

Ray brought in a display of Red Cross pins. For more information on the pins check out: <http://www.collectarc.com/>.



The door prize was 1 once silver round, which was won by Larry.

When Santa Claus Showed Up on U.S. Currency

By Suzanne Woolley



\$20 private bank note, 1850s. Source: Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia

Money can be so boring. Or, at least, U.S. paper currency. Green, black, cream, some president's head. With the holiday season upon us, there are holiday stamps, holiday checks, holiday-themed toilet paper. Would it be so horrible to have holiday-themed currency?

They didn't think so before the U.S. Treasury stepped in to un-democratize the design of U.S. currency. Before it did that in 1861, there actually was holiday-themed currency featuring Santa Claus, and earlier versions of St. Nicholas.

“From 1793 to 1861, when the U.S. Treasury was given exclusive rights to produce legal tender, thousands of different styles of bank notes were created by U.S. banks,” and prominent on some of their holiday-themed currency, a [blog post](#) from the Federal Reserve Bank of New York tells us, was Santa Claus.

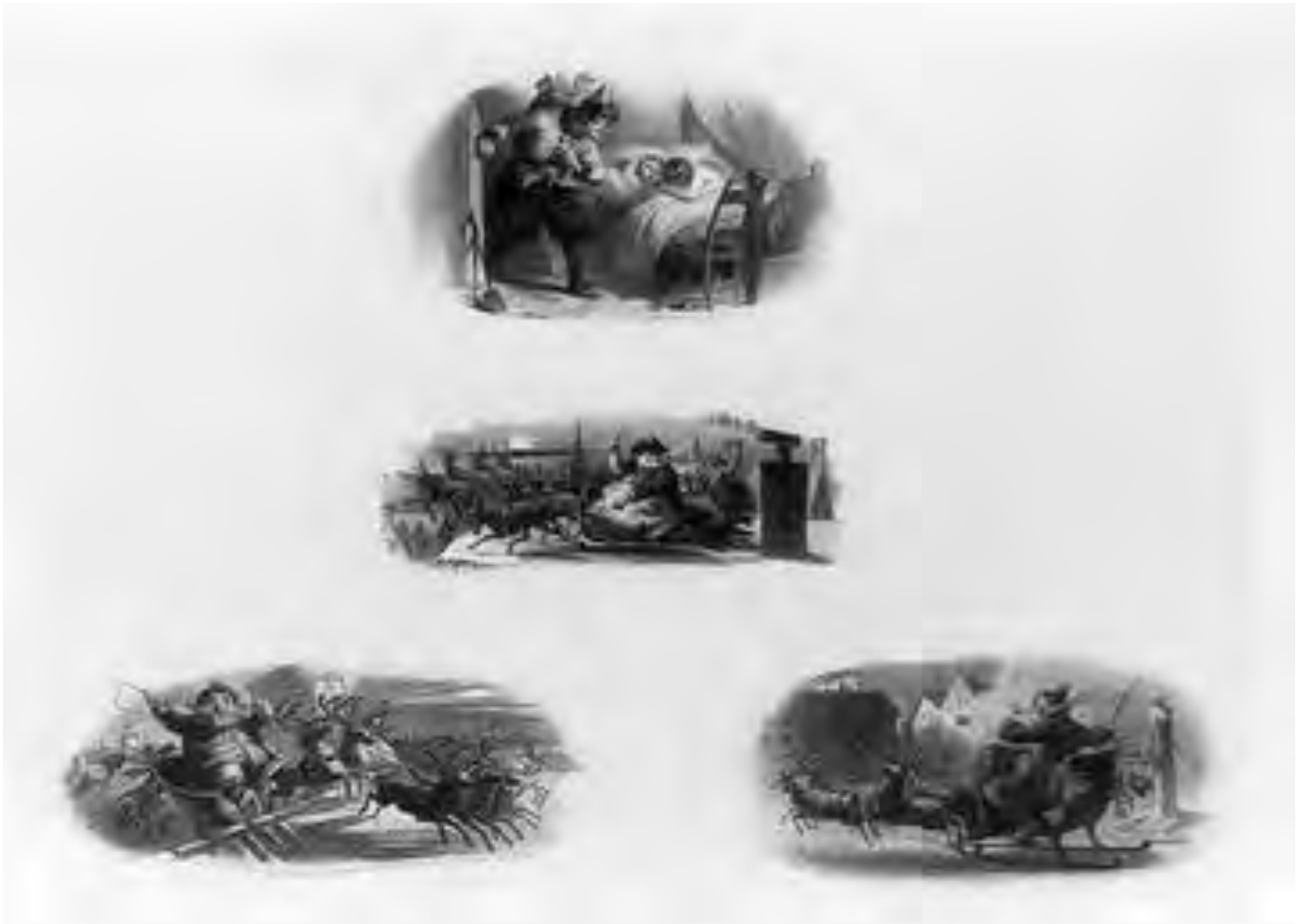
Santa was extremely popular back then, the post says, thanks to a.) Christmas becoming an official holiday in many Northern states, and b.) the printing in 1823 of the poem “A Visit from St. Nicholas” by Clement Clarke Moore (that was the original title; today, it's known as "The Night Before Christmas"). Here's another image of a Santa bank note from that era from, yes, Saint Nicholas Bank in New York:



Source: Heritage Auctions, Inc.

It wasn't exactly sentiment fueling the banks' creativity. One motivation was that, since a lot of people kept the collectible bills as keepsakes, they wouldn't be eager to redeem the bills for their underlying value in gold. If they did keep them and passed them down through the years, their heirs would be happy: One obsolete Santa bank note sold for \$40,000 in 2011, according to Heritage Auctions.

Here are other examples of the bank notes, including a few of the visual "vignettes" featured on many of them. The top one here shows a somewhat svelte Santa visiting two children in bed. Apparently, the [early version of Santa](#), or "Sinterklass," brought over by early Dutch settlers was much thinner than the rotund Santa of today:



Bank note vignettes showing Santa Claus visiting two children in bed and Santa Claus in sleigh.
Source: Library of Congress

And here's another New York bank note, and a detail from it of a *really* trim Santa. Michelle Obama would likely be a fan of this version of Santa -- if he weren't smoking a pipe.



Source: Heritage Auctions, Inc.



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