mack Martin, “Georgia’s Risqué Vignettes,” *Paper Money* 51 (January/February 2012): 22–27. Doty weighs in as well on the side of those who see such imagery as “approaching the pornographic” (Doty, “Surviving Images, Forgotten Peoples: Native Americans, Women, and African Americans on United States Obsolete Bank Notes,” in *The Banker’s Art: Studies in Paper Money*, ed. Virginia Hewitt [London: British Museum Press, 1995], 121). Also see Doty, *Pictures from a Distant Country*, 36 and 99.
- 45 Thies, “Female Beauty,” 122. One of Thies’s prime examples is Rawdon’s vignette of Venus, which, however, does appear in unimpeachably respectable contexts, such as on the \$50 note of the Republic of Texas (see Figure 43).

- 46 The tensions arising between the formulas of academic art and the prudishness of some beholders are ongoing. In 2002, Attorney General John Ashcroft's Department of Justice ordered drapes to hang in front of two heroic seminude statues installed in the 1930s, one of which shows the *Spirit of Justice*, which is represented by a toga-clad woman with an exposed breast, and the other the *Majesty of the Law*, by a man concealed only by a cloth draped over his right hip.
- 47 See Newlin, "Asher B. Durand, American Engraver," 165.
- 48 In one instance where this vignette appears (the \$1 note of the Farmers & Merchants Bank, St. Joseph, Mich.), Roger Durand writes, "This is the only vignette that positively identifies Sampson" (see R. Durand, *Allegorical Representations*, 45). Richard Doty, among others, has also identified this subject as Samson (see Doty, *Pictures from a Distant Country*, 81). Yet, because Durand does not substantiate his claim, the identification as Hercules seems more plausible, given its appearance on Asher B. Durand's specimen sheet in the company of so many other classical subjects (see Figure 25). This, too, would not have been the only vignette Durand executed illustrating one of the twelve labors of Hercules: he also produced a vignette of Hercules defeating the Lernaean hydra (see Figure 21). To complicate matters further, Q David Bowers identifies the man and the lion as Androcles and the lion, a benevolent interpretation that is contradicted by the intensity of the man's scowling features (see Bowers, *Obsolete Paper Money*, 198 and 248).
- 49 Some modern critics have rejected entirely the aspirations of high art in the belief that they are inimical to the American experience at any level. In 1969, the social historian J. C. Furnas fulminated against the harm inflicted on American art by academic principles. He called the American-born painter Benjamin West (1738–1820), who followed Sir Joshua Reynolds as president of Britain's Royal Academy of Arts, "a genial and benevolent person but ideologically a sort of Typhoid Mary" (J. C. Furnas, *The Americans: A Social History of the United States, 1587–1914* [New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1969], 588). Furnas deplored West's dedication to academic ideology: "A great painter, West and many of his Old World contemporaries maintained, should concentrate mainly on ideal subjects—historical, mythological, allegorical, religious—in other words, on sublime illustration" (578–579). For Furnas, such an elitist approach is for American artists "an imported malaria," a "virus" that only erodes artistic values. In his opinion, Americans should stick to reality rather than attempt sublime fictions, and West would have been far better off practicing only portraiture.
- 50 Fanny Trollope, *Domestic Manners of the Americans*, reprint (Lexington, Ky.: CreateSpace, 2015), 33.
- 51 J. Durand, *Life and Times of A. B. Durand*, 71.
- 52 J. Durand, *Life and Times of A. B. Durand*, 71. In his comments on the identifications underlying grand-manner imagery, Roger Durand, who apparently is unrelated to A. B. and John Durand, carries on John's proclivity for confining the vignettes' meanings too narrowly to the functions of the banking business. In 1969, Robert Holton was still complaining about the inappropriateness of featuring classical subjects: "Early notes often depicted purely classical subject matter wholly [*sic*] unrelated to the banking institution and chosen by the engraver purely from his art schooling background contemporary with the classic revival" (Robert K. Holton, "The Intriguing Evolution of Bank Note Design," *Essay-Proof Journal* 26 [Summer 1969], 99).
- 53 Doty, *Pictures from a Distant Country*, 80 (emphasis in original)
- 54 Doty, *Pictures from a Distant Country*, 80.

- 55 William Tudor, Jr., “An Address Delivered to the Phi Beta Kappa Society . . .,” *North American Review* 2 (November 1815), 19–20, quoted in Brian W. Dippie, *The Vanishing American: White Attitudes and U.S. Indian Policy* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1982), 13.
- 56 On the president’s throne-like chair, Greenough sculpted a relief of Apollo in his chariot, representing the enlightenment’s westward progress made possible by Washington’s leadership. At the back corners of the chair stand two small figures: on the left is a resigned Native American and on the right Columbus holding a globe. The relief of Apollo in his chariot appears on the Native American’s side, again associating the two subjects. The corresponding relief on the other side, which is associated with Columbus and the introduction of European culture, shows the indomitable infant Hercules strangling a serpent sent to kill him, unsupported by his fearful twin brother Iphicles. James M. Goode explains this subject’s relevance: “This panel represents the successful overthrow [by Hercules] of European domination in North America and the inability of the South American colonies in the late eighteenth century [represented by Iphicles] to achieve independence from European domination” (J. M. Goode, *Washington Sculpture: A Cultural History of Outdoor Sculpture in the Nation’s Capital* [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008], 746). When viewing Greenough’s sculpture from the front, the drapery hanging from Washington’s right arm eclipses the Indigenous American, leaving the focus on Columbus and the development of Western values.
- 57 Quoted in Bowers, *Obsolete Paper Money*, 253.
- 58 From 1813 to 1815, Ralph Rawdon had served an apprenticeship under the engraver Thomas Kensett in Cheshire, Conn. Beginning in 1816, he set up shop with changing partners both in Albany and in New York City. The firm Rawdon, Clark & Co. existed from 1827 to 1834. For information on Ralph Rawdon and his firms, see Gene Hessler, *The Engraver’s Line: An Encyclopedia of Paper Money & Postage Stamps* (Port Clinton, Ohio: BNR Press, 1993), 245, and Bowers, *Obsolete Paper Money*, 369–377.
- 59 Heinz Tschachler maintains that the line drawn around a note’s border corresponds to a painting’s gilt frame, which proclaims “the artwork’s aura (which corresponds to the aureole or halo in Christian iconography)” (Tschachler, *The Greenback: Paper Money and American Culture* [Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2010], 75). Thus, just as this aura reverentially enshrines the painting’s authenticity and originality, the bank note’s black line performs this same function. Perhaps even more relevant is how the notes are normally trimmed. A thin white paper margin extends beyond the boundary line, further setting off the note as would a frame on a painting. (The cutting machinery used with today’s U.S. currency retains this aspect on all its notes.)

Chapter 4

- 1 Although aware that the vignettes on bank notes depict the world through rose-colored glasses, the historian Elvira Clain-Stefanelli rightly lauds them for the abundant information they render on antebellum life. She provides a long list of the varied types of subject matter that one encounters in these designs, for which the only notable exceptions are in the areas of music, sports, and religion (Clain-Stefanelli, “An Historian’s View of the State Bank Notes: A Mirror of Life in the Early Republic,” in *America’s Currency, 1789–1866: Coinage of the Americas Conference at the American Numismatic Society, New York City, October 31–November 2, 1985*, ed. William E. Metcalf [New York: American Numismatic Society, 1986]: 25–50).

- 2 Thomas F. Morris, "James Smillie: The Pictorial Engraver, 1807–1885," *Essay-Proof Journal* 1 (October 1944), 199.
- 3 Rachael Klein, "Art and Authority in Antebellum New York City: The Rise and Fall of the American Art-Union," *Journal of American History* 81 (March 1995): 1534–1561.
- 4 A similar "portrait" of a train again appears on notes in different regions of the country. The vignette by Wellstood, Hay & Whiting, New York, is seen as far apart as the \$10 note of the St. Croix River Bank, Wisconsin, ca. 1858 (James A. Haxby, *Standard Catalog of United States Obsolete Bank Notes, 1782–1866*, 4 vols. [Iola, Wis.: Krause Publications, 1988], 4:2558, WI-85, G4), and the \$5 note of the Peoples' Bank of Baltimore, Md., 1850s–early 1860s (Haxby, *Standard Catalog*, 1:672, MD-110, G6b). "St. C./R.R." is stenciled on the car behind the locomotive in the St. Croix River note, a detail that does not appear in the Maryland vignette.
- 5 See Haxby, *Standard Catalog*, 4:2605, WI-535, G8b.
- 6 See Q. David Bowers, *Whitman Encyclopedia of Obsolete Paper Money*, 8 vols. (Atlanta: Whitman Publishing, 2014–2017), 6:272, W-GA-1020-005-G030 and G030a and G030b.
- 7 All three bank notes are reproduced in Joseph J. Gaines, Jr., "Obsolete Bank Notes with Vignettes Used on Confederate States of America Type 23 and Type 32 Currency Notes," *Paper Money* 53 (January/February 2014), 36–37, figs. 2–4.
- 8 See Haxby, *Standard Catalog*, 1:359, IL-610, G2a.
- 9 For a well-illustrated discussion of how changes are made to vignettes, see Mark D. Tomasko, "Vignette Alteration Involves Several Steps," *Bank Note Reporter* (June 2000): 36–38.
- 10 The type of crop being grown in a field is not necessarily a determining factor in establishing whether the laborers are freemen or enslaved. Obviously, a cotton field is out of place in a Michigan scene, but a compacted version of the Michigan vignette on a Virginia note, in which the central section has been deleted, shows the overseer watching enslaved people harvesting grain (see Haxby, *Standard Catalog*, 4:2534, VA-220, G10). During the Confederacy, a lithographed version of this same scene appears on the \$5 note of the state of Alabama.
- 11 A change in geography not only alters one's perception of the identity of the rider, but it can also change the interpretation of details. In the Michigan note, the horseman holds a riding crop. Although in the Southern iteration the length remains the same, John W. Jones, in his exhibition catalog *Confederate Currency: The Color of Money, Depictions of Slavery in Confederate and Southern States Currency* (West Columbia, S.C.: Olive Press, 2002) reproduces two of his paintings based on the vignette found in Figure 63: *Slave Overseer with Whip* (p. 53) and *Slave Overseer with Whip II* (p. 97), where he considerably lengthens the riding crop in the second variation. In both instances, his transformation of a riding crop into a whip is either a misreading of the vignette or an example of poetic license. The riding crop is indeed more sinister when seen in the hands of an overseer, but it is a riding crop nonetheless. Bank-note imagery was careful to keep at arm's length the full extent of slavery's all-too-real horrors.
- 12 These figures too were separated to stand alone in other contexts. For a brief biography of Dayton, see Roger H. Durand, *Interesting Notes about Portraits*, 3 vols. (Rehoboth, Maine: R. H. Durand & Co., 2004), 3:52.

- 13 Busts of two beautiful women, titled “FANCY HEADS,” are included as no. 250 in the ABNC’s original series of 924 die-proof engravings produced from 1858 to 1878. Mark Tomasko offers several arresting examples of how entrancing women, drawn from popular prints, were employed on bank notes (see Mark D. Tomasko, *Images of Value: The Artwork behind U.S. Security Engraving, 1830s–1980s* [New York: Grolier Club, 2017], 52–57 and 66–67). One, a lithograph by Bernard Romain Julien after a work by Louis Eugene Coedes (fig. 13A), was used by both the National Bank Note Company (NBNC) and the American Bank Note Company (ABNC): “National used it first, in 1859 . . . with a modification to the original art, covering the girl’s shoulder. American engraved the subject two years later, following the original print almost exactly” (52). This female figure, wearing a grapevine wreath on her head, is identified in the NBNC die-proof engraving by William E. Marshall as *Ariadne*, Bacchus’s consort, and in the ABNC die-proof engraving by James Bannister as *The Wreath*, where she personifies prosperity and fertility—the two interpretations, despite the difference between a clothed shoulder and a bare one, being essentially the same (figs. 13D and 13B). No titles appear in the bank notes that they adorn (figs. 13C and 13E) as their basic meaning is clear without them.
- 14 As Martin Postle writes, “The term ‘fancy picture’ was coined in the eighteenth century [in England], when the word ‘fancy’ was more akin to ‘fantasy’” (Martin Postle, *Angels & Urchins: The Fancy Picture in 18th-Century British Art*, Djanogly Art Gallery, University of Nottingham, and Kenwood House, Hampstead, London, 1998, 5). This genre was applied to a number of sentimentalized subjects, such as angelic children, captivating women, endearing urchins, and picturesque beggars.
- 15 For a multifaceted treatment of this subject, see Virginia Hewitt, *Beauty and the Banknote: Images of Women on Paper Currency* (London: British Museum Publications, 1994), and her essay, “Soft Images, Hard Currency: The Portrayal of Women on Paper Money,” in *The Banker’s Art: Studies in Paper Money*, ed. Virginia Hewitt (London: British Museum Press, 1995), 156–165.
- 16 RWH&E also had issued an earlier version of this advertisement, which is identical in all respects except for the two male portraits at the bottom above the Native American couple (R. M. Smythe, Auction 100, 22 November 1991, repr. on back cover of the catalog). On the right-hand side, General Winfield Scott has replaced President Jackson.
- 17 Richard Doty, *Pictures from a Distant Country: Seeing America through Old Paper Money* (Atlanta: Whitman Publishing, 2013), 37. Doty was referring to the vignette’s appearance on a note (fig. 4–5) rather than the one on the RWH&E broadside.
- 18 See John A. Muscalus, *Henriette Sontag, the Countess Rossi, on Paper Money Issued in the United States* (Bridgeport, Pa.: Historical Paper Money Research Institute, 1969).
- 19 Joshua Greenberg cites the case of the young boy who appears at the upper left on the \$1 note of the Egg Harbor Bank, Egg Harbor, N.J. (for the note, see Haxby, *Standard Catalog*, 2:1275, NJ-115, G2b). This is a highly idealized portrait of Philip M. Wolseifer, who was the son of one of Egg Harbor’s most prominent citizens. When the note was issued, his appearance would have evoked civic pride, but his portrait soon became a generic depiction of adorable innocence when the ABNC reused it on currency in other regions (see Joshua R. Greenberg, *Bank Notes and Shinplasters: The Rage for Paper Money in the Early Republic* [Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020], 84–85).
- 20 In 1967, Robert Bellah first employed the term “civil religion” to refer to the theme of religion in American public life (see Robert N. Bellah, *The Broken Covenant: American*

- Civil Religion in Time of Trial*, 2nd ed. [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992], viii). Other like-minded phrases he also mentions are “political religion,” “religion of the republic,” and “public piety” (165). As he points out, in public discourse, Americans chose to express their Christian beliefs in muted terms: “Americans were a religious people and their public life ever gave expression to that fact, but they avoided any hint of establishment by opting for a neutral religious language that could give offense to none” (45).
- 21 For a discussion of Washington’s importance to American coins, paper money, and stamps, see Heinz Tschachler, *George Washington and Political Fatherhood: The Endurance of a National Myth* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co., 2020).
 - 22 For a discussion of the ruler’s “body natural” and his “body politic,” see Ernst Kantorowicz’s groundbreaking book of 1957, *The King’s Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1957).
 - 23 Mark Edward Thistlewaite, *The Image of George Washington: Studies in Mid-Nineteenth-Century American History Painting* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1979), 189.
 - 24 Q. David Bowers writes that the vignette, having been exclusively engraved for the Bank of North America, was “borrowed” by the Rhode Island bank (Bowers, *Whitman Encyclopedia*, 5:244).
 - 25 See “Perry’s Victory on Lake Erie,” in Roger H. Durand, *Interesting Notes about History* (Rehoboth, Maine: R. H. Durand & Co., 1990), 134–137, and John A. Muscalus, *Birch’s Painting of Perry’s Victory on Lake Erie on State Bank Notes and Scrip* (Bridgeport, Pa.: Historical Paper Money Research Institute, 1966).
 - 26 For background on this family, see the “Harrison Dynasty” in Bob McCabe, *Counterfeiting and Technology: A History of the Long Struggle between Paper-Money Counterfeiters and Security Printing* (Atlanta: Whitman Publishing, 2016), 44–46.
 - 27 For a colorful account of the Jefferson Bank’s short, checkered history, see Greenberg, *Bank Notes and Shinplasters*, 106–107.
 - 28 See John A. Muscalus, *Jackson Portraits and the Battle of New Orleans on State Bank Notes* (Bridgeport, Pa.: Historical Paper Money Research Institute, 1974), and R. Durand, *History*, 142–145.
 - 29 See C. John Ferreri, “America’s First Historical Vignettes on Paper Money,” *Paper Money* 31 (January/February 1992): 5–9.
 - 30 Roger Durand offers a number of historical scenes, several of which have already been referenced, in his book *Interesting Notes about History*. Durand arranges the subjects in chronological order based on when the event took place rather than by the date of the vignettes, but his selection is extremely informative. Unsurprisingly, America’s story begins with vignettes depicting the landing of Christopher Columbus, but the very first image in the book relates the story of William Tell and the apple, which is said to have taken place in Switzerland in the early 1300s. This image related to a rebellion against a tyrant proved popular on bank notes in German communities.
 - 31 Danforth, Bald & Co. produced an earlier version of this specimen sheet (early 1850s, 89.5×79.4 centimeters). In the ca. 1853 printing, Danforth, Wright & Co. not only changed the name but also proudly added a genealogy near the bottom starting with Murray, Draper, Fairman & Co., 1814, thereby identifying itself with a long and distinguished history of American bank-note printers. In addition to adding flourishes to the upper border, this later version also introduces American Liberty atop the urn within a

shell motif that associates her with the iconography of the Birth of Venus. The vignette of a sailor now pins down the center. Examples of both four-piece specimen sheets are in the Numismatic Collection of Yale University Art Museum. The photograph reproduced as Figure 75 is probably of its recently acquired impression, and the measurements for both works are the ones recorded by Yale.

32 For the identification of this subject, see R. Durand, *History*, 33–34.

Chapter 5

- 1 See Q. David Bowers, *Obsolete Paper Money Issued by Banks in the United States, 1782–1866* (Atlanta: Whitman Publishing, 2006), 311.
- 2 See Mark D. Tomasko, “Notes on Bank Note Engravers & Artist Attributions,” *Paper Money* 46 (March/April 2007): 150.
- 3 For information on Smillie, see Thomas F. Morris’s four-part essay, “James Smillie: The Pictorial Engraver, 1807–1885,” *Essay-Proof Journal* 1 (April 1944): 67–74; 1 (June 1944): 133–141; 1 (October 1944): 199–207; and 2 (January 1945): 19–25. It should be noted that Morris is the son of Thomas F. Morris, Sr., who played an important role in conceiving the Silver Certificates Series of 1896 discussed in chapter 12.
- 4 Anonymous, “Notices of the Fine Arts: Bank-Note Engraving,” *Godey’s Magazine and Lady’s Book* 36 (1848), 126.
- 5 Anonymous, “Notices of the Fine Arts: Bank-Note Engraving,” 127.
- 6 The second part of Bob McCabe’s book *Counterfeiting and Technology: A History of the Long Struggle between Paper-Money Counterfeiters and Security Printing* (Atlanta: Whitman Publishing, 2016) offers an informed exposition of the various processes involved in the making of paper money. A chapter is devoted to line engraving, followed by one on mechanical engraving that considers the use of lathes, cycloid machines, ruling machines, and other mechanical devices. A chapter is devoted to paper, another to ink, followed by one on printing presses. It concludes with the chapter “A Little Chemistry,” which explores such methods as lithography, electrotyping, and photoengraving.
- 7 Jennifer L. Roberts, “The Currency of Ornament: Machine-Lathed Anticounterfeiting Patterns and the Portability of Value,” in *Histories of Ornament: From Global to Local*, ed. by Gülru Necipoğlu and Alina Payne (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2016), 308–319.
- 8 The steamboat vignette is the work of RWH&E, having appeared earlier on the \$1 note of the City of Wapello, Iowa, dated 20 July 1857 (see Newman Numismatic Portal at Washington University in St. Louis, <https://nnp.wustl.edu/library/imagetdetail/598126?col=512602> [accessed 8 September 2023]). In this bill, a Native American stands at the far right meditating on the world’s changing nature. The steamboat also proudly bears the name of the city but goes nameless in the later ABNC version.
- 9 Rawdon, Wright, Hatch & Edson Business Solicitation Letter, 1 May 1856, Heritage Auctions, #3513 (April 2011), lot 19544.
- 10 This specimen sheet forms part of the collection of the New York Public Library.
- 11 George Peyton, *How to Detect Counterfeit Bank Notes*, 3rd ed. (New York: Published for the Author, 1861), 8.
- 12 Peyton, *How to Detect Counterfeit Bank Notes*, 12–13.

- 13 See the section on “Worthless Paper” in chapter 2.
- 14 Anonymous, “Notices of the Fine Arts: Bank-Note Engraving,” 126–127.
- 15 Italics indicate emphasis in the original quote. Anonymous, “Notices of the Fine Arts: Bank-Note Engraving,” 127.
- 16 Anonymous, “Notices of the Fine Arts: Bank-Note Engraving,” 127.
- 17 [Charles Toppan], “History and Progress of Bank Note Engraving,” *The Crayon* 1 (21 February 1855): 116.
- 18 As seen earlier, an article from the year before had praised the work of Asher B. Durand from the 1820s as having inaugurated a new era in bank-note engraving: “As designer and engraver, [he] carried so much taste into the work, as to place the note among the works of fine arts—a work in which beauty now blends with utility, and that to a degree that makes paper currency an instrument for refining the public taste” (Anonymous, “Cyrus Durand, the Machinist and Bank-Note Engraver,” *The Illustrated Magazine of Art* 3 [1854], 270).
- 19 [Charles Toppan], “History and Progress of Bank-Note Engraving,” 117.
- 20 A. H. Guernsey, “Making Money. III.—The American Bank Note Company,” *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* 24 (February 1862), 308.
- 21 Guernsey, “Making Money,” 308.
- 22 These two works are illustrated and discussed in Mark D. Tomasko, *Images of Value: The Artwork behind U.S. Security Engraving, 1830s–1980s* (New York: Grolier Club), 2017, 58–59.
- 23 See Thomas F. Morris [Jr.], “Felix O. C. Darley: Bank Note Artist, 1822–1888,” *Essay Proof Journal* 18 (Winter 1961), 5. One estimate is that over his career, Darley executed close to 4,000 drawings for books, periodicals, newspapers, and bank notes (see Wilmington, Delaware, Delaware Art Museum, *Illustrated by Darley*, 4 May–18 June 1978, 3).
- 24 Mark Tomasko totals 112 drawings executed for Toppan Carpenter from 1853 to 1858; 39 drawings for ABNC from 1859 to 1865; 59 for the Continental Bank Note Company (CBNC) from 1864 to 1873; and a smattering of artwork for other firms (Tomasko, *Images of Value*, 47). Because the Bureau of Engraving and Printing favored the art of Theodore Liebler, Darley’s designs did not adorn federal currency.
- 25 The account book is owned by the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Mass. For the most part, the following references to this ledger rely on the portions published in Terry A. Bryan, “Art & Commerce Intersect: The Bank Note Vignettes of Felix Octavius Carr Darley,” *Paper Money* 46 (March/April 2007): 83–121. Bryan’s dates and attributions are not always trustworthy. For corrections to his article, see Mark D. Tomasko, “Examination Shows All That Glitters Is Not Darley,” *Bank Note Reporter* (June 2007): 44–48.
- 26 These dates and prices are taken from copies of the account book.
- 27 See Bryan, “Art & Commerce Intersect,” 108.
- 28 See Bryan, “Art & Commerce Intersect,” 100.
- 29 See Bryan, “Art & Commerce Intersect,” 103. Also recorded in the ledger is *End Piece Indian on Horseback*, which dates to January 1854 (99).
- 30 See Bryan, “Art & Commerce Intersect,” 102.

- 31 See Morris, “Felix O. C. Darley,” 5.
- 32 See Bryan, “Art & Commerce Intersect,” 103.
- 33 For the identifications of the artist and engraver, see Roger H. Durand, *Interesting Notes about Vignettes*, 3 vols. (Rehoboth, Maine: R. H. Durand & Co., 1995), [1]:110. R. Durand also illustrates one of Darley’s preparatory drawings for this design.
- 34 DeWitt Clinton Hay is identified as the engraver in Ronald L. Horstman, “The White Bear,” *Paper Money* 38 (March/April 1999), 36.
- 35 Without offering evidence, Terry A. Bryan asserts, “E. K. Kane described the attack while on the lecture circuit” (Bryan, “Art & Commerce Intersect,” 114). This is a plausible explanation, even if undocumented.
- 36 For the ledger entries, see Bryan, “Art & Commerce Intersect,” 103.
- 37 Another vignette *Dr. Kane’s Artic Expedition* appears on the \$5 note of the Northern Bank, Providence, R.I. (see Q. David Bowers, *Whitman Encyclopedia of Obsolete Paper Money*, 8 vols. [Atlanta: Whitman Publishing, 2014–2017], 5:208, W-RI-1130-005-G040b). Printed by Toppan, Carpenter & Co. and then by the ABNC, it shows three men pushing a boat back into the water. Striking a statuesque pose, Kane stands holding his rifle beside the dogs and dogsled next to the boat. For a discussion of this image, see Ronald L. Horstman, “The Story behind an Obsolete Note Vignette: Kane’s Artic Expedition,” *Paper Money* 21 (July/August 1982): 163–165, and Hortsman, “The White Bear,” 36.
- 38 *The Cooper Vignettes: From Drawings by F. O. C. Darley* (New York: James G. Gregory, Successor to W. A. Townsend & Co., 1862). The publishing house had said much the same thing in its prospectus, a portion of which is quoted in an English review of 1861. The London reviewer pounced on a reference to “the great mechanical beauty of the lines” to condemn both bank-note engraving and the Cooper illustrations as being too mechanical in character to qualify as high art, a complaint that still reverberates today (Anonymous, “Darley’s Cooper Vignettes,” *The Art-Journal* 22 [July 1860], 224). George Frederick Cumming Smillie, chief engraver at the BEP from 1894–1922 and the cousin of James Smillie, wrote notes from 1912 to 1917 about the artistic merits of bank-note engraving, prompted, in part, by a critical letter from the designer Kenyon Cox to the BEP (Bureau of Engraving and Printing), dated 21 July 1913. The letter and notes, one section of which reads, “Engraving Not ‘Mechanical,’” are printed in G. F. C. Smillie, “Notes on Line Engraving,” *Essay-Proof Journal* 8 (October 1951): 201–206.
- 39 The book lists twenty-six names of those who participated in executing the Cooper illustrations, a who’s who of bank-note engravers, including Louis Delnoce, Robert Hinselwood, Alfred Jones, Alfred Sealey, James Smillie and his son J. D. Smillie, and Edward Keatinge, who was then well on his way to becoming the architect of Confederate currency.
- 40 The left-hand vignette appears on its own in the lower left-hand corner of the \$5 note of the McKean County Bank, Smethport, Penn. (see James A. Haxby, *Standard Catalog of United States Obsolete Bank Notes, 1782–1866*, 4 vols. [Iola, Wis.: Krause Publications, 1988], 4:2135, PA-625, G6a).
- 41 Mark Tomasko suggested Casilear may be the designer. A proof of this image from the Smillie Family Album was sold in the Heritage Numismatic Auction of 3 September 2014, which would suggest that either Smillie was involved in its engraving or, out of admiration for its quality, he included it in his personal collection.

Chapter 6

- 1 Herman Melville, *White-Jacket* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press and the Newberry Library, 1970), 151.
- 2 Whereas the phrase “American Exceptionalism” was not coined until the 1920s, an awareness that White America occupied a special place in history is at least as old as the 1620 Plymouth settlement, when the Puritans believed that their new beginning would act as a model for the world. Later, the ideology fueling the American Revolution encouraged the new nation to see itself as embodying a special mission and destiny to uplift all humankind.
- 3 Asher B. Durand, “Letters on Landscape Painting. No. II,” *The Crayon* 1 (17 January 1855), 34.
- 4 A. B. Durand, “Letter No. VIII,” *The Crayon* 1 (6 June 1855), 354.
- 5 William Cullen Bryant, “Funeral Oration on the Death of Thomas Cole” (1848), reprinted in John W. McCoubrey, *American Art, 1700–1960: Sources and Documents* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1965), 96.
- 6 Two books that provide insights into perceptions of the evolving American landscape are John R. Stilgoe, *Common Landscape of America, 1580 to 1845* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1982), and Gloria Gilda Deak, *Picturing America, 1497–1899* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1988).
- 7 All the various notes employing this vignette bear the imprint of the ABNC, which was founded in 1858. The \$5 note of the Rail Road Bank, Madison, Wisconsin, bears a double imprint—Danforth, Perkins & Co. and the ABNC (see James A. Haxby, *Standard Catalog of United States Obsolete Bank Notes, 1782–1866*, 4 vols. [Iola, Wis.: Krause Publications, 1988], 4:2589, WI-385, G2)—which suggests it was produced soon after their merger.
- 8 For reproductions of this currency, see Douglas A. Nyholm, *Mormon Currency, 1837–1937* (self-pub., 2010).
- 9 Quoted in Larry Witham, *A City upon a Hill: How Sermons Changed the Course of American History* (New York: HarperOne, 2007), 19. Winthrop delivered his sermon “A Model of Christian Charity” in 1630, either just before the Puritans departed England, while they were at sea on the ship *Arabella*, or soon after their arrival in America. For another resplendent panorama stretching across the top of a bill, see the \$5 note, Dover Bank, Dover, N.H. (Q. David Bowers, *Whitman Encyclopedia of Obsolete Paper Money*, 8 vols. [Atlanta: Whitman Publishing, 2014–2017], 1:203). This note, issued in the 1830s–1840s, bears the imprint “Perkins Patent Steel Plate.” Extremely rare, it is better known from an inferior counterfeit bill copying it. The design, however, takes a different tack from the earlier Augusta panorama, choosing to strongly emphasize the center foreground, where allegorical figures dominate and where a massive tree, its sheltering branches stretching across the top of the image, is directly behind them. To the left and right are detailed images of daily life, punctuated with impressive religious, civic, and domestic architecture, serviced by a busy wharf. The Augusta note introduces a “5” at either end of the panorama. The Dover note does the same but more carefully integrates the numbers into the scene, making any attempt to raise the face value that much more difficult.
- 10 Roger H. Durand, *Interesting Notes about History* (Rehoboth, Maine: R. H. Durand & Co., 1990), 11–14. Also see Gene Hessler, “Christopher Columbus on Bank Notes,” *Paper Money* 31 (September/October 1992): 163–168.

- 11 See John A. Muscalus, *Bank Notes Commemorating the Landing of the Pilgrims at Plymouth* (Bridgeport, Pa.: Historical Paper Money Research Institute, 1973); R. Durand, *History*, 28–32; and C. John Ferreri, “Pilgrim Vignettes on Obsolete Notes,” *Paper Money* 50 (November/December 2011): 404–414.
- 12 See R. Durand, *History*, 35–36, and Roger H. Durand, *Interesting Notes about Vignettes*, 3 vols. (Rehoboth, Maine: R. H. Durand & Co., 1995–2001), [1]:113.
- 13 See R. Durand, *History*, 37–38.
- 14 For illustrations of both vignettes, see R. Durand, *History*, 39–41, and R. Durand, *Vignettes*, [1]:106 and 2:82.
- 15 See R. Durand, *History*, 52–54.
- 16 Deism believed in a Creator who had revealed himself in nature, having inscribed the knowledge of good and evil in the hearts of men and women. Reason, unassisted by divine revelation, guided one’s choices, and in the afterlife, one would be rewarded or punished according to one’s conduct in this world.
- 17 Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815–1848* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 186. William Bierly places formal church membership at 40 percent of the population by 1860. Of the remainder, he points out that many who declined formal membership, such as Abraham Lincoln, still subscribed to fundamental Christian tenets and were intimately familiar with the Bible (William Bierly, *In God We Trust: The American Civil War, Money, Banking, and Religion* [Pelham, Ala.: Whitman Publishing, 2019], 10).
- 18 One should mention that there is an early exception: notes designed and printed by P. Maverick, Durand & Co., prepared for the Eagle Bank of Providence, R.I., bear the inscription “IN GOD WE HOPE” as an accompaniment to the anchor of Hope. But this appeal to the Almighty references the state’s seal rather than providing an independent religious declaration. A sheet of these bills can be found at the New York Historical Society Museum and Library in the Durand file, Box 1, Folder 2, no. 83419d. The four bills are a \$20 note, \$50, \$100, and a post note (a note whose denomination is left blank to be filled in as desired). A \$1.50 post note dated 1 July 1837 is illustrated in Haxby, *Standard Catalog*, 4:2226, RI-285, G12; and in Bowers, *Whitman Encyclopedia*, 5:159, W-RI-930–001.50-G040).
- 19 In his book *In God We Trust*, William Bierly offers a detailed account of when, how, and why God was invoked on U.S. money, right up to the present day.
- 20 See Gene Hessler, “Precursors of the Motto ‘In God We Trust’ on U.S. Paper Money and Design Background for Related Notes,” *Paper Money* 17 (January/February 1978):10–14. Also see *Paper Money* 46 (September/October 2007), 343. The appearance of “GOD” on federal paper money has raised issues about the First Amendment’s call for the separation of church and state. Whatever the merits of this argument, no such restrictions applied to bank-note imagery.
- 21 One is reminded of John Adams’s statement linking the United States to the illumination and emancipation of all humankind: “I always consider the settlement of America with reverence and wonder, as the opening of a grand scene and design in providence, for the illumination of the ignorant and the emancipation of the slavish part of mankind all over the earth” (John Adams, “A Dissertation on the Canon and Feudal Law,” *Boston Gazette*, August 1765).

- 22 Although Max Weber coined the phrase “the Protestant work ethic” in his book *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1904–1905), the concept itself is as old as the Protestant Reformation.
- 23 Given its popularity, there are numerous publications on Christmas imagery, but a good place to start is Roger H. Durand, *Interesting Notes about Christmas* (Rehoboth, Maine: R. H. Durand & Co., 1993).
- 24 For two examples of St. George and the Dragon, see the \$2 note of the Sackets Harbor Bank, Sackets Harbor, N.Y. (Haxby, *Standard Catalog*, 3:1780, NY-2470, G50a), and the \$3 note of the Wisconsin Marine & Fire Insurance Co., Milwaukee, Wis. (Haxby, *Standard Catalog*, 4:2606, WI-545, G4). The first is the work of Rawdon, Wright, Hatch & Edson; the second of Toppan, Carpenter, Casilear & Co.
- 25 The angel vignette is discussed at greater length in John A. Muscalus, “Bank Notes with Leonardo’s ‘Madonna of the Rocks’ Angel Detail,” *Paper Money* 14 (March/April 1975): 57–59.
- 26 For various appearances of this vignette, see John A. Muscalus, *Saint Catherine on Paper Money of the State of Florida and Others* (Bridgeport, Pa.: Historical Paper Money Research Institute, 1968). When reproducing this vignette, Roger Durand also titles it *St. Catherine of Alexandria* (R. Durand, *Vignettes*, 3:122). Both he and Muscalus misunderstand the nature of the transmission of images—although the vignette is based on a painting of St. Catherine, in the new context its old title no longer applies. Another Raphael source employed by Asher B. Durand can be seen on the \$10 note of specimen bills reproduced in Q. David Bowers, *Obsolete Paper Money Issued by Banks in the United States, 1782–1866* (Atlanta: Whitman Publishing, 2006), 175. The enchanting bust of the young woman who turns her head back to look upward as her hair and drapery blow in the wind is based on Raphael’s fresco *Galatea* in the Farnesina in Rome.
- 27 For use of this vignette on notes issued for the Delaware Bridge Company, see John A. Muscalus, *Famous Paintings of God and the Infant Christ on Paper Money Issued in New Jersey* (Bridgeport, Pa.: Historical Paper Money Research Institute, 1969). The Infant Christ referred to in the title is the same vignette as the one discussed in Muscalus, *The Extensive Use of Christ on Paper Money Circulated in the United States* (Bridgeport, Pa.: Historical Paper Money Research Institute, 1968).
- 28 Roger Durand argues for a Christian reading: “It is interesting to note that with all the controversy surrounding the separation of church and state and the criticism by some of the use of the phrase ‘In God We Trust’ on our currency, that over 150 years ago the officers of a company [the Delaware Bridge Company of Lambertville, N.J.] chose to use an actual artist’s interpretation of the Almighty God on their currency. Many banks and other organizations that issued paper money used many different mythological gods which would offend no one, but a few companies apparently wished to make a statement by using the vignette of the God of their beliefs” (Roger H. Durand, *Interesting Notes about Allegorical Representations* [Rehoboth, Maine: R. H. Durand & Co., 1994], 22). In a later publication, however, he changed his mind, correctly identifying the vignette as *Jupiter* (R. Durand, *Vignettes*, 2:92).
- 29 See Muscalus, *The Extensive Use of Christ*, 4.
- 30 John Muscalus also published the pamphlet *Saint John on Paper Money Issued in the United States* (Bridgeport, Pa.: Historical Paper Money Research Institute, 1968). In this second instance, the image of the youthful St. John the Baptist embracing a lamb, which is based on a print after a painting by the seventeenth-century Spanish painter Bartolomé

Esteban Murillo (National Gallery, London), is unmistakably religious, as St. John's cross with his banner lies at his feet. Yet this vignette was produced by a firm out of the mainstream—Sage & Sons, Litho-Bank Note Engravers, Buffalo, N.Y.—and may have appeared only on an 1858 fraudulent bank note and the bills altered from it, as well as notes of 1862 printed for a hotel in Buffalo. Rather than demonstrate the popularity of religious imagery, this vignette, a rendering of poor quality reserved for marginal notes, underscores the dearth of such subjects in the mainstream production of nineteenth-century American paper money.

- 31 Roger Durand records Casilear as the designer (see R. Durand, *Vignettes*, [1]:29). He also lists James D. Smillie and Alfred Jones as the engravers. Smillie would have been responsible for etching the background and Jones for engraving the figures.
- 32 The other of Leutze's designs, engraved by Burt in 1862, is *Pro Patria* (for one's country), another patriotic image, in this instance, showing America, armed with spear and shield in the manner of Minerva, holding up before a flaming classical altar a gem-encrusted chalice and strings of jewels. She wears a star-studded cloak, and atop her helmet is a downsized eagle. Dimly seen in the background is a phalanx of spear-holding soldiers. Leutze recalls the classical narrative, recounted in Livy, of Roman women donating their riches for the good of the country, a subject that had also appeared in the iconography of the French Revolution. Nicolas Guy Brenet had exhibited his painting *Piety and Generosity of Roman Women*, in which Roman matrons are shown donating their jewels and wedding rings to the republic, at the Salon of 1785. At the beginning of the French Revolution, artists' wives and daughters reenacted in a public ceremony this classical story when they donated their jewelry to the nation. Although *Pro Patria* and *The Death-Blow* conform to the criteria for bank-note vignettes, and *The Death-Blow* was included in the series of bank-note vignettes issued by the ABNC, they do not appear on paper money. Both, however, can be found as pendants, along with other vignettes, on a state of New Jersey certificate of appreciation for Civil War veterans, an example of which is in the collection of Mark Tomasko.
- 33 Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America and Two Essays on America*, trans. Gerald E. Bevan with an Introduction and Notes by Isaac Kramnick (London: Penguin Books, 2003), 525–526. Later, in his account, Tocqueville reiterates that America's exceptional circumstance, which he calls "this new condition of society," does not necessarily make it superior, only different (820).
- 34 Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 524.
- 35 Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 524.
- 36 Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 713.
- 37 Washington Irving, "The Creole Village: A Sketch from a Steam-Boat," *The Knickerbocker Magazine* 8 (November 1836), 602.
- 38 Irving, "The Creole Village," 602.
- 39 Irving, "The Creole Village," 604.
- 40 Charles Dickens, *American Notes* (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1968), 43.
- 41 Walter Benjamin, "One-Way Street," in *One-Way Street and Other Writings*, trans. Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter (London: Verso, 1992), 96.
- 42 Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 277.

- 43 Fanny Trollope, *Domestic Manners of the Americans*, reprint (self-published: CreateSpace, 2015), 212–213.
- 44 Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 710.

Chapter 7

- 1 Gareth E. John, “Cultural Nationalism, Westward Expansion and the Production of Imperial Landscape: George Catlin’s Native American West,” *Ecumene: A Journal of Cultural Geographies* 8 (2001), 184. John is referring to the book by G. H. Orians, *The Cult of the Vanishing American: A Century View, 1834–1934* (Toledo, Ohio: H. J. Chittenden Co., 1934).
- 2 For an account of Catlin’s works, his travels, his intentions, and the disposition of his collections, see the exhibition catalog *George Catlin and His Indian Gallery* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian American Art Museum, 2002).
- 3 Quoted in Gareth E. John, “Cultural Nationalism,” 183, from George Catlin, *O-kee-pa: A Religious Ceremony; and Other Customs of the Mandans* (London: Trübner, 1867), 52.
- 4 The upper-central vignette of the \$10 note of the Bank of Morgan, Morgan, Georgia (Q. David Bowers, *Whitman Encyclopedia of Obsolete Paper Money*, 8 vols. [Atlanta: Whitman Publishing, 2014–2017], 6:195, W-GA-760-010-G060), features a magnificent American eagle atop the globe with its wings spread wide, as it shelters and unites the state flags behind it. The eagle, however, can also be seen to extend its protection to the two oval vignettes in the lower-left and right-hand corners. On the left, a resolute Revolutionary War soldier stands on a war-torn battlefield. On the right, a Native American, wearing an elaborate topknot, large necklace, and decorated animal hide, reaches for an arrow to place in his bow. Both of these stalwart and inspiring exemplars, two kindred spirits, belong in spirit to the same homeland.
- 5 Kenneth Neal offers an overview for reasons why the American Indian ceased to be as popular a subject as it had been in the first half of the nineteenth century (Kenneth Neal, *The Decline of Indian Subjects in American Painting after 1865*, Master’s thesis, University of Pittsburgh, 1983).
- 6 See Heinz Tschachler, *The Greenback: Paper Money and American Culture* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2010), 86. Also, see Forrest W. Daniel, “Running Antelope—Misnamed Onepapa,” *Paper Money* 8 (1969): 4–9. Another source is Chris Bulfinch, “Running Antelope and the 1899 \$5 Silver Certificate,” *CoinWeek*, 26 June 2020, accessed through the Society of Paper Money Collectors’ *News & Notes* 6 (30 June 2020). George Frederick Cumming Smillie, a nephew of James Smillie, was the engraver.
- 7 For the nineteenth-century definition of Native American, see Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815–1848* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 321.
- 8 As can be seen in the bibliography, the literature on the White response to Native Americans is vast. Hugh Honour, *The New Golden Land: European Images of America from the Discoveries to the Present Time* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1975); Hugh Honour’s exhibition catalog *The European Vision of America* (National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; Cleveland Museum of Art; and Musée du Louvre, Paris, 1976–1977); Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., *The White Man’s Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978); Gene Hessler, “The Environment and the American Indian as

Seen on 19th Century Bank Notes,” *Paper Money* 23 (March/April 1984): 75–78; Robert H. Durand, *Interesting Notes about Indians* (Rehoboth, Maine: R. H. Durand & Co. 1991); Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1998); John M. Coward, *The Newspaper Indian: Native American Identity in the Press, 1820–90* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999); and Stephanie Pratt, *American Indians in British Art, 1700–1840* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2005). For a welcome corrective to the narrative of White dominance over the American Indian nations, see Pekka Hämmäläinen, *Indigenous Continent: The Epic Contest for North America* (New York: Liveright Publishing, 2022).

- 9 See Heinz Tschachler, “The Wildman in the New World: The Standing Indian on the Massachusetts Bay Colony’s Bills of Credit Reveals Colonial Perceptions of Native Americans,” *Numismatist* (September 2019): 39–47. Tschachler misinterprets some details to make the figure of the Standing Indian confirm more closely to the Wildman tradition. In contrast to him, I interpret the markings on the Standing Indian as denoting a darker skin color rather than as shaggy hair. Nor do I see any facial hair.
- 10 Thomas Harriot’s *A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia*, Theodor de Bry’s 1590 ed. (New York: Dover Publications Reprint, 1972), [75] (in the original text, the lower case “v’s” are rendered as “u’s”). The first engraving of a Pict [77] shows him holding a bleeding severed head, another head lying at his feet, making him far more barbaric than any of John White’s Virginian Indians.
- 11 Quoted in Tschachler, “The Wildman in the New World,” 43.
- 12 An American Indian with dark skin and no weapons had appeared earlier on Georgia’s five-shilling note of 1762 (reproduced in Eric P. Newman, *The Early Paper Money of America*, 5th ed. [Iola, Wis.: Krause Publications, 2008], 100).
- 13 For one study concerning the early depiction of America as an Indian maiden, see Lester C. Olson, “The American Colonies Portrayed as an Indian: Race and Gender in Eighteenth-Century British Caricatures,” *Imprint* 17 (Autumn 1992): 2–13. In the seventeenth century, allegorical depictions of America had also favored the male figure of the Indian Emperor (see Pratt’s chapter “The Allegorical Representation in America,” in *American Indians in British Art, 1700–1840*). For numerous images depicting early America and its native inhabitants, see Lynn Glaser, *Engraved America; Iconography of America through 1800* (Philadelphia: Ancient Orb Press, 1970). Also see Glaser, *America on Paper: The First Hundred Years* (Philadelphia: Associated Antiquaries, 1989).
- 14 As is the case of the Indian maiden in the preceding illustration, the feathers establish her American identity at the same time they mischaracterize her Indian identity: “female Indians, regardless of tribe, never wore feathers” (Tschachler, *The Greenback*, 85).
- 15 The vignette of Ceres accompanied by the classicized America appears on a note dated to June 1849 in Richard Doty, *Pictures from a Distant Country: Seeing America through Old Paper Money* (Atlanta: Whitman Publishing, 2013), 162, fig. 2–22. The bank-note firm is Hufty & Danforth. (Doty also reproduces an undated, unissued note with this same vignette produced by Danforth, Bald & Co. [230, fig. 7–9].) As we have seen, the farmhouse and church replace the standing figure in a note dated 20 October 1852, and for a note with the Indian maiden bearing the early date of 1 September 1852, see the \$10 note of the Bank of the Republic, Washington, D.C., in James A. Haxby, *Standard Catalog of United States Obsolete Bank Notes, 1782–1866*, 4 vols. (Iola, Wis.: Krause Publications, 1988), 1:208, DC-350, G8. These two later versions, which appear to have been created almost simultaneously, are the work of Danforth, Bald & Co.

- 16 Conversion for Native maidens to Christianity often proved to be a perilous affair. Anne-Louis Girodet's well-known painting *The Entombment of Atala*, exhibited at the Paris Salon of 1807 (Musée du Louvre, Paris), shows Atala, the half-caste heroine of François-René de Chateaubriand's 1801 novel, being buried with a cross in her clasped hands and with another cross seen outside the mouth of the cave in which she is being interred. Torn between her love for the Indian brave Chactas and her Christian vow of chastity, she had committed suicide. Thomas Crawford's sculpture *Mexican Girl Dying* of 1848 (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York) shows a young woman expiring with a cross lying across her exposed left thigh. The conversion of fictional Native Americans could prove fatal, whether they died by their own hand or at the hands of their hostile tribes, and even the real-life Pocahontas did not survive long after traveling to London, where she contracted a European disease.
- 17 Two articles, both by E. McClung Fleming, help shed light on the various guises in which the allegory of America could appear: "The American Image as an Indian Princess, 1765–1783," *Winterthur Portfolio* 2 (1965): 65–81; and "From Indian Princess to Greek Goddess: The American Image, 1783–1815," *Winterthur Portfolio* 3 (1967): 37–66. For the early nineteenth century, Fleming charts four main groupings: 1. the Indian Princess, 2. the Plumed Greek Goddess, a neoclassical transformation of the Indian Princess (this figure applies primarily to European depictions in which the feathers are those of an ostrich), 3. three classical deities—Hercules, Minerva, and Liberty, and 4. Columbia. The Indian Princess, Minerva, Liberty and Columbia can often be found in various combinations. Also see Gene Hessler, "The History and Development of 'America' as Symbolized by an American Female," in *America's Currency, 1789–1866: Coinage of the Americas Conference at the American Numismatic Society, New York City, October 31–November 2, 1985*, ed. William E. Metcalf (New York: the American Numismatic Society, 1986), 81–88.
- 18 Roger Durand identifies this scene as "Major Waldron's Terrible Fight" (Roger H. Durand, *Interesting Notes about History* [Rehoboth, Maine: R. H. Durand & Co., 1990], 23–25), an episode which took place on 27 June 1689, during King William's War. At the time of the attack, Waldron was sleeping in his bed, then tied to his chair and tortured by the Natives, who were seeking revenge for an earlier betrayal, an event that does not correspond to the vignette's narrative. When reproducing this vignette a second time, Durand gives W. W. Rice as the engraver of the figures and James D. Smillie as the engraver of the background (Roger H. Durand, *Interesting Notes about Vignettes*, 3 vols. [Rehoboth, Maine: R. H. Durand & Co., 1995–2001], [1]:114). As already noted, the design is by Felix Darley.
- 19 For a reproduction, see R. Durand, *Vignettes*, 3:111. For a discussion of Vanderlyn's painting and numerous other nineteenth-century illustrations of this subject, see Samuel Y. Edgerton, Jr., "The Murder of Jane McCrea," *The Art Bulletin* 47 (December 1965): 481–492.
- 20 Edgerton, "The Murder of Jane McCrea," 488 (reproduced as fig. 9). Edgerton did not know of the bank-note vignette, but in 1965, an image of this note would have been difficult to find.
- 21 Another dramatic fight between American Indians and White settlers appears in a vignette showing a fallen Daniel Boone at the mercy of a Native American in a skirmish that took place on 24 April 1777. Boone is shown being rescued by Simon Kenton, who shoots the foe before he can bring his tomahawk down on Boone's head (see R. Durand, *History*, 107–109, and R. Durand, *Vignettes*, 3:72).

- 22 The Native American as “noble” savage is covered in most books on how White culture responded to the American Indian, but the following two should also be added to this list: Rena Neumann Coen, *The Indian as the Noble Savage in Nineteenth Century American Art* (PhD diss., University of Minnesota, 1969), and Terry Jay Ellingson, *The Myth of the Noble Savage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).
- 23 J. J. Winkelmann [Winckelmann], *Reflections on the Painting and Sculpture of the Greeks*, trans. Henry Fuseli [Fuseli] (London, 1765), 6.
- 24 John Galt, *The Life and Studies of Benjamin West, Esq. . . . Prior to his Arrival in England*, 2 vols. (London, 1816), 1:104.
- 25 Galt, *Life and Studies of Benjamin West*, 1:105.
- 26 In his book *The Landscape, A Didactic Poem*, 2nd ed. (London: W. Bulmer, 1795), Richard Payne Knight records a more matter-of-fact account, minus the group of onlookers, of West’s reaction to the *Apollo Belvedere*: “the great artist [West] who now so worthily fills the President’s chair in the Royal Academy, assured me, that when he first saw the Apollo of the Belvidere, he was extremely struck with its resemblance to some of the Mohawk warriors whom he had seen in America” (3n). As early as 1755, John Shebbeare had already gone West one better in his rapturous comparison of an Indian warrior to the *Apollo Belvedere*:
- Cannassatego* [sic] had now reached his thirtieth Year, in all the Bloom of Manhood . . . no human Form was ever seen more graceful, than that of *Canassatego*, his Person was as strait as the Arrow which his Hands directed from his fatal Bow, his Stature six Foot, the most perfect Height in Human Nature; on his large Neck his Head stood erect and bold, his Face was animated with Features that spoke Sensibility of Soul, high and open was his Forehead, from his Eyes flashed forth the Beams of Courage and Compassion, as each Passion at different Moments animated his Bosom, within which his Heart beat with honest Throbbing for his Country’s Service; . . . The Air, Attitude and Expression of the beauteous Statue of *Apollo*, which adorns the *Belvedera* Palace at *Rome*, were seen animated in this *American* the Instant he had discharged his deadly shaft. (John Shebbeare, *Lydia, or Filial Piety. A Novel*, 4 vols. [London, 1755], 1:3–4)
- 27 “Philip of Pokanoket,” in *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.*, in *Washington Irving: History, Tales and Sketches* (Cambridge: Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge for Literary Classics of the United States, 1983), 1013–1028. Irving gives Philip’s Native name as Metamocet.
- 28 Reproduced and discussed in Francis Haskell and Nicholas Penny, *Taste and the Antique: The Lure of Classical Sculpture, 1500–1900* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1981), 224–226.
- 29 This work is discussed in R. Durand, *History*, 45–48, and R. Durand, *Vignettes*, [1]:105. Ferdinand Pettrich’s large marble sculpture *The Dying Tecumseh* (Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.) of 1856 belongs to this tradition of the heroic death of a valiant and respected foe. See also Peter Stephenson’s sculpture *Wounded Indian* of 1850 (reproduced in William H. Gerdts, *American Neo-Classic Sculpture: The Marble Resurrection* [New York: Viking Press, 1973], 128).
- 30 After the 1584 engraving was made, various popes were responsible for commissioning restoration work not only on the figures but also on their positioning. Reproduced and discussed in Haskell and Penny, *Taste and the Antique*, 136–141.

- 31 For a vignette showing a standing American Indian attempting to control a rearing horse, see Doty, *Pictures from a Distant Country*, 273, fig. 10–26. In this instance, classical restraint has been abandoned in favor of Romantic wildness, where the struggle between man and beast is intense and unconstrained.
- 32 A later reworking of this vignette removes the waterfall, shaves down the rock, and rearranges the Native American’s left arm to show him holding a bow. See the \$10 note of the Bank of St. Johns, Jacksonville, Fla. (Haxby, *Standard Catalog*, 1:219, FL-30, G4a).
- 33 Spurious means that counterfeiters created this nonvalid note to circulate as a genuine type, even falsely identifying it as the work of the legitimate publishing firm Eastern. Because of its unusually high quality, it must have fooled many.
- 34 See R. Durand, *Vignettes*, 2:81 (a reproduction of the print after Robertson faces this page).
- 35 This American Indian couple appears in the lower corners of the \$20 note of the Auburn Exchange Bank, Auburn, New York, where they reach out to the central vignette of the American Eagle (see Haxby, *Standard Catalog*, 3:1435, NY-190, G12a). The two vignettes, however, are not always employed as pendants.
- 36 Asher B. Durand employed a river god on the \$2 and \$3 notes of New York’s Globe Bank (see Haxby, *Standard Catalog*, 3:1631, NY-1625, G2 and G6).
- 37 A vignette by Rawdon, Wright & Hatch from the 1840s on the \$1 note of the Housatonic Bank, Stockholm, Mass., shows the indebtedness of another female figure to classical prototypes (see Haxby, *Standard Catalog*, 2:992, MA-1200, G6 and G8). The engraver creates a Native American version of the Birth of Venus, a figure stepping from an impossibly steady canoe and framed by the drapery she holds behind her. The classical source glorifies and elevates this conception, transforming her into something more than an attractive maiden on a lake.
- 38 For a discussion of paintings and drawings depicting Red Jacket, see Jadviga da Costa Nunes, “Red Jacket: The Man and His Portraits,” *The American Art Journal* 12 (Summer 1980): 5–20.
- 39 William Dunlap, *A History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States*, 3 vols. (Boston: C. E. Goodspeed & Co., 1918), 3:193.
- 40 Vignettes that are faithful to Weir’s full-length figure of Red Jacket also appear on bank notes. See the \$5 note of the Bank of Brunswick, Brunswick, Ga., bearing the imprint of Bald, Spencer, Hufty & Danforth/Danforth, Bald Spencer & Hufty (Bowers, *Whitman Encyclopedia*, 6:88, W-GA-120-005-G020), and the \$5 note of the Eagle Bank, Bristol, R.I., by Danforth & Hufty (Bowers, *Whitman Encyclopedia*, 5:17, W-RI-090-005-G150). Rather than being based on the painting, all three interpretations are more likely based on one of the engravings after it. George W. Hatch’s engraving was published in New York in 1828 in *The Talisman for 1829* (see Barbara Dyer Gallati, ed., *Making American Taste: Narrative Art for a New Democracy* [New York: The New York Historical Society in association with D. Gilles Limited, London, 2011], 298, no. 47, n60), and another by M. J. Danforth appeared as one of the illustrations to B. B. Thatcher’s *Indian Biography* in 1832 (see Thatcher, *Indian Biography: or, An Historical Account of Those Individuals Who have Been Distinguished Among the North American Natives as Orators, Warriors, Statesmen, and Other Remarkable Characters* [New York: J & J Harper, 1832]).
- 41 American Indian leaders negotiating treaties with their White counterparts are another category that portrays Native Americans in a favorable light, as they are accorded

dignity and an implied eloquence. The most famous image of this type is Benjamin West's painting *William Penn's Treaty with the Indians* (Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia), which adorns several bank notes.

- 42 Brant appears on the \$1 note of the Montgomery County Bank, Johnston, N.Y. The vignette, the work of V. Balch, C. Durand, dates to the 1830s and is based on a portrait painted by Ezra Ames in 1806. See Roger H. Durand, *Interesting Notes about Portraits*, 3 vols. (Rehoboth, Maine: R. H. Durand & Co., 1996–2004), [1]:17. There is a lithograph from the 1830s after Ames's portrait, which could have been the vignette's source.
- 43 Tahcoloquiot appears on the \$10 note of the Bank of Chippeway, Sault De. St. Marys, Mich., printed by the New England Bank Note Co. in 1838. This portrait is derived from Charles Bird King's painting, which he executed in 1824, when Tahcoloquiot traveled to Washington, D.C. (the federal government had commissioned King to paint visiting Indian dignitaries). Unfortunately, this portrait, which was housed in the Indian Gallery of the Smithsonian, burned in the fire of 1865 (see R. Durand, *Portraits*, 2:104).
- 44 Sequoyah appears on the \$2 note of the Bank of Fayetteville, N.C., which is the work of Durand, Baldwin & Co. and dates to 1849–1850. See R. Durand, *Portraits*, 3:106, and Bowers, *Whitman Encyclopedia*, 6:300, W-NC-130-002-G020a.
- 45 The first is a vignette on the \$3 note of the Norombeca Bank, Banger, Maine, by Rawdon, Wright, Hatch & Edson/The New England Bank Note Co. with the printed date of 4 July 1857 (Bowers, *Whitman Encyclopedia*, 2:339, W-ME-290-003-G030a). Another version of Red Jacket's portrait appears on the \$5 note of the Windham County Bank, Brattleboro, Vt. Printed by Danforth, Wright & Co./American Bank Note Company, it dates to the early 1860s. See R. Durand, *Portraits*, [1]:68.
- 46 Cornplanter appears on the \$5 note of the Miners and Planters Bank, Murphy, N.C., the work of the American Bank Note Company in 1859–1860. See R. Durand, *Portraits*, [1]:34, and Bowers, *Whitman Encyclopedia*, 6:318, W-NC-310-005-G010. The image is based on a drawing by F. O. C. Darley.
- 47 Native Americans hunting buffalo with bows and arrows is a more common subject than hunting with lances. In this regard, Glenn E. Jackson makes some comparisons between George Catlin's prints of buffaloes and bank-note vignettes (Glenn E. Jackson, "Banknote Research Rewarding and Revealing," *Essay-Proof Journal* 24 [Spring 1967]: 52–54).
- 48 The indomitable Arab horseman on the \$50 note of the Central Bank of Georgia, Milledgeville, Ga., executed by Fairman, Draper, Underwood & Co. in the 1830s–1840s, also shares a commonality with images of mounted and armed Native Americans (Bowers, *Whitman Encyclopedia*, 6:194, W-GA-750-050-G090). This vignette also appears on the \$20 note of the Connecticut Bank, Bridgeport, Conn., under the imprint, Draper, Underwood, Bald & Spencer/N. & S. S. Jocelyn (Bowers, *Whitman Encyclopedia*, 2:19, W-CT-070-020-G200).
- 49 In the Newman Numismatic Portal at Washington University in St. Louis, there is a well-circulated note hand-dated 15 November 1837 (<https://nnp.wustl.edu/library/ImageDetail/595768>).
- 50 This same vignette appears on the \$10 note of the Merchants' Bank, New Orleans, also printed by Draper, Toppan, Longacre & Co., where the townscape represents New Orleans (Bowers, *Whitman Encyclopedia*, 7:310, W-LA-310-G020).

- 51 For a wry reconfiguring of the end pieces as Anglo-American figures who deliberately echo their Native antecedents, see Draper, Toppan, Longacre & Co.'s \$5 note, Fulton Bank, New York, N.Y. (Haxby, *Standard Catalog*, 3:1629, NY-1620, G22).
- 52 This design also appears on the \$10 note of the Bank of Nebraska, Omaha, Neb. (Haxby, *Standard Catalog*, 2: 1179, NE-55, 612). In this instance, the central oval, on a vertical axis, is a portrait of Mrs. B. F. Allen, the wife of the Des Moines millionaire, who was the first president of the bank.
- 53 George Catlin, *Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs, and Conditions of the North American Indians: Written during Eight Years' Travel (1832–1839) amongst the Wildest Tribes of Indians in North America*, 2 vols. (New York: Dover Publications Reprint, 1973), 1:16.
- 54 Quoted in Jean M. O'Brien, *Firsting and Lasting: Writing Indians Out of Existence in New England* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 28.
- 55 The same configuration applies to another note except for a difference in the portrait. In this latter instance, Red Jacket separates the two mothers (reproduced in Doty, *Pictures from a Distant Country*, 163, fig. 2–24). His oval portrait is the same as the one listed in R. Durand, *Vignettes*, [1]:68. Another variation on this theme adds a husband to the Indian family grouping with the shield of the United States in the center (see the \$4 note of the Bank of Washington, Washington, N.C., in Bowers, *Whitman Encyclopedia*, 6:353, W-NC-560-004-G020).
- 56 Anonymous, *The Literary World* 1 (15 May 1847), 348.
- 57 William H. Truettner establishes these details and other aspects of the Mohawk warrior's presence in his book *Painting Indians and Building Empires in North America, 1710–1840* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 44–45.
- 58 One variation on this theme is by Asher B. Durand. His seated, pondering American Indian in the *Arms of New York* owes a debt to West's example (see Charles Henry Hart, *Catalogue of the Engraved Work of Asher B. Durand* [New York: Grolier Club, 1895], no. 188). The seated, dignified, pensive Native American was also a favorite subject of sculptors who developed their own iconography. The sculptor Thomas Crawford executed a multi-figured composition entitled *The Progress of Civilization* for the east pediment of the Senate wing of the U.S. Capitol building. From this ensemble, he created a stand-alone sculpture. Dated 1856, *The Indian: Dying Chief Contemplating the Progress of Civilization* (New York Historical Society, New York) enshrines in marble this trope of the noble, melancholy American Indian meditating on his race's descent into extinction. Seated on a rock covered by a bearskin, the Native American, nude except for an elaborate feathered headdress and moccasins, rests his drooping head on his right hand. Another example is Augustus Saint-Gaudens's brooding *Hiawatha* of 1871–1872 (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York). Hiram Powers came up with a different response. His sculpture *The Last of the Tribe* of 1867–1872 (Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.) shows a Native maiden, the last of her kind, looking behind her as she runs away from "civilization." Never was there an easier solution to the American Indian problem. William Gerds points out that this maiden has a male counterpart in John Adams Elder's painting *The Last of His Tribe* (Gerds, *American Neo-Classical Sculpture*, 130). Gerds also includes a female variant to the melancholy male American Indian: Joseph Mozier's statue *The Indian Girl's Lament*, the conception for which is based on a poem by William Cullen Bryant (130–131).
- 59 See R. Durand, *Vignettes*, 2:84 (a reproduction of Rolph's engraving faces this page).

- 60 In a version of this vignette on a note dated 4 October 1858, which was created for what was probably a fraudulent bank, W. L. Ormsby stretched the scene to accommodate the wife and child seen in Figure 140. The alienated figure is now provided with a family, in which his pointing wife connects him and the viewer to the objects of his meditation (\$10 note, Farmers' and Drovers' Bank, Petersburg, Ind., in Haxby, *Standard Catalog*, 1:433, IN-520, G8a and G8b). Bowers states that Ormsby's vignette also appeared as a book illustration (see Bowers, *Obsolete Paper Money*, 209).
- 61 The painting and the journal engraving are discussed in Ellwood Parry's *The Image of the Indian and the Black Man in American Art, 1590–1900* (New York: G. Braziller, 1974), 75–76. A similar idea is depicted on notes of the Shawmut Bank, Boston, where Chief Obbatinewat, seated on a dune or embankment, looks out to sea at an approaching ship, which is presumably the *Mayflower* arriving in 1620. This vignette by Terry, Pelton & Co. dates to the 1830s–1850s (see Bowers, *Whitman Encyclopedia*, 3:179–180).
- 62 According to a review in the *New-York Mirror* of 30 May 1837, “The painter [John Chapman] has imagined an Indian girl, who, looking from an eminence, sees at a distance a European ship approaching” (quoted in Parry, *Image of the Indian and the Black Man in American Art*, 75). Ellwood Parry identifies the figure in the engraving as male, speculating that the firm had changed the gender to make “the tone of the image . . . more serious” (76). He may well be right. As demonstrated in the text's next paragraph, the bank-note firms, as was customary, had no difficulty in replacing the ship with a train. Perhaps they changed the gender of the figure as well, and the 1842 engraving was following suite. Yet, it seems unlikely that any engraver tasked to reproduce a painting would make such a radical alteration on their own. The figure's suggestion of wide hips leaves open the door for a female identification in accord with the newspaper critic (it is also possible the critic misremembered the protagonist's gender when describing the picture).
- 63 Quoted in Parry, *Image of the Indian and the Black Man in American Art*, 77.
- 64 This note is reproduced in Haxby, *Standard Catalog*, 3:1418, NY-80, G10.
- 65 The two firms, W. L. Ormsby, New York, and Doolittle & Munson, Cincinnati, joined together under the name Eastern and Western Bank Note Company to produce a specimen sheet that features the vignette prominently (an impression of the specimen sheet was sold at R. M. Smythe & Co.'s Memphis International Public Auction, 18–19 June 1993, Sale #118). Presumably, this sheet was the source for the \$50 certificate. The other two vignettes that appear on this certificate also appear on this same sheet. The Native spying the first ship also appears on a note from the mid-1840s that is an altered \$10 note from the Geauza Insurance Co., Painesville, Ohio, by RWH&E (Burlington Co. Bank, Medford, N.J., in Haxby, *Standard Catalog*, 3:1309, NJ-295, A40). Later, in the first half of the 1850s, Doty & Bergen, N.Y., chose this vignette for the \$5 note of the fraudulent Merchants Bank, Mankato, Minn. (Haxby, *Standard Catalog*, 2:1097, MN-75, G5a), which was altered more than once to represent other banks.
- 66 Reproduced and discussed in William Kloss, with an introductory essay by Doreen Bolger and David Park Curry, *Art in the White House: A Nation's Pride* (Washington, D.C.: White House Historical Association in cooperation with the National Geographic Society, 1992), 112–114. Another painting with a similar theme is Tompkins Harrison Matteson's *The Last of the Race*, also of 1847, where the father stands with his family and dog grouped around him as he stoically looks out over the immensity of the ocean as the sun sets (New York Historical Society, New York). Following this well-trodden path are paintings by DeWitt Clinton Boutelle (Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, Va., and the

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston) and John Mix Stanley's *The Last of Their Race* of 1857 (Whitney Western Art Museum, Cody, Wyoming).

- 67 The following two books address at length the trope of the Vanishing Indian: Brian W. Dippie, *The Vanishing American: White Attitudes and U.S. Indian Policy* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1982), and O'Brien, *Firsting and Lasting*. The title of O'Brien's book deserves a brief explanation. "Firsting" refers to White people's consensus in the nineteenth century that they were the first to establish a civilized society in America's "virgin lands." It was their right, even their sacred duty, to replace the Natives, a transfer of land that, in their telling, was accomplished lawfully and as peacefully as the sometimes-unreasonable Native Americans would allow. Accompanying this narrative was the myth of American Indian extinction, insisting on their disappearance even when they still lived within or adjacent to a White author's community. "Lasting" refers to "the last of the [name of one's tribe of choice]," as "proof" of their vanishing.
- 68 Tschachler, *The Greenback*, 84.
- 69 In *Democracy in America*, Alexis de Tocqueville makes a commonplace observation: "The native of North America retains his opinions and the slightest of his habits with a tenacity which has no parallel in history. For more than two hundred years the wandering tribes of North America have had daily connection with White men and they have never, so to speak, appropriated a single idea or custom" (Tocqueville, *Democracy in America and Two Essays on America*, trans. Gerald E. Bevan with an Introduction and Notes by Isaac Kramnick [London: Penguin Books, 2003], 374n1). There is nobility to the Native's loyalty to his own culture, but the Native American's stubbornness comes at a high price. A vignette on the \$2 note of the Quinchang Bank, Norwich, Conn., translates the classical story of Narcissus into that of a reclining American Indian princess looking longingly into a pool of water beside her (Bowers, *Whitman Encyclopedia*, 2:218, W-CT-930-002-G050). Transfixed by her reflection, she is incapable of change, and, like Narcissus, her prideful self-love dooms her to die.
- 70 The view of the town is most likely a studio creation. In any case, when the vignette appears on the \$1 note of the Ocoee Bank, Cleveland, Tenn., it represents Cleveland (Bowers, *Whitman Encyclopedia*, 7:514, W-TN-150-001-G090).
- 71 Quoted in Barbara Dayer Gallati's informative entry on this painting (see Gallati, *Making American Taste*, 247).
- 72 The pictorial possibilities of the theme of the Vanishing Indian were not lost on novelists. In her 1855 book *Zoë; or the Quadroon's Triumph*, Elizabeth D. Livermore creates a fictitious picture gallery in which one of the paintings bears the title *The Last of His Race*. Livermore introduces an art critic to elucidate the content of these imagined pictures. With deep-felt sympathy, the critic addresses the painting's protagonist: "Rend the vault above thee with thy heart's cry of agony" (Elizabeth D. Livermore, *Zoë; or the Quadroon's Triumph: A Tale for the Times*, 2 vols. [Cincinnati, 1855], 2:125). Through this character, Livermore displays the compassionate empathy that one might expect, even if the utterance is only a feeble echo of King Lear's anguished howl over the dead body of Cordelia ("Howl, howl, howl, howl! Oh you are men of stones. / Had I your tongues and eyes, I'd use them so / That heaven's vault should crack" [*King Lear*, 5, iii, 257–259]). In this recounting, despite the distressing nature of the American Indian's plight, the critic foresees the inevitability of his eventual acceptance of Christianity, thereby offering to a White audience some solace (in one sense, this brings to fruition the proselytizing of the Natives laid out in the Massachusetts Bay Colony's seal of 1629).

- 73 This Native American first appeared as an allegorical figure paired with a White female representing Ceres or Agriculture. America's Indian heritage and its White heritage are given equal weight, as the figures recline on either side of the American eagle atop a globe of the world (see the central vignette of the \$2 note of the Bank of Watertown, Watertown, Wis., printed by TCC and dated 8 January 1856 [Haxby, *Standard Catalog*, 4:2634, WI-825, G4a]). Ceres holds up stalks of grain that counterbalance the diagonal of the Native American's rifle.

Chapter 8

- 1 Discussions of Ormsby can be found in most books surveying bank notes. Three articles in chronological order are as follows: Julian Blanchard, "A Specimen of Ormsby's Proposed Design for Bank Notes," *Essay-Proof Journal* 15 (Fall 1958): 169–170; Robert McCabe, "Waterman Lilly Ormsby and the Continental Bank Note Co.," *Paper Money* 40 (March/April 2001): 163–170; and Q David Bowers, "Waterman Lily Ormsby, Idealist," *Paper Money* 43 (July/August 2004): 288–297. For a more skeptical view of Ormsby, see Mark D. Tomasko, *The Feel of Steel: The Art and History of Bank-Note Engraving in the United States*. 2nd ed. (New York: The American Numismatic Society, 2012), 15.
- 2 See Bob McCabe, *Counterfeiting and Technology: A History of the Long Struggle Between Paper-Money Counterfeiters and Security Printing* (Atlanta: Whitman Publishing, 2016), 127.
- 3 See the biography of Ormsby in Q David Bowers, *Obsolete Paper Money Issued by Banks in the United States, 1782–1866* (Atlanta: Whitman Publishing, 2006), 275–305. A good account of the charges of counterfeiting leveled at Ormsby can be found in McCabe, *Counterfeiting and Technology*, 130–131.
- 4 For a history of the City Bank of Leavenworth and a reproduction of an uncut sheet, front and back, see Robert Gill, "The Obsolete Corner: The City Bank of Leavenworth, Kansas," *Paper Money* 57 (March/April 2018): 144–145.
- 5 Roger Durand prefers the name cherubs for these winged boys, which is a good characterization if cherubs are not interpreted entirely within a sacred context. To describe them on these bank notes as belonging to "an order of angelic beings ranked second to the seraphin [*sic*]" is unhelpful and misleading (Roger H. Durand, *Interesting Notes about Allegorical Representations* [Rehoboth, Maine: R. H. Durand & Co., 1994], 14). Durand's assertion, however, that they portray innocence is more apt.
- 6 This vignette also appears on the \$1 note of the High Bridge Bank (a railroad station and not a town), Maryland, which bears the printed date of 15 November 1854 (see Q David Bowers, *Whitman Encyclopedia of Obsolete Paper Money*, 8 vols. [Atlanta: Whitman Publishing, 2014–2017], 8:324, W-MD-1090-001-S010). The bank was nonexistent and the note fraudulent, a fact that does not speak well of Ormsby's business practices.
- 7 Q David Bowers identifies the bust as portraying George Washington (Bowers, *Whitman Encyclopedia*, 142). The figure's high bald dome, long curly hair, and beard affirm it to be Shakespeare, with the head most closely resembling Louis François Roubiliac's 1742 bust of the Bard, which would have been available from an engraving after it. For other images, see John A. Muscalus, *Shakespeare on Paper Money* (Bridgeport, Pa.: Historical Paper Money Research Institute, 1969).
- 8 Willa Cather, "Between the Acts," *Nebraska State Journal*, 29 April 1894, 13.
- 9 Quoted in Bowers, *Obsolete Paper Money*, 355.

- 10 W. L. Ormsby, *Cycloidal Configurations or the Harvest of Counterfeiters: Containing Matter of the Highest Importance Concerning Paper Money: Also Explaining the Unit System of Bank Note Engraving* (New York: W. L. Ormsby, ca. 1862), 24.
- 11 The metaphor of the Wheel of Fortune was well established. In her book on America's first banking collapse, Jane Kamensky quotes from a song written in 1806 titled "The Bankrupt's Soliloquy After Going Through the Mill" that captures a sense of success's fickle nature: "FORTUNE will various gifts impart, / Sometimes she'll smile & sometimes frown, / 'Tis best to keep a cheerful heart, / Some will go up, and some go down" (*Pittsfield Sun*, Pittsfield, Mass., 31 March 1806, quoted in Jane Kamensky, *The Exchange Artist: A Tale of High-Flying Speculation and America's First Banking Collapse* [New York: Viking, 2008], 13). In this context, Kamensky speaks of "fortune's merry wheel" and how many are "spun round and round, bottom to top and through the mill again."
- 12 For a detailed account, see the section "Defects and Insecurities of the Patch-Work System" in W. L. Ormsby, *A Description of the Present System of Bank Note Engraving, Showing Its Tendency to Facilitate Counterfeiting: To Which Is Added a New Method of Constructing Bank Notes to Prevent Forgery* (New York: W. L. Ormsby; and London: Willoughby & Co., 1852, 66–67).
- 13 Ormsby, *Description of the Present System*, 80.
- 14 McCabe points out how Ormsby conveniently ignores the use of photography as an aid to duplication (see McCabe, *Counterfeiting and Technology*, 130). He also outlines six improvements generated by Ormsby's system (129–130).
- 15 Ormsby, *Description of the Present System*, 102.
- 16 Ormsby, *Description of the Present System*, 82–83.
- 17 Ormsby, *Description of the Present System*, 84.
- 18 Ormsby, *Description of the Present System*, 88.
- 19 Ormsby, *Cycloidal Configurations*, 5.
- 20 Ormsby, *Cycloidal Configurations*, 44–45. Elisha Kent Kane's second book is titled *Arctic Explorations: The Second Grinnell Expedition in Search of Sir John Franklin, 1853, 54, 55* (Philadelphia: Childs & Peterson, 1857). The journey proved so arduous that Kane never recovered from the ordeal, dying in the same year his book was published. Ormsby sprinkles his text throughout with erudite allusions from a variety of sources, including the Bible, Shakespeare, William Cowper, Richard Brinsley Sheridan, and Latin quotations.
- 21 Ormsby, *Cycloidal Configurations*, 7.
- 22 Ormsby, *Cycloidal Configurations*, 43.
- 23 Ormsby, *Cycloidal Configurations*, 10.
- 24 Ormsby, *Cycloidal Configurations*, 30.
- 25 Ormsby, *Cycloidal Configurations*, 42.
- 26 Ormsby, *Cycloidal Configurations*, 40.
- 27 Ormsby, *Cycloidal Configurations*, 35.
- 28 Ormsby, *Cycloidal Configurations*, 36.

- 29 For a lengthy account of the history of the Carroll County Bank along with Ormsby's notes for this bank, see Bowers, *Obsolete Paper Money*, 340–366. For more varieties of this same design, see Bowers, *Whitman Encyclopedia*, 1:88–89.
- 30 See Bowers, *Obsolete Paper Money*, 2:682–683, W-NH-830-001G020a and G020b.
- 31 Ormsby had already issued two notes containing variations on this design, both of which may have been produced for advertising purposes. The 1854 \$1 note for the Security Bank, a generic name, shows Mercury pointing to a map in the lower-right corner featuring New York Harbor and lower Manhattan, a message aimed at New York City banks (reproduced in Bowers, “Waterman Lily Ormsby, Idealist,” 289; also see James A. Haxby, *Standard Catalog of United States Obsolete Bank Notes, 1782–1866*, 4 vols. [Iola, Wis.: Krause Publications, 1988], 3:1697, NY-1905, G2). A proof \$1 note for the Morrisiana Bank, Westchester County, New York, either another advertisement or a design for a bank that was never established, has at the lower right Ormsby's patent application of 1853 (see Haxby, *Standard Catalog*, 3:1590, NY-1395, G2 [without the “phantom” ONE] and 3:1591, G2a [with the ONE]). This note may be the prototype for the others. Here, Mercury points to the foundations of a classical structure, representing the raising of a bank of substance made possible by Plenty's largesse. The banner at the left sports at its top stars that together form a single large star. The small stars refer to the states of the Union (by 1853, there were thirty-one states, and even allowing for stars being obscured by the lettering, it is difficult to see how all thirty-one could be accommodated; but Ormsby was not so literally minded, and the point of “out of many, one” is clear). This type is also the only one to forgo displaying the numeral “1,” an unheard-of departure for a bank note, which argues in favor of its having been intended as an advertisement. Regardless, it is an outstanding example of self-expression in bank-note art.

Chapter 9

- 1 See Russell Rulau, “Pre-Civil War (1812–1861) United States Treasury Notes,” in Chester L. Krause and Robert F. Lemke, *Standard Catalog of United States Paper Money*, ed. Robert E. White, 18th ed. (Iola, Wis.: Krause Publications, 1999), 159–163.
- 2 For a discussion of all three versions of the statue, see Vivien Green Fryd, *Art & Empire: The Politics of Ethnicity in the United States Capitol, 1815–1860* (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 1992), 190–200. For a reproduction of the statue's second version, whose whereabouts was unknown at the time of Fryd's 1992 publication, see her essay “Masking Slavery in and on the United States Capitol Rotunda,” in *American Pantheon: Sculptural and Artistic Decoration of the United States Capitol*, ed. Donald R. Kennon and Thomas P. Somma (Athens, Ohio: published for the U.S. Capitol Historical Society by Ohio University Press, 2004), 148, fig. 8.
- 3 Jefferson Davis to Montgomery Meigs, 15 January 1856, Meigs Letterbook, Office of the Architect of the Capitol, Washington, D.C., quoted in Fryd, *Art & Empire*, 193. The larger story of the issues surrounding the expansion of the capitol building can be found in Guy Gugliotta, *Freedom's Cap: The United States Capitol and the Coming of the Civil War* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2012).
- 4 Thomas Crawford to Montgomery Meigs, 18 October 1855, Meigs Letterbook, quoted in Fryd, *Art & Empire*, 193. Crawford wrote these words about the stars encircling the liberty cap in the second version, but they apply as well to the helmet.
- 5 Crawford to Meigs, 19 March 1856, Meigs Letterbook, quoted in Fryd, *Art & Empire*, 193.

- 6 That “unum” is emphasized is surely no coincidence. When the vignette appeared on a Georgia bank note of 1861, the base with its inscription was cut from the design. One could argue that the vignette’s positioning in the note’s center called for this reduction, but one wonders if the inscription in a Southern context was unwelcomed (reproduced in Roger H. Durand, *Interesting Notes about Vignettes*, 3 vols. [Rehoboth, Maine: R. H. Durand & Co., 1995–2001], 2:25).
- 7 Crawford to Meigs, 18 October 1855, Meigs Letterbook, quoted in Fryd, *Art & Empire*, 193.
- 8 The vignette appeared on bank notes, also produced by the ABNC, at the same time it appeared on federal money.
- 9 Some scenes drawn from the Civil War appear on this more rarefied and exclusive currency. The \$100 interest-bearing two-year notes, from the Act of 3 March 1863, feature a vignette titled *In the Turret*, showing a crew manning a large naval cannon (see Gene Hessler and Carlson Chambliss, *The Comprehensive Catalog of U.S. Paper Money*, 7th ed. [Port Clinton, Ohio: BNR Press, 2006], 204). The \$20 interest-bearing one-year note from the Act of 3 March 1863 and the \$500 three-year interest-bearing note from the Act of 30 June 1864 contain the vignette *Mortar Firing* (see Hessler and Chambliss, *The Comprehensive Catalog of U.S. Paper Money*, 145 and 238). The \$500 compound-interest Treasury note from the Acts of 1863 and 1864 show *The Standard Bearer* on the left and the *New Ironsides* on the right (239). As with the sole scene of military action displayed on Confederate currency (see Figure 215), these vignettes contain no dead bodies.
- 10 Krause and Lemke, *Standard Catalog of United States Paper Money*, 65.
- 11 Spencer M. Clark, *Report to the Secretary of the Treasury from the First Division of the National Currency Bureau, Showing Its Origin, Growth, and Present Condition* (Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Engraving and Printing, 1864), 12. Clark, the first chief of the First Division of the National Currency Bureau, wrote this report, which is the first of its kind, at the request of William Pitt Fessenden, who had replaced Salmon P. Chase as secretary of the Treasury.
- 12 Clark, *Report to the Secretary of the Treasury*, 12.
- 13 On 28 March 1863, Clark wrote to Secretary Chase, “Sir: I respectfully suggest as a design for a National Currency the engraving of national historic pictures of the full size of the note to be issued, and submit, as ‘a model of illustrative drawing,’ a two-dollar note, made up of a copy of Weir’s painting of the ‘Embarkation of the Pilgrims,’ with a suitable reverse” (Clark, *Report to the Secretary of the Treasury*, 13).
- 14 There was no doubt in Ormsby’s mind that Clark was indebted to his unit system, writing in March 1870 to Secretary [George] Boutwell at the Bureau of Engraving and Printing: “My principles did, in fact, achieve a triumph. Mr. S.M Clark adopted them in 1863—using my book as his ‘*vade mecum*’ [guidebook]. The Hon. Secretary Chase himself adopted them, believing Mr. Clark to be the author” (letter from Ormsby to Boutwell, March 1870, part of Record Group 318, Records of the BEP, Entry 3A, “Official and Miscellaneous Letters Received, M-Z, 1870,” National Archives, College Park, Md., quoted in Bob McCabe, *Counterfeiting and Technology: A History of the Long Struggle between Paper-Money Counterfeiters and Security Printing* [Atlanta: Whitman Publishing, 2016], 130).
- 15 Clark, *Report to the Secretary of the Treasury*, 15.

- 16 Clark gave the following as one example of the pictures' educational powers: "The laboring man, who should receive every Saturday night a copy of the 'Surrender of Burgoyne' for his weekly wages, would soon inquire who General Burgoyne was, and to whom he surrendered" (Clark, *Report to the Secretary of the Treasury*, 14). Under the final program, Burgoyne appears on the \$500 bill, a completely unrealistic weekly wage (\$5 is a more plausible sum).
- 17 Clark, *Report to the Secretary of the Treasury*, 14–15.
- 18 Clark, *Report to the Secretary of the Treasury*, 14.
- 19 The announcement is reprinted in Gene Hessler, *U.S. Essay, Proof and Specimen Notes* (Portage, Ohio: BNR Press, 1979), 135–136.
- 20 Clark, *Report to the Secretary of the Treasury*, 11.
- 21 Clark, *Report to the Secretary of the Treasury*, 13. The italics are Clark's.
- 22 In 1836, after John Trumbull's paintings featuring the American Revolution were already in place, Congress specified only that the next four historical pictures should serve "to illustrate the discovery of America; the settlement of the United States; the history of the Revolution [already covered by Trumbull]; or of the adoption of the Constitution" (*Register of Debates*, House, 24th Congress, 1st sess., 23 June 1836, app., xxiii, quoted in Fryd, *Art & Empire*, 46).
- 23 Trumbull shows the moment on 28 June 1776, when a delegation led by Thomas Jefferson submitted to a seated John Hancock the manuscript containing the Declaration of Independence. However, this picture also foreshadows and encompasses the signing of the Declaration that took place six days later. The nineteenth-century definition of history painting—an idealized depiction of the past that invites poetic license—allows for just this kind of conflation. Asher B. Durand's engraving after this painting, which Trumbull commissioned and closely supervised, bears the title *Declaration of Independence of the United States of America, July 4, 1776*, confirming that the Fourth of July is also intended.
- 24 For a Eurocentric civilization, Christopher Columbus is the required starting point, but Hernando de Soto is perhaps one more Spanish explorer than is needed. In this regard, Powell took over the original commission from Henry Inman, his former teacher, who had died before completing his own work. This work was to have shown Daniel Boone immigrating to Kentucky, when, after blazing the Wilderness Road through the Cumberland Gap in 1775, he pioneered a settlement in the face of stiff opposition from the Shawnee. Such a major shift again demonstrates how little oversight went into the selection of subject matter.
- 25 See Gene Hessler, *The Engraver's Line: An Encyclopedia of Paper Money & Postage Stamp Art* (Port Clinton, Ohio: BNR Press, 1993), 142.
- 26 Unsurprisingly, other bank-note vignettes of this subject had already appeared (see Roger H. Durand, *Interesting Notes about History* [Rehoboth, Maine: R. H. Durand & Co., 1990], 11–14). One of the most interesting does not appear on paper money issued in the United States. Rather, the New England Bank Note Company, Boston, created an unusual image for the Bank of St. Thomas on St. Thomas Island. On the \$100 bill, the island itself appears as the main protagonist while, in the distance, a religious procession proceeds from Columbus's ship to climb the hill to undertake a solemn ceremony. The Native Americans are under new management, and the sober, methodical procession seems more oppressive than liberating. An unissued sheet of this cur-

rency in the Smithsonian National Numismatic Collection contains on its \$500 bill another image of the Four Continents.

- 27 Hessler and Chambliss, *The Comprehensive Catalog of U.S. Paper Money*, 94.
- 28 Q. David Bowers and David M. Sundman link both vignettes to Pocahontas: “This motif [the vignette appearing on the \$10 Legal Tender Note, Series of 1869-1880] has been variously titled *Introduction of the Old World to the New*, this being Treasury Department nomenclature, or *Pocahontas Presented at Court*. A related figure of Pocahontas, but with different figures receiving her, also called *Introduction of the Old World to the New*, was used on the face of \$5 National Bank Notes of the Original and Series of 1875” (Bowers and Sundman, *100 Greatest American Currency Notes* [Atlanta: Whitman Publishing, 2006], 100).
- 29 In regard to the vignette sometimes identified as *Pocahontas Presented at Court* on the \$10 Legal Tender Note, Pocahontas and her husband, John Rolfe, were indeed warmly received by England’s nobility on their visit to London in 1616–1617, but there is little evidence suggesting this design depicts the British court of James I. A more plausible interpretation is that Columbus is introducing an Indian Princess, symbolizing America or the New World, to the Spanish court of Queen Isabella, the queen being the regal seated woman in the composition’s center. Columbus, accompanied by Native Americans he had brought back with him from his first voyage to the Americas, had indeed been granted an audience with the king and queen in 1493. The old Moor, seated on the ground at the queen’s feet, further indicates the scene takes place in Spain.
- 30 Indisputably, the Vikings were the first Europeans to discover America, having reached its shores centuries before Columbus’s expedition, but Columbus gets the credit because the Viking explorations and settlements had no major impact on European consciousness.
- 31 Quoted in McCabe, *Counterfeiting and Technology*, 169.
- 32 Roger Durand reproduces an earlier, cruder vignette of this scene that even predates Powell’s painting (see R. Durand, *History*, 15–16). This vignette eschews religious symbolism.
- 33 According to the website of the Architect of the capitol, the engraving for the note after Weir’s *Embarkation of the Pilgrims* is based on a smaller version of this scene, now in the Brooklyn Museum of Art, which the artist painted in 1857. The engraver would have benefited from the reduction in size as well as from the greater clarity in the presentation of the main figures (see <https://www.aoc.gov/explore-capitol-campus/art/embarkation-pilgrims> [accessed 8 September 2023]).
- 34 Sculpted at the same time as Capellano’s relief of Pocahontas saving Captain John Smith, the two sculptures again show the disparity in the approach to Virginia’s history with that of Massachusetts. Pocahontas’s story has all the ingredients of a romance novel, whereas the landing of the Pilgrims is on a par with the landing of Columbus.
- 35 Franklin’s description of the experiment was published on 19 October 1752 in *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, an account that was republished and widely distributed. A summary of Franklin’s involvement with electricity can be found in J. A. Leo Lemay, *The Life of Benjamin Franklin: Soldier, Scientist, and Politician, 1748–1757* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 3:58–137.
- 36 Numerous portraits of Franklin appear on bank notes, but perhaps of greater interest is an expansive vignette on the stock of the Philadelphia & Absecom Telegraph Company,

by the Philadelphia lithographic firm M. H. Traubel & Co., bearing the printed date, “185-.” The high-flying kite is shown being struck by lightning, but Franklin and his son share their shed with a young man, presumably Samuel Morse, who is pondering over transmitting a telegraph. A line of anachronistic telegraph poles already traverses the countryside in the distant landscape beneath the stormy sky, an intriguing conflation of an American discovery with its American application (this work is in the Smithsonian’s Graphic Arts Division).

- 37 Mark D. Tomasko located Liebler as the artist in the ABNC records (see Tomasko, *Images of Value: The Artwork behind U.S. Security Engraving, 1830s–1980s* [New York: Grolier Club, 2017], 29). Up until then, Felix Octavius Carr Darley had been the frontrunner. Other vignettes of the battle of Lexington can be found in R. Durand, *History*, 68–71.
- 38 The story is first recounted in the 1809 ninth edition of Mason Locke Weems, *The Life of George Washington* (quoted in Mark Edward Thistlewaite, *The Image of George Washington: Studies in Mid-Nineteenth-Century American History Painting* [New York: Garland Publishing, 1979], 98–99).
- 39 The painting and the print after it are reproduced in Thistlewaite, *The Image of George Washington*, figs. 85 and 86. The vignette in turn influenced Henry Brueckner’s conception as seen in his painting *The Prayer at Valley Forge*, where the general is shown with his hands clasped in front. For John C. Reid’s 1866 engraving after this painting, see Thistlewaite, fig. 89.
- 40 The Currier & Ives lithograph is reproduced in Bryan F. Le Beau, *Currier & Ives: America Imagined* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001), 43.
- 41 For the identification of Edwin White as the artist, see Hessler and Chambliss, *The Comprehensive Catalog of U.S. Paper Money*, 61.
- 42 For other vignettes depicting the landing of the Pilgrims, see R. Durand, *History*, 28–32.
- 43 An easily accessible source for this information on Raleigh’s life was available in Walter Raleigh, William Oldys, and Thomas Birch, *The Works of Sir Walter Raleigh*, 8 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1829), 1:73.
- 44 Bowers and Sundman, *100 Greatest American Currency Notes*, 22. Their caption for this image repeats this sentiment, calling it a “seemingly satirical vignette.”
- 45 For a reproduction of the back of the 15-shilling note, see Eric P. Newman, *The Early Paper Money of America*, 5th ed. (Iola, Wis.: Krause Publications, 2008), 300.

Chapter 10

- 1 See James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 9.
- 2 McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 39.
- 3 McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 39.
- 4 For introductions to slave imagery on bank notes, see “The People in the Middle,” in Richard Doty, *Pictures from a Distant Country: Seeing America through Old Paper Money* (Atlanta: Whitman Publishing, 2013), 28–34; Q. David Bowers, *Whitman Encyclopedia of Obsolete Paper Money*, 8 vols. (Atlanta: Whitman Publishing, 2014–2017), 1:170; Heinz Tschachler, *The Greenback: Paper Money and American Culture* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland,

2010), 87–93; John W. Jones’s exhibition catalog, *Confederate Currency: The Color of Money, Images of Slavery in Confederate and Southern States Currency*, ed. Gretchen Barbatis (West Columbia, S.C.: Olive Press, 2002); and the Internet exhibition *Beyond Face Value: Depictions of Slavery in Confederate Currency*, created by the United States Civil War Center at Louisiana State University (<http://exhibitions.blogs.lib.lsu.edu/?p=566&page=9> [accessed 8 September 2023]). The last two exhibitions include bank notes in the definition of Confederate currency and Southern states currency. Also relevant is the ambitious series by David Bindman and Henry Louis Gates, Jr., eds., *The Image of the Black in Western Art* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press in collaboration with the W. E. B. Du Bois Institute for African and African American Research, Menil Collection, Houston). From this series, see *From the American Revolution to World War I: Slaves and Liberators* (1989), vol. 4, pt. 1, and *From the American Revolution to World War I: Black Models and White Myths* (1989), vol. 4, pt. 2.

- 5 As Q. David Bowers explained, this bank may never have existed: “The existing notes are unissued, suggesting that a charter was sought but never granted, or that it is a spurious entity altogether” (Bowers, *Whitman Encyclopedia*, 6:98). There is also room for debate about the note’s dating. As recorded by Foster Wild Rice, the firm Murray, Draper, Fairman & Co., which designed the imprint appearing on the note, operated from 1811 to 1818, at which time it became Murray, Fairman & Co. Then, in 1823, it became Fairman, Draper, Underwood & Co. (Foster Wild Rice, “Antecedents of the American Bank Note Company of 1958,” *Essay-Proof Journal* 18 [Fall 1961]: 140). William Griffiths records Murray, Draper, Fairman & Co.’s terminal date as 1823, suggesting that the original imprint may have been used even after 1818, which would give some credence to dating the Augusta note to ca. 1820 (William H. Griffiths, *The Story of American Bank Note Company* [New York: American Bank Note Company, 1959], 31).
- 6 This interpretation is in opposition to that of Richard Doty, who writes, “We see a broad panorama of activities, in which people of all colors participate. And that is all: there is no suggestion of subordination, no hint as to people of one color existing as the property of another” (Doty, *Pictures from a Distant Country*, 28).
- 7 For two other depictions of enslaved people from this early period, one can point to laborers loading a wagon with bales of cotton, a cotton press seen in the background, in a vignette that appears on the \$5 note of the Mississippi & Alabama Rail-Road Company, Brandon, Mississippi, dated 1 January 1838. This vignette was later to appear on the Hoyer & Ludwig \$100 Confederate note (Type 13). Given the small size of the figures, their race is difficult to determine, but given the place and the activity, viewers would have assumed they were enslaved people and not free Whites. The \$20 note of the Ocmulgee Bank, Macon, Ga., dated to 1840, shows another loaded wagon being pulled to a wharf by a team of six horses under the guidance of a mounted enslaved person (see Figure 37).
- 8 Mark Tomasko reproduces another intriguing example of a racial transformation occurring in two dies based on the same vignette. He first reproduces a wash drawing, executed ca. 1830s and attributed to George W. Hatch, showing farmers having lunch in a field (Mark D. Tomasko, *Images of Value: The Artwork behind U.S. Security Engraving, 1830s–1980s* [New York: Grolier Club, 2017], 37, fig. 8A). Next is a proof from an original die, whose engraving of the drawing makes only a few minor modifications. This is accompanied by a note from the 1830s on which this vignette appears (figs. 8B and 8D). But of greater interest is another proof from the original die, to which a major alteration has been made to the principal couple (fig. 8C). In the first incarnation a White woman, who is presumably the farmer’s wife, pours a drink into her seated husband’s cup as he rests in the fields to eat his lunch. Because she holds a rake in her other

hand, she too is helping with the harvest. In the change, the White woman is replaced by a Black woman who is enslaved; if Tomasko's conjecture is correct, this alteration "was perhaps done specially for an 1840s–1850s \$3 note of the Bank of the State of South Carolina" (36). Again, alterations in dress are as important as skin tones: the wife's broad-brimmed hat, a protection from the sun that helps maintain her fair complexion, becomes for the enslaved person a bandana that binds her hair, so it does not interfere with her labors.

- 9 In this version of the vignette, the palm trees in the background are cropped at the top. For a variety of ways in which this vignette was used, see Fred R. Marckhoff and Glenn B. Smedley, "Engravings on Paper Money: The Interchangeable Use of Vignettes on 19th Century Bank Notes," *Essay-Proof Journal* 18 (Fall 1961), 161–162, figs. Ga-Gc.
- 10 At the National Museum of African American History and Culture, Washington, D.C., the curator, Nancy Bercaw, inventively installed a wall of bank notes around the theme of how Black slave-labor contributed to both Southern agriculture and New England industry.
- 11 *Charles Sumner: His Complete Works*, 20 vols. (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1900), 2:233.
- 12 See Joshua R. Greenberg, *Bank Notes and Shinplasters: The Rage for Paper Money in the Early Republic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020), 92–93. On Northern money, the enslaved boy holding a basket of cotton is also found on two New Jersey notes: the \$2 note of the Lambertville Bank and the \$2 note of the Phillipsburg Bank (see James A. Haxby, *Standard Catalog of United States Obsolete Bank Notes, 1782–1866*, 4 vols. [Iola, Wis.: Krause Publications, 1988], 2:1304, NJ-270, A5, and 2:1358, NJ-455, A10). These notes, however, are spurious, having been altered, as Haxby points out, from the \$2 note of the Bank of Greensborough, Ga.
- 13 Bowers, *Whitman Encyclopedia*, 6:213.
- 14 This hand-dated note is in the National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.
- 15 As seen on a Minnesota note (see Figure 94), the Black man holding a dog on a leash and leaning against the barn shares in the corn-husking merriment while remaining an outsider.
- 16 The date of the painting and the dates of the bank notes featuring the vignette (all the notes date to no earlier than 1859) leave no doubt that the painting came first (for two other Southern notes with this vignette, see the \$5 note of the Planters Bank of the State of Georgia, Savannah [Bowers, *Whitman Encyclopedia*, 6:262, W-GA-1010-005-G090], and the \$50 note of the Bank of Pittsylvania, Chatham, Va. [Bowers, *Whitman Encyclopedia*, 8: 399, W-VA-240-050-G050 and G050a]).
- 17 Maybelle Mann characterizes the "small negro boy" as "affectionately portrayed" (Mann, *Francis William Edmonds: Mammon and Art* [New York: Garland Publishing, 1977], 148). H. Nichols B. Clark sees the painting as an "optimistic image" that offers the boy "some element of hope, [by] seeming to imply that hard work will have its rewards" (Clark, *Francis W. Edmonds: American Master in the Dutch Tradition* [Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press for the Amon Carter Museum, 1988], 118–119). Barbara Dayer Gallati wishes to return to the painting's earliest title *Grinding the Scythe*, a reference that appeared in an article of 1863, because it implies that the action requires the cooperation of both principals (Barbara Dayer Gallati, ed., *Making American Taste: Narrative Art for a New Democracy* [New York: The New York Historical Society in association with D. Gilles Limited, London, 2011], 207–208, no. 12). However, the

boy's open-mouth expression suggests that, while his physical efforts may even be superior to that of the farmer, Edmonds does not depict him as the farmer's equal in intelligence.

- 18 When the vignette appears on the \$10 note of the Orleans County Bank, Albion, N.Y. (Haxby, *Standard Catalog*, 3:1426, NY-125, G10a), the more benign interpretation, as with the painting, is again possible.
- 19 Guy McElroy suggests *All Talk and No Work* may be a pendant to *The Scythe Grinder*. See Guy McElroy, *Facing History: The Black Image in American Art, 1710–1940* (Bedford, England: Bedford Arts Publishers in Association with the Corcoran Gallery of Art, 1990), 115–117.
- 20 Jones, *Confederate Currency: The Color of Money*, 133.
- 21 Elizabeth D. Livermore, *Zoë; or the Quadroon's Triumph: A Tale for the Times*, 2 vols. (Cincinnati, 1855), 1:10.
- 22 Of interest is Dion Boucicault's popular play *The Octoroon*, which opened in New York on 6 December 1859. For his plot, Boucicault turned to Captain Mayne Reid's novel *The Quadroon; or, A Lover's Adventures in Louisiana*, published in London in 1856. Reid's heroine, the quadroon of the title, is named Aurore, and the narrator, who pursues her through multiple plot twists, ends up marrying her at the end despite her mixed-race background. Boucicault, however, made two changes to his adaptation of Reid's novel that may have been inspired by Livermore. His heroine is named Zoe, and she dies at the play's end after, in the manner of Shakespeare's Juliet, having taken poison. Like Livermore's Zoë, she too had found herself trapped between two worlds—on the one hand, being of mixed race, she was excluded from White society, and on the other hand, her light skin color and her education excluded her from the Black community.
- 23 Livermore, *Zoë*, 2:101.
- 24 Livermore, *Zoë*, 2:305.
- 25 The vignette *Zoë* also appears on the \$5 note of the Beloit Savings Bank, Beloit, Wis. (Haxby, *Standard Catalog*, 4:2555, WI-55, G2), which is an altered version of the \$5 note of the Oriental Bank, Warrensville, Wis. (Haxby, *Standard Catalog*, 4:2633, WI-815, G2), a bank that apparently never opened. Both notes were printed later than the Fort Edwards bill in that ABNC has been added alongside Bald & Cousland.
- 26 Two paintings of White men with Indian wives are reproduced in Julie Schimmel's "Inventing 'the Indian,'" in *The West as America: Reinterpreting Images of the Frontier, 1820–1920*, ed. W. H. Truettner (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press for the National Museum of American Art, 1991), 149–189. The earlier of the two is Charles Deas's *The Voyageurs* of 1845, which shows a French trapper with his wife and four half-breed children in a canoe in an idyllic mountainous landscape (reproduced 177). Although in harmony with nature, the family's marginal situation does not inspire emulation. The other painting is Alfred Jacob Miller's *The Trapper's Bride* of 1850, in which, in a titillating scene, a seated trapper takes the hand of a young, desirable maiden, for whom he has bargained (reproduced 176). Lust rather than love would seem to be the motivation. Also see George Caleb Bingham's *Fur Traders Descending the Missouri* (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York), which depicts a father accompanied by his half-breed son in a canoe.
- 27 Jean M. O'Brien points out how the reaction of Whites to the mixing of their race with Blacks and with Indians operated at two extremes: "Non-Indians [i.e., Whites] thought

about race and blood according to a colonial calculus in which the possession of even a single drop of African American ‘blood’ relegated one to the status of ‘Black’ and ‘slave,’ whereas it demanded of Indians evidence of just the opposite: purity of blood. This calculus operated within the colonial order, on the one hand securing a labor supply in hereditary bondage, and on the other justifying the seizure of Indian lands on the basis of Indian ‘disappearance’” (O’Brien, *Firsting and Lasting: Writing Indians Out of Existence in New England* [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010], xxi–xxii).

- 28 The vignette *Zoe* appears on the three versions of the \$10 note of the Bank of Greensborough, Greensborough, Ga. (Bowers, *Whitman Encyclopedia*, 6:157, W-GA-530-010-G040, G040a, and G040b). (This note in an altered version was used for the Lambertville Bank in Lambertville, New Jersey [see Haxby, *Standard Catalog*, 2:1305, NJ-275, A25]). One of the bills reproduced in Bowers bears the written date of 8 May 1857. The vignette also appears on an undated proof of the \$1 note of the Bank of Hamilton, Hamilton, Ga. (Bowers, *Whitman Encyclopedia*, 6:163, W-GA-580-001-G010). It appears again on the two versions of the \$10 note of the Manufacturers Bank, Macon, Ga. (Bowers, *Whitman Encyclopedia*, 6:179, W-GA-680-010-G100 and G100a). All the bills are the product of Bald, Cousland & Co./Baldwin, Bald & Cousland with one exception. One of the notes of the Macon bank, bearing the written date of 1862, was printed by the ABNC. When the earlier firm joined in the merger that created the ABNC, this vignette came with it.

Chapter 11

- 1 Over the course of the war, there was an extraordinary difference between the effect inflation had on the Union compared to the Confederacy: “For the war as a whole the Union experienced inflation of only 80 percent (contrasted with 9,000 percent for the Confederacy)” (James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1988], 447).
- 2 See Grover C. Criswell, Jr., and Clarence L. Criswell, *Confederate and Southern States Currency* (Pass-A-Grille, Fla.: Criswell’s Publications), 1957.
- 3 First Series, Act of 9 March 1861, Types 1–6; Second Series, Act of 16 May 1861 (with one exception the notes are dated 25 July 1861), Types 7–12; Third Series, Acts of 19 August and 24 December 1861 and 18 April 1862 (dated 2 September 1861), Types 13–37 and 46; Fourth Series, Acts of 17 April and 23 September 1862, Types 38–45; Fifth Series, Act of 13 October 1862 (dated 2 December 1862), Types 49–55; Sixth Series, Act of 23 March 1863 (dated 6 April 1863), Types 56–63; Seventh Series, Act of 17 February 1864 (notes bear the same date), Types 64–72. This system too has serious flaws. Michael McNeil has proposed a new organization that more sensibly reduces the types from 72 to 65. In addition, within each series, he groups the notes by the printer (Michael McNeil, “An Architecture of Confederate Notes,” *Paper Money* 56 [January/February 2017]: 39–45).
- 4 For a recent catalog of these notes, one should consult Hugh Shull, *A Guide Book of Southern States Currency* (Atlanta: Whitman Publishing, 2007). However, it should be noted that the identification of the subject matter of some of the vignettes is flawed. To name two of the most egregious examples, in one instance, Shull identifies the flying female, who appears on the \$20 notes of both Missouri and North Carolina, as a “floating allegorical figure with grain and horn” (207), and in another as a “goddess (possibly Ceres or Fame) blowing trumpet in clouds” (260). Shull is correct in suggesting Fame, but in her right hand, instead of a stalk of grain, Fame holds a quill pen,

with which she will record the names and deeds of those whose reputations she does not want to die with them. The second significant error is the “frontiersman,” who appears at the lower right of the \$20 Louisiana note (147). This figure wears the pelt of a lion and holds a club rather than a rifle. He is Hercules, a classical symbol of heroic strength and endurance in line with Thomas Coram’s use of this god to symbolize undaunted opposition to an outside aggressor during the Revolutionary War.

- 5 See Q. David Bowers and David M. Sundman, *100 Greatest American Currency Notes* (Atlanta: Whitman Publishing, 2006), 46.
- 6 The contract was for a \$50 note (see Figure 189) and a \$100 note (Type 5).
- 7 See Douglas B. Ball, “Confederate Currency Derived from Banknote Plates,” *Numismatist* 85 (March 1972), 341–342.
- 8 One of these plates and the wrapper in which it and the others were mailed are reproduced in Neil Kagan, *Smithsonian Civil War: Inside the National Collection* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Books, 2013), 156–157.
- 9 W. L. Ormsby, *Cycloidal Configurations or the Harvest of Counterfeiters: Containing Matter of the Highest Importance Concerning Paper Money: Also Explaining the Unit System of Bank Note Engraving* (New York: W. L. Ormsby, ca. 1862), 17.
- 10 Ormsby, *Cycloidal Configurations*, 18. Ormsby reprints, as well an article from the New York newspaper *The World* of 26 April 1861, which points out that U.S. Deputy Marshals had seized eighteen plates made for Confederate bonds in the New York office of the ABNC (11). An hour later, the plates for the Confederate Treasury notes printed by the NBNC were also confiscated. Both firms were equally culpable, and Ormsby saw no difference between the two, remarking that their “business interests . . . are identically the same” (9).
- 11 “Introduction,” in *Slavery’s Capitalism: A New History of American Economic Development*, ed. Sven Beckert and Seth Rockman (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 1.
- 12 A proof vignette produced by the NBNC entitles this allegorical figure “AMERICA.” This figure, however, has been given several identifications in the literature on Confederate currency. In 1915, W. W. Bradbeer called her Minerva (W. W. Bradbeer, *Confederate and Southern State Currency: Historical and Financial Data, Biographical Sketches, Descriptions with Illustrations* [Omaha, Neb.: Aubrey E. Bebee Reprint, 1956], 48, no. 3). Two years later, H. D. Allen described her as Ceres (H. D. Allen, “The Paper Money of the Confederate States, with Historical Data,” *Numismatist* 30 [June 1917], 232). In 1947, P. H. Chase christened her Liberty (P. H. Chase, *Confederate Treasury Notes: The Paper Money of the Confederate States of America, 1861–1865* [Philadelphia: n.p., 1947], 27). Claud Fuller returned to Ceres (Claud E. Fuller, *Confederate Currency, 1861–1865* [Nashville: Parthenon Press under the Auspices of the Tennessee Division, United Daughters of the Confederacy, 1949], 62). Grover and Clarence Criswell returned to Minerva (Criswell and Criswell, *Confederate and Southern States Currency*, Type 3). Following Chase, Roger Durand identified the figure as Liberty (Roger H. Durand, *Interesting Notes about Vignettes*, 3 vols. [Rehoboth, Maine: R. H. Durand & Co., 1995–2001], 2:36). Arlie R. Slabaugh called her Columbia (Slabaugh, *Confederate States Paper Money* [Iola, Wis.: Krause Publications, 1998], 20, no. 2). Pierre Fricke called her Ceres with a wreath of grain (Pierre Fricke, *Collecting Confederate Paper Money*, 3rd ed. [Self-published, 2014], 127, fig. 3–1), but when the same image appears in reverse on another \$100 note (Figure 208), he called her the “Confederacy” as represented by Columbia (308, fig. 41–3). In any

event, “America,” with only the thirteen stripes on the shield having been altered, has been transformed into “the Confederate States of America.” For an outline of the research undertaken on Confederate currency before Bradbeer published his book, see the section “Background of Confederate Currency and Catalogs and Collecting” in Grover C. Criswell with Douglas Ball and Hugh Shull, *Comprehensive Catalog of Confederate Paper Money* (Port Clinton, Ohio: BNR Press, 1996), 17–20.

- 13 Letter from Crawford to Meigs, 31 October 1853, Meigs Letterbook, quoted in Vivien Green Fryd, *Art & Empire: The Politics of Ethnicity in the United States Capitol, 1815–1860* (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 1992), 113.
- 14 Fryd, *Art & Empire*, 113.
- 15 Fryd, *Art & Empire*, 113. In the sculpture, the rising sun appears to America’s right.
- 16 This allegorical figure proved highly adaptable. Later, the NBNC was to use the same vignette on the 10-pesos note, dated 8 September 1877, of the Banco del Pobre in Chile (Neil Shafer and Colin R. Bruce, eds., *Standard Catalog of World Paper Money: Specialized Issues*, 8th ed. [Iola, Wis.: Krause Publications, 1998], 1:278, S363).
- 17 Written in pencil on a card displaying a proof of this vignette in the collection of Mark Tomasko is the name Robert R. Hinselwood.
- 18 A small sign at the right, where the dirt road crosses the railroad tracks, bears the tiny lettering, “LOOK OUT for BELL RINGS [of advancing trains],” a lighthearted suggestion that peaceful harmony was not guaranteed.
- 19 All four of the NBNC Montgomery issue notes have green tints, each with its own distinct pattern.
- 20 Joseph Gaines provides a helpful accounting of where the vignettes on these four notes—Figure 190 and Types 22, 19, and 15—had previously appeared on bank notes (see Joseph J. Gaines, Jr., “Origin of Vignettes Used on Southern Bank Note Company-produced Confederate States of America Currency,” *Paper Money* 51 (September/October 2012): 345–363).
- 21 W. W. Bradbeer identifies the figures in the central vignette as Pallas and Ceres (Bradbeer, *Confederate and Southern State Currency*, 48, no. 6). H. D. Allen adds that the figures also represent Commerce and Industry (Allen, “The Paper Money of the Confederate States,” 30 [June 1917], 235). Later catalogers have settled on Industry and Agriculture, to which Roger Durand is an exception since he still identifies the first figure as Pallas (R. Durand, *Interesting Notes about Allegorical Representations* [Rehoboth, Maine: R. H. Durand & Co., 1994], 38).
- 22 For a prewar use of this vignette, see the \$5 note for the Bank of Lexington, North Carolina, which was issued by the ABNC beginning in 1859 (James A. Haxby, *Standard Catalog of United States Obsolete Bank Notes, 1782–1866*, 4 vols. [Iola, Wis.: Krause Publications, 1988], 3:1870, NC-30, G2a).
- 23 In the literature on Confederate currency, Minerva, as is the case in Type 5, is often identified as the goddess of war (for one example, see Fricke, *Collecting Confederate Paper Money*, 131), but this is not her primary function (in regard to war, Mars has no peers). When this vignette was first employed on antebellum bank notes, it was as the goddess of wisdom. The globe beside her reinforces this association with wisdom and knowledge. In addition, her helmet, spear and shield show her in another of her traditional roles, that of Protector of the Arts. Minerva on the \$20 note (Type 19) holds out in her

left hand an olive branch, a symbol of a peace. Her shield decorated with Medusa's head is a common attribute, but her bandolier containing an angel's head flanked by wings, perhaps an indication of the purity of this virgin goddess's wise thoughts, is unusual.

- 24 Allen offers an informative description of the scene in Type 5: "In the centre, [there is a] train of cars showing an old-fashioned wood-burning locomotive with wire netting over the smoke-stack to prevent sparks from escaping and setting fires. Behind the locomotive is an old-fashioned baggage car on which can be seen C.S.A. (Confederate States of America.) The whole picture, however, is said to be a view of the Hudson River, New York" (Allen, "The Paper Money of the United States," 30 [June 1917], 236).
- 25 Bradbeer identified the figure as Minerva (Bradbeer, *Confederate and Southern State Currency*, 70, no. 243), an identification that lasted until 2014, when Fricke christened her as Navigation (Fricke, *Collecting Confederate Paper Money*, 258).
- 26 Hoyer & Ludwig turned the vignette of Thetis into one representing Ceres, when, in its more crudely rendered lithograph, the firm removed the triton and placed a scythe at her feet on a \$5 Virginia note (Hugh Shull, *A Guide Book of Southern States Currency* [Atlanta: Whitman Publishing, 2007], 426) and on a number of Florida notes (72–75).
- 27 The SBNC was not the only firm in New Orleans to print notes for the Confederacy. The printer J. Manouvrier produced a lithographed \$5 note, dated 25 July 1861 (Type 12), but he chose not to introduce any vignettes into his overall design. The simplicity of his notes did not find favor with Memminger, nor did his irresponsible practices: the shipments of his \$10 notes were bundled in brown wrapping paper, which were broken into, prompting the government to destroy the remainder. His note is a reminder of just how imposing the SBNC bills were, representing a different level of professionalism.
- 28 J. D. Pope, the head of the Treasury-Note Division at Columbia, wrote Memminger a revealing letter as to why consolidating the various private firms within a government establishment would not work. He complained about being unduly pressured by the firms B. Duncan, J. T. Paterson, and Keatinge & Ball, everyone wanting a bigger piece of the pie. He singled out Keatinge as by far the best of the group but doubted he could be persuaded to give up his lucrative arrangement: "Keatinge is much the most intelligent and practical workman of them all, and would make a capital director, but I fear he is too deeply interested as a contractor to give up the profits and take a salary" (Pope to Memminger, 18 August 1862, quoted in Richard Cecil Todd, *Confederate Finance* [Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1954], 97). Pope's solution was to start over with the government setting up its own operation, using as a core group the Scottish lithographers who had been recruited to join the currency workforce, but Memminger ignored this suggestion. For a list of the firms, major and minor, that participated in the production of Confederate currency, see Criswell, *Comprehensive Catalog of Confederate Paper Money*, 54–56.
- 29 See Bob McCabe, *Counterfeiting and Technology: A History of the Long Struggle between Paper-Money Counterfeiters and Security Printing* (Atlanta: Whitman Publishing, 2016), 133.
- 30 See Douglas B. Ball, *Financial Failure and Confederate Defeat* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 118. The firm demonstrated it could produce work of sound quality in some of the notes it created for the State of Virginia.
- 31 The five notes are Criswell Types 11, 10, 9, 8, and 7, respectively.
- 32 See Criswell Types 13, 14, 18, and 36 in Criswell's catalog.

- 33 Allen identifies the bird as the dove sent forth from Noah's ark (Allen, "The Paper Money of the Confederate States," 30 [August 1917], 319). The bird's profile, however, is too streamlined to be a dove. Presumably, it was intended as an image of the unfettered soul that can fly heavenward. For an example of this vignette on a prewar note, see the \$5 bill of the Manufacturers and Mechanics Bank of Columbus, Ga., dated 1 November 1854. This bill was printed by Danforth, Wright & Co., New York and Philadelphia (reproduced in Richard Doty, *Pictures from a Distant Country: Seeing America through Old Paper Money* [Atlanta: Whitman Publishing, 2013], 233, fig. 7–16).
- 34 Bradbeer points out that the notes issued before 8 June 1861 show ten stars on the flag. After Tennessee seceded on that date, an eleventh star was added (see Bradbeer, *Confederate and Southern State Currency*, 52n).
- 35 An example of this vignette can be found on the \$5 note of the Hagerstown Bank, Hagerstown, Md. (Q David Bowers, *Whitman Encyclopedia of Obsolete Paper Money*, 8 vols. [Atlanta: Whitman Publishing, 2014–2017], 8:313, W-MD-100-005-G170).
- 36 The eight notes are as follows: Figures 193 and 194, Type 27; Figures 195 and 196, Types 18, 14, and 13, respectively. A third \$10 note (Type 46) is an anomaly. It is erroneously dated 2 September 1862, rather than 1861, and although by Hoyer & Ludwig, it lacks an imprint (a small "Ludwig" appears beneath the central vignette of Ceres as maritime commerce, despite the design having been taken from an antebellum prototype). A portrait of R. M. T. Hunter, a Confederate cabinet minister, appears in the lower right corner, but this too is not an original creation, having been copied from notes produced by rival firms.
- 37 See Ball, "Confederate Currency Derived from Banknote Plates," 343.
- 38 Joseph J. Gaines, Jr., has compiled a great deal of information about this vignette and the Confederate note after it in his article "The Indian Princess Vignette Used on Obsolete Currency," *Paper Money* 49 (September/October 2010): 355–362.
- 39 For one example, see the \$15 note of the Bank of Vicksburg, Mississippi (Bowers, *Whitman Encyclopedia*, 7:468, W-MS-890-015-G140). The vignette of the train on the right-hand side is borrowed from the plate of the \$10 note of the Bank of Charleston. This same vignette also appears in Type 27.
- 40 See Bradbeer, *Confederate and Southern State Currency*, 57, no. 99.
- 41 Before the war, Paterson was a dentist practicing in Augusta, Georgia. When the firm Hoyer & Ludwig made the decision to stay in Richmond rather than move to Columbia, S.C., he negotiated to buy its equipment, setting up shop in Columbia with the other major printers. He also took on the printing of other notes that had first appeared under Hoyer & Ludwig's imprint, as in Types 36 and 28.
- 42 For discussions of versions of this image, see Everett K. Cooper, "A Confederate Vignette—Origin and History," *Paper Money* 4 (Winter 1965), 18; Bowers, *Whitman Encyclopedia*, 1:153; and Marvin D. Ashmore and Michael McNeil, "Origins of the Train Vignette on Confederate Type-39 Treasury Notes," *Paper Money* 58 (March/April 2019), 116–118.
- 43 See Ross A. Brooks, *The Visible Confederacy: Images and Objects in the Civil War South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2019), 98.
- 44 The four notes are as follows: Type 37, and Figures 198, 199, and 200.
- 45 Although the \$5 note is dated 2 September 1861, Grover Criswell comments, "The sailor seated at the center of the note was produced during 1862" (Criswell, *Comprehen-*

sive *Catalog of Confederate Paper Money*, 138). Even if this vignette does not directly copy a prewar design, it can be seen as a variation on a common theme.

- 46 A list of the notes using this vignette can be found in Joseph J. Gaines, Jr., "Use of Sweet Potato Dinner Vignette on Confederate and Obsolete Bank Notes," *Paper Money* 51 (November/December 2012): 427–436. Gaines points out that the image was limited almost exclusively to the South and, in particular, to South Carolina (the sole exception is a proof of a note for the Bank of Xenia, Ohio). After the war, vignettes of *General Marion's Sweet Potato Dinner* and *Sergeants Jasper and Newton Rescuing American Prisoners from the British*, which records another painting by John Blake White of a Revolutionary War scene, were to appear on notes for the state of South Carolina produced by the ABNC.
- 47 In Figure 199 in the vignette on the right, Minerva leans on a columnar plinth on top of which is a victory wreath, a detail that presages another Southern victory over an invading army.
- 48 For an earlier example, one of many, see the Continental \$45 note dated 14 January 1779, where two beehives are sheltered by a shed roof. The motto reads, "SIC FLORET RESPUBLICA" (Thus let the nation flourish), associating the beehives with a well-regulated and productive society (the note is reproduced in Eric P. Newman, *The Early Paper Money of America*, 5th ed. [Iola, Wis.: Krause Publications, 2008], 44, and the motto is translated on 47). Roger Durand specifically identifies the beehive as alluding to thrift (see R. Durand, *Allegorical Representations*, 96).
- 49 Allen's early description of the vignette's content has become standard: "In the centre, [is an] allegorical design representing Industry, seated between a winged Cupid holding a caduceus, the pastoral staff of Mercury, and a bee-hive, which also symbolizes Industry" (Allen, "The Paper Money of the Confederate States," 31 [January 1918], 5).
- 50 Lucy Pickens's maiden name was Holcombe, and the South Carolina Holcombe regiment was named in her honor. The writer of a newspaper article that appeared in *Charleston News and Courier* after her death on 8 August 1899 describes her appearance when she reviewed the Holcombe regiment after its formation, an account that corresponds closely with her portrait on the \$1 bill: "Mounted on a spirited steed, attired in a riding habit of black velvet, WITH A LARGE HAT OF THE SAME MATERIAL TURNED UP ON ONE SIDE, WITH A LONG WHITE PLUME AS ITS ONLY ORNAMENT, she reviewed the Regiment, herself the most striking figure of the vast array" (quoted from Allen, "The Paper Money of the Confederate States," 31 [April 1918], 151).
- 51 Ross Brooks notes that Lucy Pickens had a "close friendship with . . . Memminger," making her adoption even more politically astute (Brooks, *The Visible Confederacy*, 181). Brooks is singularly unimpressed by Pickens's overall commitment to the Confederate cause. Her connections, rather than a praiseworthy résumé, led to her elevated position.
- 52 Arlie Slabaugh doubted the attribution to Liberty but offered no replacement: "At left a figure said to represent Liberty but which is more likely a nondescript product of the artist's imagination" (Slabaugh, *Confederate States Paper Money*, 48).
- 53 See Bradbeer, *Confederate and Southern State Currency*, 75, no. 286, and 81, no. 334; Allen, "The Paper Money of the Confederate States," 31 (April 1918), 155, 156; and Chase, *Confederate Treasury Notes*, 205.
- 54 Fuller, *Confederate Currency*, 39, 90, 95.

- 55 In 1957, Grover and Clarence Criswell retained the old identification of “South striking down Union” (Criswell and Criswell, *Confederate and Southern States Currency*, 39), but two years later, Fred Reinfeld, following Fuller, misidentified the subject as “Hercules liberating Prometheus by slaying the vulture” (Fred Reinfeld, *The Story of Civil War Money* [New York: Sterling Publishing Co., 1959], 63). In 1994, Roger Durand confusingly identified the Confederate vignette on the \$2 note as the South striking down the North but identified it in the caption to the reproduction as “Hercules liberating Prometheus by slaying the vulture” (R. Durand, *Allegorical Representations*, 41 [also see R. Durand, *Vignettes*, 2:21]). In 1998, Slabaugh unequivocally identified the \$2 Confederate note as showing Hercules and Prometheus (Slabaugh, *Confederate States Paper Money*, 49). Then an expanded edition of Slabaugh’s book had it both ways. One version of the \$2 note is identified as the Confederacy striking down the Union, whereas another shows Hercules liberating Prometheus (Arlie R. Slabaugh, *Confederate States Paper Money: Civil War Currency from the South*, ed. George S. Cuhaj, 12th ed. Iola, Wis.: Krause Publications, 2012], 41 and 53, respectively). In 2013, Ian Binnington described both the traditional and the new reading but came down on the side of the new one (Ian Binnington, *Confederate Visions: Nationalism, Symbolism, and the Imagined South in the Civil War* [Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2013], 84). In the following year, Pierre Fricke also accepted Hercules and Prometheus as the subject (Fricke, *Collecting Confederate Paper Money*, 291–293, 336, 339).
- 56 When describing the original interpretation, Binnington saw the Union eagle as having sided with the South: “It also appears as though a bird, which could easily be an eagle, is joining the attack. Even the symbol of the United States apparently cannot stand its own perfidy” (Binnington, *Confederate Visions*, 84).
- 57 Blanton Duncan to C. G. Memminger, 26 May 1862, Blanton Duncan Files: Confederate Citizens and Business Firms Files (National Archives Microfilm Publication, M346, roll 262), RG109, cited in Brooks, *The Visible Confederacy*, 34.
- 58 See R. Durand, *Allegorical Representations*, 41, and *Vignettes*, 2:21. Sensibly, in his 2007 book on the currency of the Southern states, Hugh Shull gave the traditional interpretation for the Louisiana note (Shull, *A Guide Book of Southern States Currency*, 144), as did Slabaugh in the 2012 edition of his book, which included the Louisiana note (Slabaugh, *Confederate States Paper Money: Civil War Currency from the South*, 182).
- 59 The combatant on the left can again be read as either male or female. Yet, even in an allegory, it is less than chivalrous for a male knight to dispatch a defenseless female, an offending reversal of the traditional formula. On balance, identifying the figure as male is the more plausible interpretation; even so, Duncan’s firm would seem to be casting the North as decidedly effeminate.
- 60 Quoted in McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 150.
- 61 See Ball, “Confederate Currency Derived from Banknote Plates,” 342.
- 62 See Ball, “Confederate Currency Derived from Banknote Plates,” 343.
- 63 For a list of the bank notes that feature a vignette of the blacksmith, the majority of which appear on Northern banks, see Gaines, “Origin of Vignettes Used on Confederate . . . Currency,” 43–44.
- 64 In addition to the Savannah note, on which the Confederate bill is based, Gaines lists nineteen other notes where the vignette of this boy appears (see Gaines, “Origin of Vignettes Used on Confederate . . . Currency,” 44).

- 65 Two other Keatinge & Ball \$10 bills, also dated 2 September 1861 (Types 25 and 26), are differentiated from each other only by the red tint employed on the Type 26 note. Both feature portraits of Hunter on the left and Memminger on the right. The center vignette shows Hope, a figure that, in a more abbreviated form, can be seen on Durand's specimen sheet (see the woman in the vertical format at lower right in Figure 103).
- 66 See John A. Muscalus, *Sully's Painting of the Future Rev. Dr. Alfred L. Elwyn on Paper Money* (Bridgeport, Pa.: Historical Paper Money Research Institute, 1969). The vignette reverses the painting.
- 67 Other than the Savannah note, Gaines lists two bank notes on which the cartload of cotton appears, thirteen for *The Corn Gatherers*, and twenty-eight for the ducks (see Gaines, "Origin of Vignettes used on Confederate . . . Currency," 43).
- 68 See Ball, "Confederate Currency Derived from Banknote Plates," 345.
- 69 See H. D. Allen, "The \$10 Bill of the Confederate States of Sept. 2, 1861," *Numismatist* 30 (January 1917): 10–13. Also see Brent H. Hughes, "How 'a Mystery of the South' Was Solved," *Paper Money* 12 (1973): 189–191. Before Allen's discovery, many thought the portrait was of Williamson S. Oldham, a Confederate senator from Texas.
- 70 Binnington, *Confederate Visions*, 82.
- 71 Seven of the states making up the Confederacy issued notes with recycled images of enslaved peoples with Mississippi showing the greatest variety of subject matter (the other states are Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Missouri, and North Carolina, as well as the secessionist government in Missouri; the enslaved are absent from the notes of Louisiana, Texas, and Virginia, whereas South Carolina and Tennessee did not issue their own state currency). The motif that appears most frequently is a version of the Black boy holding a basket of cotton, although he no longer wears a broad smile. Overall, the images concentrate on the performance of agricultural tasks, such as plowing, hoeing, picking and transporting cotton, and the tending of horses.
- 72 Under President Barack Obama's administration, proposals were made to change radically some denominations of federal paper money by introducing multiracial and multicultural content, thereby dramatically altering those values America's currency chooses to reflect. Harriet Tubman, a former enslaved person and an ardent and effective abolitionist, was proposed as a replacement for Andrew Jackson on the \$20 note. Portraits of civil rights leaders were projected to adorn the back of the \$5 note and suffragists the back of the \$10 bill. The Lincoln Memorial would still appear on the back of the \$5 bill, but it would be shown at the time of Marian Anderson's 1939 performance, and although the Treasury Department's building would still appear on the back of the \$10 note, it would be at the moment in 1913 when it was the end point for a march for women's right to vote (see Jackie Calmes, "\$20 Billing: Tubman Is In, Jackson Is Out," *New York Times*, 21 April 2016, A1 and A21 [Atlanta edition]). Although new portraits would be introduced and the public buildings that already appear would be presented in new contexts, the artistic conception of how to present this welcomed new subject matter could well remain much the same. Unfortunately, however, this initiative was postponed by Steven Mnuchin, Treasury secretary in Donald Trump's administration. For a more detailed account of the motivations underlying choices made in the past as well as the present, see Sharon Ann Murphy, *Other People's Money: How Banking Worked in the Early American Republic* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2017), 169–176.

- 73 See Douglas B. Ball's entry "Currency," in *Encyclopedia of the Confederacy*, ed. Richard N. Current, 4 vols. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), 1:436 and 438. Also see Douglas B. Ball, "The Confederate Currency Reform of 1862," in *America's Currency 1789–1866: Coinage of the Americas Conference at the American Numismatic Society, New York, October 31–November 2, 1985*, ed. William E. Metcalf (New York: American Numismatic Society, 1985): 1–12. Also see Brooks, *The Visible Confederacy*, 23 and 110.
- 74 The sole exception to Keatinge & Ball's dominance is Archer & Daly's production of the smaller 50-cent note, Types 63 and 72 (for Type 72, the firm's name had changed to Archer & Halpin).
- 75 Manouvrier's bank note is discussed in note 27.
- 76 See Philip H. Chase, "The Mysterious Chemicograph Backs for Confederate Currency," *Numismatist* 63 (March 1950): 123–129. Chase surmises that even if some of the plates made it through the Union blockade, because their medium (electrotypes) could not have easily been integrated with the engraving and lithographic processes then in use, printing from them may have proved too inconvenient (126).
- 77 See Ball, "Currency," 1:438.
- 78 Everett K. Cooper, "Anachronisms on Confederate Currency," *Paper Money* 34 (July/August, 1995), 139–141, 148. The author's examples of anachronistic choices apply primarily to the portraits of officials. Even after certain figures were no longer in office or had become opposed to the agenda of Jefferson Davis's administration, they remained in place on the nation's currency. This may have been related to necessity rather than policy: the speed at which notes had to be turned out left no time for fine-tuning.
- 79 For one example of the use of this vignette, see the \$20 note of the Bank of Memphis, Memphis, Tenn., which is dated 1 June 1854 (Bowers, *Whitman Encyclopedia*, 7:561, W-TN-480-020-G050).
- 80 Over the three years of issue, there are minor changes made to the vignettes of state capitol buildings. Of architectural significance in the 1864 version of the \$20 note, the ramp of dirt leading up to the central stairway has been removed and the spire atop the lantern is clipped.
- 81 In all three instances—the 1862, 1863, and 1864 \$100 notes—H. D. Allen describes the two soldiers as "representing the Infantry and Artillery branches of the army" (Allen, "The Paper Money of the Confederate States," 31 [July 1918], 286; 31 [October 1918], 406; and 32 [January 1919], 6). He does not, however, specify what links either figure to the artillery. One description of Confederate uniforms states there is little difference between the branches of service: "The Confederacy made no effort to provide a distinct style of uniform for the light artillery. It was only the color of the uniform trim [red for the artillery and blue for the infantry], and in some cases that of the cap being worn [again red and blue], that set the artilleryman apart from the infantryman or cavalryman" (Earl J. Coates, Michael J. McAfee, and Don Troiani, *Don Troiani's Regiments & Uniforms of the Civil War* [Mechanicsville, Pa.: Stackpole Books, 2002], 215). The black-and-white vignette offers little help in terms of the crucial detail of color. Perhaps both men belong to the infantry, although the older gentleman with his imposing slouch hat, impressive coat, and boots enjoys a higher status than his comrade (whereas the boots he wears may be better suited for horseback riding than long marches, for sentry duty an infantryman might well have donned a pair).

- 82 The title “Veterans” engraved beneath the stone helps explain the sense of repose in the Revolutionary War vignette. This word could mean they are experienced and seasoned soldiers, but it could also indicate that the war is over, their mission having been accomplished. The standing soldier wears an upturned broad-brimmed hat and the seated soldier a bicorne hat, but attached to both is the same ornament, which appears to be a bucktail. Such an item might well have adorned a soldier’s hat during this period (see Digby Smith and Kevin F. Kiley, *An Illustrated Encyclopedia of Uniforms of the American War of Independence, 1775–1783* [London: Lorenz Books, 2008], 59, caption to first rifleman). This vignette also appears on notes from at least two other Northern states: the \$20 note of the Hatters Bank, Bethel, Conn. (see Bowers, *Whitman Encyclopedia*, 2:7, W-CT-020-020-G110) and the \$50 note of the Lamoille County Bank, Hyde Park, Vt., dated 21 May 1855 (see R. Durand, *Vignettes*, 2:75, and Bowers, *Whitman Encyclopedia*, 5:381, W-VT-360-050-G070 and G070a).
- 83 Allen, “The Paper Money of the Confederate States,” 31 (December 1918), 470.
- 84 After the war, Union generals frequently appeared on U.S. paper currency. One should also mention that General Winfield Scott, who was general-in-chief of the Union army at the beginning of the Civil War, appeared on the \$1000 note of the National Bank Note series, but in this case, it was his leadership in the Mexican–American War that was being honored. In addition, this note was not in general circulation.
- 85 The Great Seal of the United States was adopted by the Continental Congress in 1782. On the seal’s reverse, two Latin mottoes abstain from directly invoking God’s name: *ANNUIT CŒPTIS* (He [God] has favored our undertakings) and *NOVUS SECTORUM* (a new order of the ages). Both the obverse and reverse of this seal eventually appeared on paper money: in 1935, they were placed on the back of the \$1 bill, a position they still occupy today. For a discussion of how the Confederacy overtly referenced God in its constitution and seal as a way of claiming moral superiority over the North, see William Bierly, *In God We Trust: The American Civil War: Money, Banking, and Religion* (Pelham, Ala.: Whitman Publishing, 2019), 18–23, 149–153.

Chapter 12

- 1 Quoted in Thomas F. Morris [Jr.], “U.S. Silver Certificates, Series of 1896,” *Numismatist* 47 (June 1934), 367.
- 2 After a long and acrimonious correspondence, Claude Johnson rejected Will Low’s design for a second note. Low called this design *Peace and Defence*. It appears first on a study for the \$10 note and then for the \$2. Both are reproduced along with some of the correspondence in Gene Hessler, “The \$2 Educational Note Essay: The Original Sketch,” *Paper Money* 18 (September/October 1979): 274–276. The Bureau of Engraving and Printing has Walter Shirlaw’s large design for the \$10 bill, which Charles Schlecht engraved, but this note was never issued. Its two main allegorical figures depict Agriculture and Forestry, who occupy the entire middle from top to bottom (see Gene Hessler, *U.S. Essay, Proof and Specimen Notes* [Portage, Ohio: BNR Press, 1979], 119–120).
- 3 A fourth artist, C. S. Reinhart, an admired illustrator working in New York City, was also approached, but he did not participate. He died a few years later on 30 August 1896.
- 4 *New York Times*, “New Silver Certificates: Beautiful Designs of the Bills Shortly to Be Issued,” 1 March 1896, 25. The article bears the dateline, “Washington, Feb. 20.”

- 5 *New York Times*, “New Silver Certificates,” 25.
- 6 *New York Times*, “New Silver Certificates,” 25.
- 7 Glenn B. Smedley, “Walter Shirlaw: Paper Money Designer,” *Paper Money* 88 (March/April 1999), 45.
- 8 In an article, Howard W. Parshall offers reasons for the names’ placements (Howard W. Parshall, “Famous Americans on the One Dollar Educational Note,” *Paper Money* 8 [January/February 1969], 20).
- 9 The McMillan Plan of 1902 led to the radical redesigning of parts of Washington, resulting in the sweeping away of urban clutter to establish the National Mall one sees today. Senator James McMillan of Michigan chaired the Senate Park Commission that created this blueprint for the improvement of the parks in the District of Columbia.
- 10 All of those who are honored were deceased. Congress had passed a bill on 7 April 1866 prohibiting the use of a portrait of a person who was still alive on federal paper money (this prohibition did not apply to coins). Early on, it was one thing to portray such living notables as Abraham Lincoln and Salmon P. Chase, but the appearance of Spencer M. Clark, the director of the National Currency Bureau (soon to be rechristened the Bureau of Engraving and Printing), on the 5-cent Fractional currency note issued between 5 December 1864 and 16 August 1869 proved to be a bridge too far. Clark was not alone (William Fressenden, the secretary of the Treasury, appeared on the 25-cent note and Francis E. Spinner, the treasurer, on the 50-cent note), but Clark’s inclusion ignited a firestorm that caused Congress to pass its bill (see Gene Hessler and Carlson Chambliss, *The Comprehensive Catalog of U.S. Paper Money*, 7th ed. [Port Clinton, Ohio: BNR Press, 2006], 286). This and other aspects of Clark’s at times controversial career are recounted in William Bierly, *In God We Trust: The American Civil War: Money, Banking, and Religion* (Pelham, Ala.: Whitman Publishing, 2019), 95–96.
- 11 *New York Times*, “New Silver Certificates,” 25.
- 12 The same portrait of Martha Washington that appears on the back of the \$1 Silver Certificates Note, Series of 1896, had already appeared on the faces of the \$1 Silver Certificates Notes, Series of 1886 and Series of 1891.
- 13 In a letter of 18 April 1895 to G. F. C. Smillie, who was the engraver of the vignette, Blashfield complained bitterly about the change in denomination, insisting that, for compositional purposes, a number consisting of two digits was required (see Thomas F. Morris, II, “The Life and Work of Thomas F. Morris (1852–1898): Designer of Bank Notes and Stamps,” *Essay-Proof Journal* 25 [Spring 1968], 58).
- 14 Morris’s son found a list of potential subjects for the first six notes tucked into the back of his father’s 1894 diary. The list reads, “\$1—Steam and Electricity, \$2—Our Navy, \$5—Our Postal Service, \$10—Our Press, \$20—Old and New [presumably contrasting “simpler” times with the growth in industry and transportation], \$50—North, East, South and West [a subject related to Shirlaw’s design for the unissued \$10 note]” (Morris, “The Life and Work of Thomas F. Morris,” 51). Thomas Morris, Jr., was uncertain as to whether or not these subjects were generated by his father or by Johnson. In his 1934 article, he would seem to have attributed the creation of these subjects to his father (Morris, “U.S. Silver Certificates, Series of 1896,” 367). He also describes the execution of a \$2 note featuring the American navy.
- 15 Robert Fulton’s and Samuel F. B. Morse’s oval portraits appear on the back of the note in chronological order: Fulton on the left and Morse on the right. But when the note is

held up and seen from the front, Morse appropriately lines up on the left behind the figure of Electricity and Fulton on the right behind Steam. Thomas Morris, Jr., observes that “this series of notes [the Educational Series] was the first to have persons not holding office under the Government” and is as well “the first time that portraits have been placed on the backs of the notes” (Morris, “U.S. Silver Certificates, Series of 1896,” 370).

- 16 Blashfield was invited to participate in the Library of Congress project on 28 November 1894 (see Richard Murray, “Painted Words: Murals in the Library of Congress,” in *The Library of Congress: The Art and Architecture of the Thomas Jefferson Building*, eds. John Y. Cole and Henry Hope Reed [New York: W. W. Norton & Company in association with the Library of Congress, 1997], 199).
- 17 Thanks to Charles Darwin’s pioneering studies, the word “evolution” was to become a charged term. However, when Blashfield was using this word, it did not have Darwinian overtones. As pointed out by Richard Murray, the use of “evolution” for the generation of artists and sculptors working on the Library of Congress decoration was interchangeable with “history” and “progress.” Its meaning “was filtered through the teachings and writings of Herbert Spencer. Spencer’s philosophy, which became known as ‘Spencerism,’ held that history, ethics, science, art, and all forms of human endeavor progress from the simple to the complex, from the indefinite to the definite, and from the incoherent to the coherent” (Murray, “Painted Words,” 222–223). Blashfield’s American Science represents the current apex of civilization’s forward progress.
- 18 In his 1930 mural *Good and Bad Uses of Science* in Morss Hall, Walker Memorial, at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Blashfield reinforces his point that it is up to humans to decide how best to employ science’s potential (see Anne E. Samuel, “Mural Painting for America: The Artistic Production of Edwin Howland Blashfield,” in *Edwin Howland Blashfield: Master American Painter*, ed. Mina Rieur Weiner [New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2009], 102, mural reproduced on 103).
- 19 “Walter Shirlaw,” in S. G. W. Benjamin, *Our American Artists* (Boston: D. Lothrop & Co., 1879), [1].
- 20 Thomas Morris, Jr., reproduces a proof vignette of Fame blowing her trumpet that had been in Shirlaw’s personal collection (Morris, “The Life and Work of Thomas F. Morris,” 67). He rightly suggests that this vignette had influenced Shirlaw’s conception. For another reproduction of it, see Figure 74, where it appears beneath the portrait of Queen Victoria.
- 21 In discussing this note, the *New York Times* offers two related identifications of the charioteer: “On the left, it seems, coming right out of the bill, is the figure of ‘Strength,’ in the guise of a charioteer driving three fiery horses, which come with superb action. About the head of the charioteer the lightning flashes in every direction” (*New York Times*, “New Silver Certificates,” 25), and “Additional allegoric figures are ‘Jupiter,’ representing force, standing upon the backs of a span of spirited steeds” (*New York Times*, “New Silver Certificate Issued: Five-Dollar Bills Reproducing Shirlaw’s Painting ‘America,’” 15 August 1896, 4).
- 22 Thomas Morris, Jr., plausibly identifies his father’s second wife as having been the model for the female head (see Morris, “The Life and Work of Thomas F. Morris,” 68).
- 23 Thomas Morris, Jr., “U.S. Silver Certificates, Series of 1896,” 370.
- 24 See Mark D. Tomasko, *The Feel of Steel: The Art and History of Bank-Note Engraving in the United States*, 2nd ed. (New York: The American Numismatic Society, 2012), 43, 46–47.

- 25 Thomas Morris II, "The Life and Work of Thomas F. Morris," 76.
- 26 *Detroit Free Press*, "Too Many Bogus Bills. The High Art Silver Certificates Easily Counterfeited. They Are to Be Withdrawn from Circulation," 25 July 1897, 13.
- 27 *New York Times*, "New Silver Certificates," 25. Thomas Morris was among those who worried about the artists' resistance to adapting to the special requirements of bank-note engraving.
- 28 The front and back of the \$1 note are reproduced in Hessler and Chambliss, *The Comprehensive Catalog of U.S. Paper Money*, 56–57; the front and back of the \$2 note (73); and the front and back of the \$5 note (90). The front of the \$5 note is also reproduced in this book as Figure 107. The conception of the face of the \$2 note pays homage to Michelangelo's *Tomb of Giuliano de' Medici* in the Medici Chapel, Florence. The central portrait of George Washington has replaced the statue of Giuliano, and the male and female allegories to the sides have been reversed as they would be in an engraving. In line with the principles embedded in the academic tradition of the theory of imitation, this is a creative adaptation of a Renaissance masterpiece, thereby associating the design with the luster and grandeur of the original.
- 29 Accounts of these complaints can be found in Hessler, *U.S. Essay, Proof and Specimen Notes*, 116–117. Also see Mark D. Tomasko, *Images of Value: The Artwork behind U.S. Security Engraving, 1830s–1980s* (New York: Grolier Club, 2017), 91–93.
- 30 Heinz Tschachler comments, "Although the symbolic association between a woman's breast and nourishment from a fertile nation should have been clear enough (and had been intended by the note's designer, Walter Shirlaw, the co-founder of the Chicago Institute of Art), some [Boston] banks also refused to take the notes. Thus originated the idiom 'banned in Boston'" (Tschachler, *The Greenback: Paper Money and American Culture* [Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2010], 81). The wording of his observation is indebted to a comment by Virginia Hewitt: "The symbolic association between a woman's breast and nourishment from a fertile nation is clear enough" (Virginia Hewitt, ed. "Soft Images, Hard Currency: The Portrayal of Women on Paper Money," in *The Banker's Art: Studies in Paper Money* (London: British Museum Press, 1995), 159).
- 31 *Detroit Free Press*, "Too Many Bogus Bills," 25 July 1897, 13.
- 32 Charles M. Shean, "Mural Painting from the American Point of View," *The Craftsman* 7 (October 1904), 26.
- 33 Quoted in Morris, "The Life and Work of Thomas F. Morris," 87.

Conclusion

- 1 Anonymous, "Notices of the Fine Arts: Bank-Note Engraving," *Godey's Magazine and Lady's Book* 36 (1848): 127.

Abbreviations of Bank-Note Firms

ABNC—American Bank Note Company, New York

BA/BC—Bald, Adams & Co., New York/Bald, Cousland & Co., Philadelphia

BB&C/BC—Baldwin, Bald & Cousland, New York/Bald, Cousland & Co., Philadelphia

BC/BB&C—Bald, Cousland & Co., Philadelphia/Baldwin, Bald & Cousland, New York

CBNC—Continental Bank Note Company, New York

DT/DTL—Draper, Toppan & Co., Philadelphia/Draper, Toppan, Longacre & Co., Philadelphia and New York

MDF—Murray, Draper, Fairman & Co., Philadelphia

NBNC—National Bank Note Company, New York

RW&H—Rawdon, Wright & Hatch, New York

RWH&E—Rawdon, Wright, Hatch & Edson, New York

SBNC—Southern Bank Note Company, New Orleans

TCC—Toppan, Carpenter, Casilear & Co., New York and Philadelphia

UBS&H/DU—Underwood, Bald, Spencer & Hufty, Philadelphia/Danforth, Underwood & Co., New York

WHH&W—Wellstood, Hanks, Hay & Whiting, New York

WH&W—Wellstood, Hay & Whiting, New York (and sometimes Chicago)

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- The Newman Numismatic Portal (NNP). Washington University in St. Louis is undertaking an ambitious project that is intended to create "the primary and most comprehensive resource for numismatic research and reference material, initially concentrating on U.S. Coinage and Currency" (quoted from the NNP website).
- The SPMC's Obsolete Database Project (ODP). SPMC is the abbreviation for the Society of Paper Money Collectors. For the sake of clarification, "obsolete" often refers to bank notes that are no longer in circulation. These notes are sometimes distinguished from paper money produced by banks that went bankrupt, whose currency is referred to as "broken bank notes." In terms of the database, all bank-note types are included, as well as related currencies issued by other contemporary institutions.

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The Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1690 became the first government in the Western world to print paper money, the imagery for which initiated an indigenous American art form of remarkable dynamism and originality. After the Revolutionary War, the U.S. government left it to private institutions such as state-chartered banks to carry on the tradition. Adorned with a vast variety of images, bank notes soon became the fledgling country's primary currency. With pressures of the Civil War, the federal government in 1861 began taking charge of the paper-money supply by creating a national currency; simultaneously, the Confederate States of America was creating a competing self-image. Later, collaboration between government engravers and well-known artists on the 1896 Silver Certificates marked the apex of U.S. government currency design. For two centuries, American creativity and technical ingenuity resulted in imagery on paper money that helped create and enhance the nation's imagined self.



William L. Pressly taught at Yale University, Duke University, and the University of Maryland, where he served as chair of the Department of Art History and Archaeology. He is a member of the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton, New Jersey. Pressly received a Morse Fellowship from Yale University, a John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Fellowship, a Mellon Senior Fellowship from the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, a Residency Fellowship at the Yale Center for British Art, and was a Smithsonian Institution Senior Fellow. He has written numerous articles and essays, primarily on British art of the Romantic period, and six books. His book *James Barry's Murals at the Royal Society of Arts: Envisioning a New Public Art* won the 2015 William M. D. Berger Prize for British Art History. Pressly now lives in retirement in Atlanta with his wife, Nancy.



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