

U.S. Currency

Yes, if you were a banker, financial advisor, etc., you might be especially interested in collecting Currency covers, *but*, since I'm especially interested in history, did you know...

- Just to start us off, paper money was invented in China, but, oddly enough, the first paper money the Chinese issued was actually on leather (probably lasted longer than paper).

- The Continental Congress issued the first paper money in 1775 to help finance the Revolutionary War. It lost its value very quickly since it was not backed up by either silver or gold. So people started the saying, "It's not worth a Continental" about anything that was worthless.

- In 1913, Congress passed the Federal Reserve Act. Federal Reserve notes (paper money) was issued by the Federal Reserve Board and was circulated by the twelve Federal Reserve Banks. These notes are obligations of the government and are redeemable only in lawful money—not in gold or silver. Federal Reserve Notes comprise virtually all of the currency presently in circulation.

- After the US went off the gold standard in 1933, the Silver Purchase Act of 1934 directed the US Treasury to issue Silver Certificates and to maintain silver to back them. By 1963, silver had become so valuable to Industry that the 1934 act was repealed. In 1964, the printing of Silver Certificates was stopped, and, in 1968, the redemption of silver certificates for silver coins ceased.

- The typical lifespan of currency depends on the denomination of the note. Here are the average life spans according to the U.S. Bureau of Engraving and Printing:

\$1 bill - 22 months
\$5 bill - 16 months
\$10 bill - 18 months
\$20 bill - 24 months
\$50 bill - 55 months
\$100 bill - 89 months

- Bills that get worn out from everyday use are taken out of circulation and replaced. Coins usually survive in circulation for about 25 years.

- Just under half of the notes printed \$1 notes.

- Martha Washington is the only woman whose portrait has appeared on a U.S. currency note. It appeared on the face of the \$1 Silver Certificate of 1886 and 1891, and the back of the \$1 Silver Certificate of 1896.

- The largest bill ever printed was the \$100,000 bill; it was actually a Gold Certificate issued in 1934. These notes were used for transactions between Federal Reserve banks and were not circulated among the general public. President Woodrow Wilson was depicted on the bill.



- A mile of pennies laid out is \$844.80. By this standard, America is about \$2.5 million wide, coast to coast.
- "E Pluribus Unum" is used on many of our country's seals and most of our currency and coins. During the American Revolution, the Continental Congress issued a three-dollar bill bearing the motto, "Exitus in Dubio Est," which translates to "The Outcome Is in Doubt." Despite congressional pessimism about the war, John Adams, Ben Franklin, and Thomas Jefferson proposed the more prophetic motto, "E Pluribus Unum" -- "One From Many." The motto first appeared on the Great Seal of the United States in 1782. The Great Seal, however, didn't appear on U.S. currency until 1902.
- The so-called "all-seeing eye" that sits atop the pyramid on dollar bills was included as a reflection of divine providence. This was not the only option that was considered to fulfill that desired theme. A depiction of the Children of Israel in the Wilderness was also discussed as a possibility.
- Our so-called "paper currency" is actually not paper, but is made of cotton/linen material. It consists of a 75% cotton/25% linen blend with silk fibers running through it. If it were made of paper, it would fall apart if you accidentally left it in your pants pocket and sent it for a whirl in your washing machine.
- Our "paper currency" is built to take quite a beating. The BEP says it would take 4,000 double folds (first forward, and then backwards) before a note will tear.
- Is a torn up dollar bill still worth anything? According to the BEP, it is. "The BEP redeems partially destroyed or badly damaged currency as a free public service. Every year the U.S. Treasury handles approximately 30,000 claims and redeems mutilated currency valued at over \$30 million. Experts examine damaged currency and can approve the issuance of a Treasury check for the value of the currency determined to be redeemable."
- No portraits of African-Americans have appeared on paper money, but commemorative coins were issued in the 1940s bearing the images of George Washington Carver and Booker T. Washington, followed more recently by the release of a Jackie Robinson coin. Paper money does bear the signatures of four African American men who served as Registers of the Treasury (Blanche K. Bruce, Judson W. Lyons, William T. Vernon, and James C. Napier) and one African American woman who served as Treasurer of the United States (Azie Taylor Morton).
- The first paper notes were printed in denominations of 1 cent, 5 cents, 25 cents, and 50 cents.
- The Bureau of Engraving and Printing produces 38 million notes a day with a face value of approximately \$541 million. That doesn't mean there is \$541 million more money circulating today than there was yesterday, though, because 95% of the notes printed each year are used to replace notes already in circulation.
- Though it would be difficult to tell without a magnifying glass, the hands of the clock in the steeple of Independence Hall (on the back of a \$100 bill) are set at approximately 4:10. Is there a significance to that time? I don't know.
- At the base of the pyramid on the \$1 bill you will find "1776" in Roman Numerals.

[<http://www.dailyfinance.com/2010/11/23/10-fascinating-facts-about-u-s-currency/>; <http://blog.lendingclub.com/2008/01/22/the-us-dollar-bill-50-fascinating-facts/>]