

2. Using SPMC's ODP Website

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In the previous edition of *Paper Money* we gave you the 30,000 foot view of the Obsoletes Database Project (ODP) found at www.spmc.org/obs/. Here we'll get much closer to the ground, so hang on as we come in for a landing.

Before we get too far along I'd like you to check out the home page. Consider this to be a good starting point if you ever get lost. From here you can get to nearly any page on the website, via direct link or the Search utility. As ODP is an SPMC membership benefit, you need to be logged in to get past the home page. In addition to the "above the fold" area on the home page, you'll see sections for Featured Notes (which are notes deemed worthy in some way by our State Experts (SEs)), Unidentified Notes (which users can help identify), and finally Recently Added Notes. The latter should change frequently as SEs post new notes to the database.

Learn about the **history** of paper money.
Find **issuers, designs, notes** and top contributors.

Have a note or images you'd like to include in our database?

Minnesota santa Search

+ Note + Note Gallery

1,856 Locations 4,926 Issuers 16,297 Designs 4,668 Notes

1,151+ Members with access to the Obsolete Notes Database.

Featured Notes

Organizational Overview

There are three main elements associated with an obsolete note: Issuer, Design and Note data. Each Issuer may have multiple Designs, and each Design may have multiple Notes. The ultimate goal of ODP is to have a web page dedicated to each and every one of these. Those colorful boxes on the home page track our progress.

At the highest level, there is the Issuer, whose name or title appears on the note. The Issuer has a few core descriptive pieces of information about it, like its title, place of issue (state, city), business character (genuine, fraudulent) and dates of operation.

Sub-categorical to the Issuer are the Designs of notes it has issued. Designs can be assigned based on obvious or subtle differences, for example, the presence of an overprint. If you're on the Issuer home page, you'll see a tab that says "Reported Designs". Click on that to see what Designs have been reported for that Issuer. Each of the Designs is summarized in a graphical box we call a widget. Click on one to drill into the Design page.

Designs have a great many attributes. Among these are Denomination, Design Type (Bank Note, Scrip, College Currency, etc.), Authenticity (Genuine, Counterfeit, Spurious, etc.), Serial Number Type (Handwritten, Printed), Protector (Overprint, Tint), Protector Color, Dimensions (if not standard bank note size), Printer, Design Details and more.

At the bottom echelon of this hierarchy are the notes themselves. When on the Design page, you'll see a tab for "Reported Notes", which will take you a page showing a widget for each of the reported notes. Clicking on one of these will take you its Note page. This includes an image of the particular note, its grade, serial number, etc. One of these notes is designated as the plate note, the one that best represents its design. Additional note information can include its Provenance. Users can claim a note as theirs, and thereby track their collection through the Set Registry, which we will discuss later. For hoard notes, like remainders on the Canal Bank, we can set the Census Count to some large number, so we don't have the need for duplicate entries of identical notes.

Notice when on a Note page, you'll see a trail of links near the top, called breadcrumbs, which show you where you are in the hierarchy. You can easily navigate to the higher tiers through those links.

S P M C Forums Set Registry Unidentified Notes Note Galleries FAQ Credits

Note: \$1 - Central Bank

New Ulm, Minnesota (Brown County) → Central Bank → \$1 → Red Overprint → S. No. 2653

SPMC Catalog: MN:NeUl:CB:BG1:ro Published

View Edit SE Dashboard

Click on the thumbnails above to select the front or back. Then hover over the chosen side to zoom in to the detail.

Click on the thumbnails above to see full image.

Denomination: \$1 Format: Issued 2653 A Date: 22 Feb 1861

Catalog Number

Forum

The social interaction with other collectors can make a website experience fun. We have a forum on the ODP website (www.spmc.org/obs/forum/) for collectors to ask and answer questions about ODP, but also for obsoletes in general. It's meant to be a place to learn, and everyone reading this probably has a number of good questions as well as good answers. Post them here.

FAQ

For general questions about ODP, refer to the Frequently Asked Questions page. The link to the FAQs is found on the top menu bar. We're certain to add more topics as we go. Two items among the FAQs talk about catalog numbers and the rarity scale. I'd like to provide a little more background information here.

Catalog and IDN Numbers

SPMC has been responsible for publishing a number of state books on obsoletes over the last fifty years. Every one of these has catalog numbers, in a fashion designed by the author that helps collectors identify the different designs available to them. They are usually composed of a prefix identifying the issuer, and a suffix identifying the design. These state book catalog numbers are included in ODP to the extent possible. We've actually devised two alternate uniform catalog numbers for ODP, one that is descriptive in nature called the SPMC number, and another that is called the IDN (Issuer / Design / Note) number. The SPMC number should at this time be considered experimental, as SEs are permitted to change them at will, whereas the IDNs are fixed and always will be, the numbers being tied to permanent node numbers in the online database. Notice that the URLs for any given Issuer, Design and Note page embeds those node IDs. For example, the corresponding URLs for a note with IDN 68-4014-24044 are:

- Issuer page: www.spmc.org/obs/i-68
- Design page: www.spmc.org/obs/i-68/d-4014
- Note page: www.spmc.org/obs/i-68/d-4014/n-24044.

Rarity

Most of the state books present some kind of an indication of rarity. In the late 1960s SPMC began in earnest to help authors publish books on their states, and even these included the SPMC rarity scale, presented as number between R1 and R7, ordered from common to rarest. The numbers have always been estimated based on the authors' experience. The same scale is used in ODP, but here we have the option of using the SEs' experience, or letting the data speak for itself. As more notes are populated in ODP, the rarity scale can be generated dynamically by simply counting the number of notes for a given design. Automatically generated rarity values in ODP are presented in green, whereas rarities estimated by the SEs are shown in red. Rarities are presented at both the Design and Issuer levels of aggregation. See the FAQ associated with the rarity scale for detailed information.

My Information

You'll see a person silhouette on the upper right side of the menu bar. Click on that for information specific to you. At a minimum, it has links below it for My Account, My Notes and My Sets. State Experts will have additional links for tools to help them in organizing their data.

Search Utility

Now we're getting to the good stuff. The great thing about digitized data is the ability to easily search through volumes of records to quickly find what you're looking for. The ODP database has a robust search utility that

generates hits by relevance to the search terms, and will return results even if the hits are not exact. On the home page you'll find the main Search bar. It is composed of three parts:

- The first search criterion, or filter, is a pulldown menu for the state. You have the option of selecting any state (at the top of the list) or a specific state, district or territory.
- The second is a text field where you type in what you're looking for. You can enter any number of key words, or a string of words in quotation marks for an exact search.
- The third is the Search pulldown, where you specify whether you want to limit the results to Issuers, Designs, Notes or all of the above. The results will be formatted specifically to these criteria.

The screenshot shows the SPMC website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for Forums, Set Registry, Unidentified Notes, Note Galleries, FAQ, Credits, and a user icon. Below this is a breadcrumb trail: Search / Search results / santa / Design / Minnesota / Site. On the left side, there are several filter menus: Filter by Type (set to (-) Design), Filter by State (set to Minnesota), Filter by Authenticity, Filter by Denomination, Filter by Design Type, Filter by Issuer, and Filter by Printer. The main content area shows the current search filters: 'santa', 'Design', and 'Minnesota'. Below this, there is a 'Did you mean' section with the suggestion 'sanxay'. The search results are displayed under the heading 'Search results' with sorting and ordering options. The first result is a '\$1 - Red Overprint' note. It includes two images: the front and back of the note. The front image shows a one-dollar note with a central illustration of Santa Claus on a sleigh and Peter Stuyvesant at the bottom left. The back image shows the reverse side of the note. Below the images, the text reads: 'Central Bank, New Ulm, Minnesota. Santa Claus on sleigh at center. Peter Stuyvesant at lower left.' There is a 'Details' button and a 'More >' link.

In this example we search for Minnesota designs that include the word “santa”. The first result is exactly what we’re looking for. One of the key points that we need to make clear to our State Experts, who are responsible for the quality of their state data, is that designs should have descriptions that are detailed and meaningful to allow searches to be as effective as possible. It is going to take our SEs a while to accomplish this. Users should be aware that the database is ever changing as more data is populated. The search results you get will only improve over time.

What’s Next

This article summarizes how you can get around and use the data in ODP. In our next article we’ll talk about how you can add to that body of knowledge. Please contact me at shawn@shawnhewitt.com if you have questions.