

## BEP HISTORY FACT SHEET



Prepared by the Historical Resource Center - Last Updated December 2013

## HISTORICAL HIGHLIGHTS: \$2 NOTE

From 1862 to the present, the Federal Government has issued many different types of currency notes in \$2 denominations. In all, there have been six different currency types with a \$2 note. The Secretary of the Treasury is responsible for the selection of the designs, including the portraits, which appear on paper currency. \$2 notes issued prior to 1928 featured many different designs, which would often change with the introduction of a new series. \$2 notes issued since 1928 were smaller in size and more standardized in design, featuring a portrait of Thomas Jefferson on the face. Thus, for almost a century, the portrait of Thomas Jefferson has been a key design feature of the face of the \$2 note. From 1928 until 1976, the back of the \$2 featured a vignette of Jefferson's home, Monticello. Starting in 1976, the back of the notes was changed to feature a portrayal of the presentation of the Declaration of Independence, the famous document that Jefferson authored. Below are production totals, series lists, design highlights and interesting facts for each currency type that has featured a \$2 note. For more detail about notes currently in circulation, please visit [www.newmoney.gov](http://www.newmoney.gov).

## UNITED STATES NOTES

**Production:** Total Production of \$2 United States Notes 1862-1966: \$1,827,182,128

**Series Dates:** 1862, 1869, 1874, 1875, 1875A, 1875B, 1878, 1880, 1917, 1928, 1928A, 1928B, 1928C, 1928D, 1928E, 1928F, 1928G, 1953, 1953A, 1953B, 1953C, 1963, 1963A

*Face of Note*

- **Main design elements (Series):** portrait of Alexander Hamilton (1862), portrait of Thomas Jefferson (1869-1963A) and vignette *Capitol* (1869-1917)
- **Designer (Series):** Unknown (1862-1917), Clair A. Huston and Alvin R. Meissner (1928-1963A)
- **Engraver of portrait (Series):** Joseph P. Ourdon (1862), Charles K. Burt (Portrait, 1869-1963A), Louis Delnoce and William Chorlton (Vignette, 1869-1917)

## Design Highlights

*Back of Note*

- **Main design elements (Series):** lathe work with counters and text (1862-1917), vignette of Monticello (1928-1963A)
- **Designer (Series):** Unknown (all series)  
**Engraver of vignette (Series):** J.C. Benzing (1928-1963A)

## Interesting Facts

- Alexander Hamilton (1755-1804), pictured on the face of the 1862 \$2 United States Note, was one of the Founding Fathers and served as Secretary of the Treasury from 1789 to 1795.
- Thomas Jefferson began building his home, Monticello, which is featured on the back of the newest issues of the \$2 United States Notes, when he was twenty-six years old.
- For most of their history, \$2 notes have been unpopular, being viewed as unlucky or simply awkward to use in cash exchanges.
- \$2 notes were often returned to the Treasury with corners torn off, making them mutilated currency and unfit for reissue.
- The fortunes of the \$2 note were reversed with the entry of the US into World War II. In early 1942, the Treasury forbade the carrying of US currency across the Mexican-US border. The Treasury did this "to prevent use being made of Mexico as a place in which Axis agents may dispose of dollar currency looted abroad." The only exceptions to this blockade were \$2 notes and silver dollars as it was believed that there were not many of these items outside the United States. As a result, demand for \$2 notes skyrocketed along the border.

SELECT UNITED STATES NOTE IMAGES



\$2 United States Note, Face, Series 1862 (back image not available)



\$2 United States Note, Face, Series 1869



\$2 United States Note, Back, Series 1869



\$2 United States Note, Face, Series 1875



\$2 United States Note, Back, Series 1874-1917



\$2 United States Note, Face, Series 1928G



\$2 United States Note, Back, Series 1928-1953C



\$2 United States Note, Face, Series 1963



\$2 United States Note, Back, Series 1963



## FEDERAL RESERVE NOTES

**Production:** Total Production of \$2 Federal Reserve Notes, 1976-2012: \$2,430,720,000

**Series Dates:** 1976, 1995, 2003, 2003A

## Design Highlights

*Face of Note*

- **Main design elements (Series):** portrait of Thomas Jefferson (all series)
- **Designer (Series):** Clair A. Huston and Alvin R. Meissner (all series)
- **Engraver of portrait (Series):** Charles K. Burt (all series)

*Back of Note*

- **Main design elements (Series):** vignette *The Declaration of Independence* (all series)
- **Designer (Series):** Peter M. Cocci (all series)  
**Engraver of vignette (Series):** Frederick Girsch (all series)

## Interesting Facts

- There are no plans to redesign the \$2 note.
- The \$2 Federal Reserve Note, Series 1976, was introduced in celebration of the United States' bicentennial.
- The vignette on the back of the series 1976 \$2 Federal Reserve Note is based on the painting *Declaration of Independence*, by John Trumbull. There are two versions of the painting: a smaller one begun in 1786 that is located at the Yale University Art Gallery and a second, larger version begun in 1817 that is located in the rotunda of the U.S. Capitol. The two paintings are virtually the same, but one notable difference is the absence of one of the standing figures. In the Yale version, there are six standing figures on the far left side of the composition (making a total of 48 figures). In the rotunda version, one of those figures is missing (the third one from the left, making a total of 47 figures). The engraving on the back of the \$2 note includes all six of the standing figures so it appears to be based on the Yale version. Also, four seated figures on the far left and two seated figures on the far right that appear in both versions are not included in the BEP vignette. More information about Trumbull's paintings follows on the next page.

## SELECT FEDERAL RESERVE NOTES IMAGES



\$2 Federal Reserve Note, Face, Series 1976



\$2 Federal Reserve Note, Back, Series 1976-2003A

**MORE ABOUT THE 1976 \$2 FEDERAL RESERVE NOTE**

Below are the Yale and U.S. Capitol rotunda images of Trumbull's *Declaration of Independence* along with keys to the figures in each version. The differences between the two images are highlighted in yellow circles on the paintings and in the key tables. Essentially, the artist included one additional figure in the Yale version, Thomas Nelson, Jr. (#36 in the key) and the appearance of figures added or missing (as indicated by the yellow circles) is due to figures being shifted around in the two compositions.



Image Location: Yale University Art Gallery

- |   |   |   |                                     |
|---|---|---|-------------------------------------|
| 1. George Wythe, Virginia               | 13. William Floyd, New York             | 25. George Clymer, Pennsylvania         | 37. Francis Lewis, New York         |
| 2. William Whipple, New Hampshire       | 14. Arthur Middleton, South Carolina    | 26. Joseph Hewes, North Carolina        | 38. John Witherspoon, New York      |
| 3. Josiah Bartlett, New Hampshire       | 15. Thomas Heyward, Jr., South Carolina | 27. <b>George Walton, Georgia</b>       | 39. Samuel Huntington, Connecticut  |
| 4. <b>Thomas Lynch, South Carolina</b>  | 16. Charles Carroll, Maryland           | 28. James Willson, Pennsylvania         | 40. William Williams, Connecticut   |
| 5. <b>Benjamin Harrison, Virginia</b>   | 17. Robert Morris, Pennsylvania         | 29. <b>Abraham Clark, New Jersey</b>    | 41. Oliver Wolcott, Connecticut     |
| 6. Richard Henry Lee, Virginia          | 18. Thomas Willing, Pennsylvania        | 30. Francis Hopkinson, New Jersey       | 42. Charles Thomson, Pennsylvania   |
| 7. Samuel Adams, Massachusetts          | 19. Benjamin Rush, Pennsylvania         | 31. John Adams, Massachusetts           | 43. John Hancock, Massachusetts     |
| 8. George Clinton, New York             | 20. Elbridge Gerry, Massachusetts       | 32. Roger Sherman, Connecticut          | 44. George Read, Delaware           |
| 9. William Paca, Maryland               | 21. Robert Treat Paine, Massachusetts   | 33. Robert R. Livingston, New York      | 45. John Dickinson, Pennsylvania    |
| 10. Samuel Chase, Maryland              | 22. William Hooper, North Carolina      | 34. Thomas Jefferson, Virginia          | 46. Edward Rutledge, South Carolina |
| 11. <b>Richard Stockton, New Jersey</b> | 23. Stephen Hopkins, Rhode Island       | 35. Benjamin Franklin, Pennsylvania     | 47. Thomas McKean, Delaware         |
| 12. Lewis Morris, New York              | 24. William Ellery, Rhode Island        | 36. <b>Thomas Nelson, Jr., Virginia</b> | 48. Philip Livingston, New York     |



Image Location: U.S. Capitol rotunda

- |  |   |   |                                     |
|--|---|---|-------------------------------------|
| 1. George Wythe, Virginia              | 13. Arthur Middleton, South Carolina    | 25. George Clymer, Pennsylvania         | 37. John Witherspoon, New York      |
| 2. William Whipple, New Hampshire      | 14. Thomas Heyward, Jr., South Carolina | 26. William Hooper, North Carolina      | 38. Samuel Huntington, Connecticut  |
| 3. Josiah Bartlett, New Hampshire      | 15. Charles Carroll, Maryland           | 27. Joseph Hewes, North Carolina        | 39. William Williams, Connecticut   |
| 4. <b>Benjamin Harrison, Virginia</b>  | 16. <b>George Walton, Georgia</b>       | 28. James Willson, Pennsylvania         | 40. Oliver Wolcott, Connecticut     |
| 5. <b>Thomas Lynch, South Carolina</b> | 17. Robert Morris, Pennsylvania         | 29. Francis Hopkinson, New Jersey       | 41. John Hancock, Massachusetts     |
| 6. Richard Henry Lee, Virginia         | 18. Thomas Willing, Pennsylvania        | 30. John Adams, Massachusetts           | 42. Charles Thomson, Pennsylvania   |
| 7. Samuel Adams, Massachusetts         | 19. Benjamin Rush, Pennsylvania         | 31. Roger Sherman, Connecticut          | 43. George Read, Delaware           |
| 8. George Clinton, New York            | 20. Elbridge Gerry, Massachusetts       | 32. Robert R. Livingston, New York      | 44. John Dickenson, Pennsylvania    |
| 9. William Paca, Maryland              | 21. Robert Treat Paine, Massachusetts   | 33. Thomas Jefferson, Virginia          | 45. Edward Rutledge, South Carolina |
| 10. Samuel Chase, Maryland             | 22. <b>Abraham Clark, New Jersey</b>    | 34. Benjamin Franklin, Pennsylvania     | 46. Thomas McKean, Delaware         |
| 11. Lewis Morris, New York             | 23. Stephen Hopkins, Rhode Island       | 35. <b>Richard Stockton, New Jersey</b> | 47. Philip Livingston, New York     |
| 12. William Floyd, New York            | 24. William Ellery, Rhode Island        | 36. Francis Lewis, New York             |                                     |

Sources: The images of Trumbull's *Declaration of Independence* appearing on this fact sheet have been cropped horizontally to conform to limited space. They were provided by Yale University Art Gallery, <http://artgallery.yale.edu/collections/objects/declaration-independence-july-4-1776> and the Architect of the Capitol, <http://www.aoc.gov/capitol-hill/historic-rotunda-paintings/declaration-independence>, uncropped versions can be viewed on these websites. The key to figures in the Yale image is derived from a document in the BEP Historical Resource Center. The key to figures in U.S. Capitol rotunda image can be found online at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Key\\_Trumbulls\\_Declaration\\_of\\_Independence1.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Key_Trumbulls_Declaration_of_Independence1.jpg).



## SILVER CERTIFICATES

**Production:** Total Production of \$2 Silver Certificates 1886-1926: \$1,202,718,000

**Series Dates:** 1886, 1891, 1896, 1899

### Design Highlights

#### Face of Note

- **Main design elements (Series):** portrait of Winfield Scott Hancock (1886), portrait of William Windom (1891), vignette *Science Presenting Steam and Electricity to Industry and Commerce* (1896), portrait of George Washington (1899) and vignette *Mechanics and Agriculture* (1899)
- **Designer (Series):** Unknown (1886-1891, 1899), Edwin H. Blashfield (Vignette, 1896), Thomas F. Morris (1896)
- **Engraver of portrait (Series):** Charles Schlecht (1886), W. G. Phillips (1891), G.F.C. Smillie (1896 and 1899 vignettes and 1899 portrait)

#### Back of Note

- **Main design elements (Series):** lathe work with counters and text (1886, 1891 and 1899), portraits of Robert Fulton and Samuel F. B. Morse (1896)
- **Designer (Series):** Unknown (1886-1891, 1899), Thomas F. Morris (1896)
- **Engraver of vignette (Series):** Charles Burt (Fulton Portrait, 1896), Charles Schlecht (Morse Portrait, 1896)

### Interesting Facts

- Winfield Scott Hancock (1824-1886) was a Commanding General in the U.S. Army.
- William Windom (1827-1891) was once a U.S. Senator and was also once Secretary of the Treasury.
- Robert Fulton (1765-1815) is credited with inventing the first commercially successful steamboat.
- Samuel F.B. Morse (1791-1872) contributed to the invention of the telegraph and co-invented Morse code.
- The 1896 Series note was part of the Educational Series, considered some of the most beautiful notes ever produced.

### SELECT SILVER CERTIFICATE IMAGES



\$2 Silver Certificate, Face & Back, Series 1886



\$2 Silver Certificate, Face & Back, Series 1891



\$2 Silver Certificate, Face & Back, Series 1896



\$2 Silver Certificate, Face & Back, Series 1899

## NATIONAL BANK NOTES

**Production:** Total Production of \$2 National Bank Notes 1865-1879: \$15,906,742

**Series Dates:** Original, 1875

### Design Highlights

#### Face of Note

- **Main design elements (Series):** vignette *Stars and Stripes*
- **Designer (Series):** Unknown
- **Engraver of portrait (Series):** Louis Delnoce

#### Back of Note

- **Main design elements (Series):** vignette *Sir Walter Raleigh Presenting Corn and Tobacco to the English*
- **Designer (Series):** Unknown
- **Engraver of vignette (Series):** Louis Delnoce

### Interesting Facts

- This note is sometimes referred to as the “Lazy Deuce” because of the horizontal two featured on the face of the note.
- In the 1860s, there were limits on how many \$1 and \$2 notes the banks could issue because, at the time, it was believed that the widespread use of small-denomination notes caused inflation.

### SELECT NATIONAL BANK NOTE IMAGES



\$2 National Bank Note, Face, Original Series, Series 1875 (back image not available)

**TREASURY COIN NOTES**

**Production:** Total Production of \$2 Treasury Coin Notes 1891-1899: \$49,808,000

**Series Dates:** 1890, 1891

**Design Highlights**

*Face of Note*

- **Main design elements (Series):** portrait of James B. McPherson (all series)
- **Designer (Series):** George W. Casilear (all series)
- **Engraver of portrait (Series):** Charles Burt (all series)

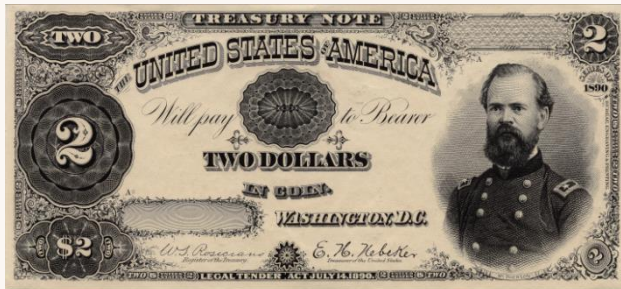
*Back of Note*

- **Main design elements (Series):** lathe work with counters and text (all series)
- **Designer (Series):** George W. Casilear (all series)

**Interesting Facts**

- James B. McPherson (1828-1864) was a General in the U.S. Army. The engraved portrait was based after a photograph by Barr & Young, c1862 housed at the National Portrait Gallery of the Smithsonian Institution.
- That Casilear was the designer for these Treasury Notes is based on his own testimony before a Senate Committee in which he said, "I was very busy at the time getting up some Treasury notes...."
- The use of the \$2 note rose in the late 1890s because of economic expansion.

**SELECT TREASURY COIN NOTE IMAGES**



\$2 Treasury Coin Note, Face, Series 1890



\$2 Treasury Coin Note, Back, Series 1890



\$2 Treasury Coin Note, Face, Series 1891



\$2 Treasury Coin Note, Back, Series 1891



## FEDERAL RESERVE BANK NOTES

**Production:** Total Production of \$2 Federal Reserve Bank Notes, 1918-1922: \$136,232,000

**Series Dates:** 1918

### Design Highlights

#### Face of Note

- **Main design elements (Series):** portrait of Thomas Jefferson
- **Designer (Series):** Clair Aubrey Huston
- **Engraver of portrait (Series):** Charles Burt

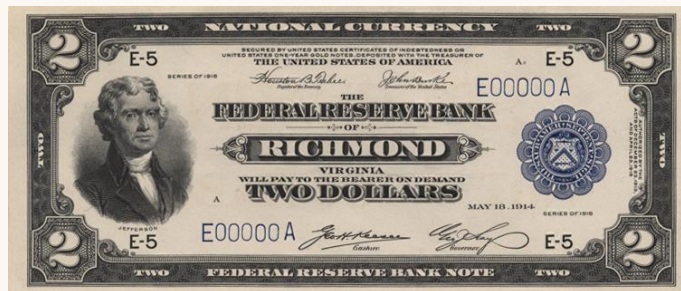
#### Back of Note

- **Main design elements (Series):** vignette of the battleship *New York*
- **Designer (Series):** Clair Aubrey Huston
- **Engraver of vignette (Series):** C.M. Chalmers

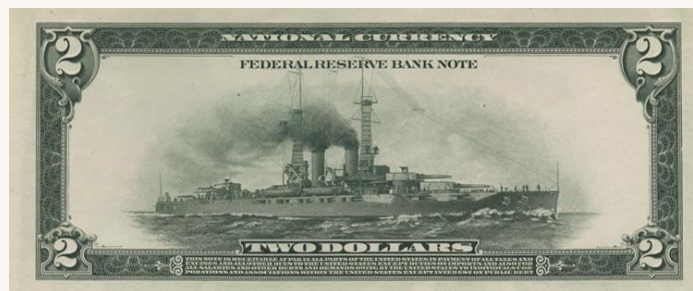
### Interesting Facts

- The portrait of Thomas Jefferson on the face of the \$2 Federal Reserve Bank Note was based on a painting by Gilbert Stuart.
- The design source for the engraved vignette of the battleship *New York* is unclear, but it was likely from a photograph.
- Because of the Pittman Act of 1918, which sold silver to the British, \$2 Silver Certificates were retired and \$2 Federal Reserve Bank Notes were printed between 1918 and 1922. During World War I, the number of \$2 notes also increased because of wartime inflation and the greater demand for currency.

### SELECT FEDERAL RESERVE BANK NOTE IMAGES



\$2 Federal Reserve Bank Note, Face, 1918



\$2 Federal Reserve Bank Note, Back, 1918