

## PREFACE TO THE EIGHTEENTH EDITION

The table and chart on page 302 of this edition summarize the current situation in the field of United States currency better than words ever could. The intensity of activity has been such that what was once unimaginable is now almost expected.

It was only in October, 2005 that a piece of American currency broke the \$1 million dollar barrier for the first time: A \$1,000 Legal Tender Note from the Series of 1890 in about uncirculated condition, identified as No. 379a in this book, brought \$1,092,500 at public auction. Since then, four other notes have exceeded that mark, interestingly enough, all in the same month. They were:

\$1,000 Gold Certificate, Series of 1882. No. 1218d — \$1,092,500 at public auction. One of three known and the only one in private hands.

\$1,000 Legal Tender Note, Series of 1863. No. 186d — \$1,150,000 at public auction. One of three in private hands.

\$1,000 Legal Tender Note, Series of 1891. No. 379c — \$2.1 million by private sale. Unique.

\$100 Gold Certificate, Series of 1863. No. 1166c — \$2.1 million by private sale. One of three known and the only one in private hands.

While these are extraordinary examples, and prices have risen across all types of notes and states of preservation, the collecting of paper money remains relatively affordable, especially when compared to United States coins. In fact, one reason given by many for the frenetic state of today's currency market is the influx of many coin collectors discovering paper for the first time, and their "amazement" at the relatively modest prices in relation to rarity.

A consequence of the arrival of so many new players in the market and of the new price levels has been the emergence of several third party grading services who, for a fee, are independently evaluating notes, giving their opinion as to condition on a numerical scale up to "70," and sealing the currency in a plastic holder. There are now theoretically at least ten different conditions defined for "uncirculated" notes — from a low of "Uncirculated 60" to a high of "Gem Uncirculated 70." The prices reflected for these grades often rise geometrically from one to the next.

The prices in this book reflect at most only two states of preservation for uncirculated notes — "Crisp Uncirculated" and "Choice Crisp Uncirculated." For those who insist on numerical equivalents, this would be CU-60 and CU-63. Prices above these grades can be considerably higher than the prices herein as well as extremely subjective. Buyers are urged to familiarize themselves with the material.

The emergence of new collectors is likely to continue. It is thanks in no small part to the continuing efforts of the Bureau of Engraving and Printing to fight counterfeiting by more frequently revising the designs of the currency. As media exposure increases awareness of the current money it has the unintended side effect of elevating interest in its predecessors as well. What it does not do is increase the supply of material available.

Collecting paper money has become so popular that for the first time there is a magazine issued four to six times annually devoted exclusively to the subject and on sale at newsstands nationwide. It is a sign of things to come.

### The Currency Collections of the American Numismatic Association and the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco

Many of the illustrations which follow were added in this book's most recent editions and are representative of two of the foremost public currency collections extant.

The Museum of the American Numismatic Association in Colorado Springs, Colorado includes issues from the ancient coinage of Greece and Rome through the pocket change used around the world today.

Two collections are of particular interest and importance for readers of this book: The Aubrey and Adeline Bebee Collection of United States Paper Money and the Robert T. Herdegen Collection of Fractional Currency (see page 149).

The Bebee Collection was formed over a period of forty-six years and was donated to the Association in 1987 and 1988. It includes nearly all issues of every denomination of American currency, excluding fractional issues, from the Civil War to the 1980s. Among its most impressive components are some extremely rare uncut sheets of early notes.

Within it are some remarkable specialized groupings. One is the 1882 \$5 "Brown Back" issues of the Second Charter period National Bank Notes with examples from nearly every state. Another includes examples of notes showing all of the official government signature combinations which may be found on "legal tender." Yet another includes examples of the very rare National Bank Notes issued in United States territories.

In 1953, Aubrey Bebee was one of the original contributors to the first edition of this book. His support and cooperation in every subsequent edition until his passing were invaluable. It is a fitting tribute to the Bebees that their collection is now a part of a book in which they have had an important part.

Highlights of these collections may be seen at the A.N.A. Museum in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Many are also available for viewing online at the ANA website, [www.money.org](http://www.money.org).

The Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco has a nearly complete collection, by type, of American large size currency. It consists of more than 1,700 individual notes, but is extraordinary for more than its size: In terms of diversity, and the number of specimens of extreme rarity, it cannot be duplicated. No part of American financial history is forgotten.

A remarkable aspect of the collection is that until 1992 its existence was not well-known. For more than forty years, it laid dormant and forgotten in a padlocked, steel currency cart deep in the Bank's vaults.

Speculation is that parts of the collection were sent to the Bank by the Treasury Department years ago as historical specimens. Other pieces were acquired during the 1950's when the Bank exchanged duplicates in an effort to widen its collection. It is interesting to note, for instance, that some of the same illustrations which in previous editions of this book were credited to the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago, have now been transferred to San Francisco.

On April 30, 1997, the American Currency Exhibit opened in the lobby of the Bank at 101 Market Street, San Francisco. Many of the more than 400 notes on exhibit are the same ones included herein. The arrangement is chronological and shows the evolution of American currency design over more than two centuries. It starts with the War of Independence, and then shows specimens of notes issued through Westward Expansion, the Civil War, Industrial Revolution, the conflict over Bimetallism, and on to the Depression, the era of National Stability, and the U.S. Dollar as the World Standard. There are also interactive educational displays. Parts of the collection may be viewed at [www.frbsf.org/currency](http://www.frbsf.org/currency).

The color section beginning on page 313 features selections from both the above collections.