



1-Yen National Bank Note Printing Specimen with an Undetached Stub, 1877, PMG 53 (About Uncirculated "SPECIMEN"), 74.00x156.00 mm

Historical Item Likely to Be the Only Existing Example of its Kind

The so-called “Sailors note” or “New 1-Yen National Bank note” (issued in 1877) is the very first banknote printed in Japan using the modern security printing technologies introduced from the West.

This printing specimen with incomparable historical importance was recently found in the scrapbook of George Casilear (1825-1912), the chief engraver of the Bureau of Engraving and Printing in the US. What is remarkable about this specimen is that the stub on the right side has not been cut off. The only other known example with an undetached stub is in the collection of Edoardo Chiossone Museum in Genoa, Italy [Fig. 1]. It is a printing specimen given to Edoardo Chiossone (1833-1898) by Japan’s Printing Bureau in 1891 when he was retired from the Bureau where he had been hired by the Japanese government and worked to introduce modern security printing technologies, designing and engraving the very 1-Yen National Bank note in 1877. Casilear, who visited Continental Bank Note Company when the American company was producing Japanese “Old National Bank notes” (issued in 1971), is likely also to have been given the printing specimen by the Japan’s Printing Bureau.

The stubs were records which the Treasury kept when it gave printed notes to the National Banks and the actual cutting of stubs was done by the Printing Bureau, an agency of the Treasury and the producer of the notes. So National Bank notes with stubs undetached were never meant to go out of the Printing Bureau. The Bureau lost the most of its valuable historical relics in the two near-total disasters during the Great Kanto Earthquake in 1923 and during the WWII. As a result, only those two examples which happened to go overseas appear to have survived until today. Other than these two, no notes with undetached stubs have been found anywhere including in the archive of the Bank of Japan.

Unlike the Chiossone’s, the Casilear’s has the National Bank President’s and Manager’s sample seals printed on it, making it unique and closer to the circulated note than the Chiossone’s. In addition, the Treasury distributed 82 specimen notes to other related government agencies in 1877 but those specimen notes do not have their stubs undetached and also has “見本” (Specimen) printed on their reverse sides [Fig. 2].

Detached stubs sometimes appear in the market. They are thought to be some of those stubs which went outside the Treasury by being discarded probably after 1899 when the National Bank Notes went out of currency.



[Fig. 1] Printing Specimen in the Collection of Chiossone Museum in Genoa, Italy



[Fig. 2] Specimen Note the Treasury Distributed to Other Government Agencies