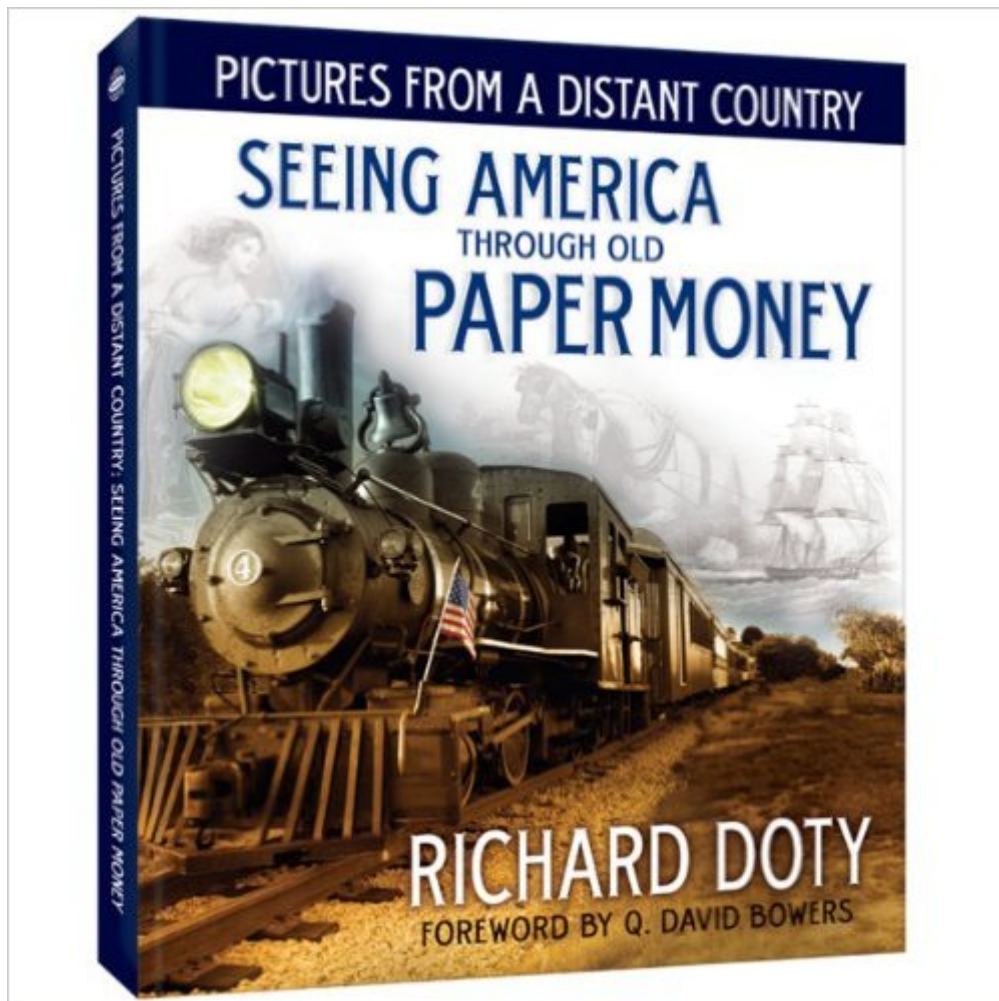


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# Pictures From A Distant Country: Seeing America Through Old Paper Money



## Synopsis

Everyone knows that there is only one form of American currency, the product of a single issuer. That currency is the greenback, and the issuer is the federal government. But this arrangement has not always been the rule: for much of our nation's history (including its most dynamic period of growth) there was no federal currency in circulation. Instead, Americans spent currency issued by private banks and other businesses. We call these pieces of private money obsolete bank notes, and they form the basis of this outstanding new book by Richard Doty, senior curator of the Smithsonian's National Numismatic Collection. What do the designs and images on these notes tell us about the United States of the 1800s? How did we Americans view women, children, family, the workplace, racial minorities, new technology? Can these obsolete bank notes serve as "pictures from a distant country"-snapshots from the United States of yesteryear? Hundreds of detailed images of these private notes illustrate Doty's engaging text. *Pictures From a Distant Country* is a must-read for every collector, and for anyone interested in our nation's colorful past.

Foreword  
Preface  
Introduction  
Chapter 1. Constructing a National Identity  
Chapter 2. The People in the Way  
Chapter 3. The People in the Middle  
Chapter 4. Temptress, Saint, and Helpmeet: Woman's Identity  
Chapter 5. Childhood and Family  
Chapter 6. Making a Living  
Chapter 7. Whimsy  
Chapter 8. "You Can Trust Me": Images of Worth  
Chapter 9. Progress  
Chapter 10. . . . An Age Now Ending  
Epilogue: And Then What Happened?  
Appendix: Full-Size Bank-Note Images  
About the Author /  
Acknowledgments  
Index to Bank-Note Issuers, by State    Â    Â

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## Customer Reviews

This is not just a book for currency collectors, but for anyone with an interest in American social history and/or an appreciation of the art of illustration and engraving. The "broken bank notes" of the nineteenth century were often not worth the paper they were printed on, but priceless in providing a view into the "distant country" of pre-Civil War America. Richard Doty does a wonderful job of digging into the symbolic meanings of the wonderful illustrations decorating these bills as a way of exploring American life at that time--the development of industry, the role of women, the relationship of Indians to white society, southern views of slavery, the work people did every day, and more. He writes very well and with a touch of humor. Occasionally he may read a bit too much into the pictures and I also wish he might have been able to say more about the artists. But overall, he is a very perceptive observer and a thoughtful historian. In short, this is not your ordinary coffee-table book. It is both a work of art and high quality historical scholarship--a rare combination well worth your money.

I loved this book. The author clearly knows and loves the material. The pictorial story of banknotes issued by local banks across the country before the revolution and during the free banking era (after Andy Jackson's veto of the 2nd Bank of the United States up until the Civil War) is highlighted in this delightful volume, which features pictures of the engravings on these notes.

Even for people steeped in American history, in this case 19th century antebellum history, there is always more to learn. This book succeeds in giving the reader a unique view of the period with a combination of art, the art of state-chartered bank notes with banking and financial history, political history and cultural history. Highly recommended.

It only covers state banks not the federal USA paper money in the 19th century. Still very interesting and all new to me.

This book is a great read for currency collectors and has great pictures of United States currency over the years past. Makes one think of how artistic our currency used to look like! Wish present currency looked like some examples of the past.

While this type of paper money is not readily available to all, the photos in this book reveal the social fabric of the 19th century, and the skill of the engraver of 150 years ago.

I have thoroughly enjoyed the book and all of the many colored prints of old obsolete paper bills. I recommend the book to anyone who is interested in old paper currency

Gave as a gift to family member who collects coins and paper money. They were thrilled from the first page.

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